Student Perceptions of Accessibility to Leadership within the Secondary School Context

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ABSTRACT

It is widely recognised that leadership development and opportunities are essential for youth to initiate positive change across peer groups, school, families, and communities (Bowman, 2013; Funk; 2002; Lizzio, Dempster & Neumann, 2011). Nonetheless, many schools and youth organisations provide leadership opportunities for some young people, and not others. Some schools present leadership opportunities through formal positions only and students do not realise there are other opportunities available to them that will contribute to their development (Lizzio et al., 2011; Mitra, 2005; Whitehead, 2009). Despite this, empirical work focusing on youth access to leadership is limited, as are studies that 'make heard' the student voice (Bowman, 2013; Funk; 2002; Lizzio et al., 2011).

This study is positioned within the body of knowledge that recognises leadership as both formal and informal influence. Jackson and Parry (2011) capture the elements of leadership in defining it as an influence relationship between leaders and followers, focusing on authentic changes and outcomes that reflect shared purpose. In drawing on this positioning of leadership, the aim of this study is to investigate student perceptions of accessibility to leadership within the secondary school context. This overall aim is supported by three sub-questions. How do students perceive and understand leadership? What do students say about access to leadership opportunities in the secondary school context? How can leadership opportunities be more accessible for more students in secondary schools?

The research paradigm chosen for this study is both constructivist and interpretivist (Bryman, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Thus, the study seeks to draw on the multiple realities of the participants by understanding how their perception of leadership may provide insight to increasing access to leadership for a broader group of students. In seeking to contribute to the emerging body of knowledge in the secondary school context, student perceptions of accessibility to leadership were sought through a case study approach in two secondary schools. Semi-structured group interviews (n=6 group; 12 in total), a questionnaire (n=100), and supporting documents (n=4) drew multiple points of view highlighting the importance of the student voice (Harris, 2008).

The study findings revealed that to increase accessibility to leadership for students requires a shift in thinking towards believing that everyone is capable of some form of leadership and that leadership opportunities may be offered both formally and informally. While formal leadership roles produce benefits, they have been criticised for not being inclusive of the whole student body (Lizzio et al., 2011; Mitra, 2005; Whitehead, 2009). With this in mind, there is a challenge for educators to find ways to help students to redefine leadership so that it is no longer the domain of a selected few.

According to the students in this study, leadership experiences are a unique way to develop young people for the future. To realise the value of leadership for all young people this study has identified some key levers for change: simplify, provide all students with at least one opportunity to experience leadership, and redefine leadership as helping others. Students suggested educators look to a broader group of students and offer both formal and informal leadership experiences based on the concept of helping others.

Students felt that the notion of leadership opportunities being more available and, coupled with the idea that leadership is about helping people, will provide an accessible way of approaching leadership. Furthermore, there are gains to be had in involving young people in the planning of their own leadership and, as a result, to engage and connect them in leadership (Hine, 2014; McNae, 2011). Leadership learning in secondary schools that is co-designed with the students has the potential to provide the ideal intervention to offer some answers to the critical themes that have arisen in this research study.

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Student's signature: Date: 20 November 2017

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background and Rationale for the Study

The Broader Setting – Leadership

Leadership is a sociological concept that has been researched extensively in an attempt to interpret and understand its meaning across various societal contexts. There are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are people who have attempted to define it (Maxwell, 2011; Yukl, 2002). The dominant discourse focuses on "the complexity of the construct of leadership" (Bass & Stogdill, 1990, p. 41). Similarly, Weinberg and Gould (2003) claim that leadership is a concept that is often referred to alongside character and is yet to be conclusively defined. This lack of consensus is likely to cause confusion about how leadership should look and be practised which can lead to inconsistencies in understanding, and more worryingly, young people thinking that they cannot be leaders (Rosch & Kusel, 2010; Van Linden & Fertman, 1998).

Despite the difficulty in defining leadership, there appears to be common elements within most definitions throughout the literature: influence, outcome, change and shared purpose (Jackson & Parry, 2011; Kim, 2009; Yukl, 2002). Jackson and Parry (2011) capture these elements of leadership in defining it as an influence relationship between leaders and followers focusing on authentic changes and outcomes that reflect shared purpose. The core measure of leadership according to Maxwell (2007), is influence. Defining leadership as influence moves it from task oriented to humanistic. Covey and Merrill (2006) agree. They describe leadership as a way a person leads their life, rather than a position. Supporting this, Maxwell (2011) states "a leadership position can be received in a day, but leadership development is a lifelong process" (p. 71). Karnes and Stephens (1999) argue too that leadership is central to the human condition and that it should be understood and practised by all. Despite this, many schools and youth organisations struggle to provide youth or student leadership education or to offer leadership opportunities to all but a selected few. There is also a dearth of studies that have considered the youth context and captured the youth voice (McNae, 2011). Leadership is dependent on context or situation and has different meanings for different people in different settings (McNae, 2011).

The present study therefore concentrates on capturing the youth voice within the context of secondary schools.

Student Leadership

The school context is integral when investigating youth leadership. This is why the present study focused on leadership opportunities and experiences that *schools* might offer and the students' perception of those experiences. Throughout the literature, authors refer to leadership development and opportunities as essential to providing youth with the skills and understanding necessary to initiate positive change across peer groups, school, families and communities (Bowman, 2013; Funk; 2002; Lizzio, Dempster & Neumann, 2011). Scholars highlight concern about some schools presenting leadership through formal positions only and students not realising there are other opportunities available to them (Lizzio et al., 2011). Formal leadership roles, whilst producing benefits, have also been criticised as a sole strategy for providing youth leadership experiences due to their relative exclusivity with relation to the whole student body (Lizzio et al., 2011; Mitra, 2005; Whitehead, 2009).

A number of leadership scholars refer to the work of Roach, Adelma and Wyman (1999) and their ground-breaking analysis of the issue of the sustainable development of youth through leadership and the relationship it has to adult leadership theories and practices. Dial (2006) identifies that much of the literature seems to deal with adults discussing student leadership issues and solutions rather than a strong student voice with students' needs expressed by students. Considering the evidence available, this study has first examined and acknowledged the abundance of adult leadership theories and concepts and then focused the data collection and methodology on the evidence gained from the voice of the students. "It would be too easy to assume that using adult leadership theories and adult concepts offers the best route to an enhanced understanding of student leadership" (Dempster & Lizzio, 2007, p. 278). The complexities and tensions in the theories and practices of adult leadership in relation to youth leadership have been considered throughout this study whilst drawing findings and conclusions from the perceptions of young people through the analysis of student voice.

Secondary schools are powerful forces in shaping young people's understanding of themselves, their leadership abilities and their place in the world (McNae, 2011). Lizzio et al. (2011) suggest 'peeling back the layers' to begin to understand what youth believe about authentic leadership opportunities and what they believe to be the value of the outcomes of leadership in

order to attract more young people to it. Drawing on the leadership literature, this study 'peels back the layers' through focusing on leadership experiences falling into two broad categories: formal and informal leadership (McNae, 2011). As discussed, leadership is often viewed as predominantly formal and position-based with some scholars highlighting the value of informal leadership experiences and identifying the potential to explore this further in the research context (Hackett & Lavery, 2011; McNae, 2011). Although there is considerable literature on the benefits of leadership for young people there are not, as yet, studies that focus on the students' perspective of leadership or their perceptions of accessibility to leadership. There also seems to be a gap in the body of knowledge directly relating to practices which enhance accessibility to leadership opportunities from the students' perspective. The present study is designed to explore and examine the beliefs and understandings young people have of student leadership in the school context and the effect this has on their ability to access leadership. The intended outcome is to identify potential 'access inhibitors' and 'access catalysts' to formal and informal leadership, reflected through the student voice.

Hine (2014) explains that students do not need a badge to be leaders. This invites us to consider what part more informal, daily opportunities within the school context can play in leadership development. Authors in the literature identified that informal leadership opportunities are often ignored, or seen as trivial or not really leadership (Keeffe & Andrews, 2011). Indeed, we do not yet know much about the daily informal opportunities that exist for young people to step forward and lead, such as may exist in casual, social group interactions with peers (Dempster, Stevens & Keeffe, 2011). The push for students to be heard is a common theme prevalent across the literature (Dempster, et al., 2011) and the ultimate outcome of this research was to begin to understand access to leadership both formally and informally from the students' perspective. "To invent a form of student leadership that has student fulfilment, academic success and social advantage at the core, our first task is to understand student leadership as students see it" (Keeffe & Andrews, 2011, p. 32). Whitehead (2009) supports this through voicing a concern about a lack of empirical research into young people's understanding of leadership, including the knowledge of how to access leadership opportunities. This study has focused on a much needed new research agenda, highlighted in the literature, which emphasises the importance of young people being listened to and involved in the planning of their leadership development (McNae, 2011). Hackett and Lavery (2011) state quite simply: "leadership belongs to everybody" (p. 58).

Focus and Approach of the Study

Research Purpose, Aim and Questions

The underlying purpose of this research study is to contribute to the emerging body of knowledge in relation to access to leadership opportunities for secondary school-aged students. A broad intention is to examine the value and nature of student leadership practices in secondary schools in order to gain a greater understanding of accessibility from the students' perspective. The research problem centres around the dichotomy of formal versus informal leadership and an emerging understanding in schools that leadership belongs to everybody (Hackett & Lavery, 2011). Scholars in the literature have acknowledged that all adolescents have leadership potential, however, it appears that not all adolescents have access to leadership opportunities. Student leadership development within secondary schools is critical because of the implications it can have on the development of young people and the dynamic nature of the possibilities it brings for the future (Archard, 2009; Hine, 2013; McNae, 2011).

From the above, a more specific aim has been developed, supported by three research questions. **The aim of this study is to investigate student perceptions of accessibility to leadership within the secondary school context**. The three sub-questions are:

1. How do students perceive and understand leadership?
2. What do students say about access to leadership opportunities in the secondary school context?
3. How can leadership opportunities be more accessible for more students in secondary schools?

Research Approach

The research paradigm chosen for this study is both constructivist and interpretivist (Bryman, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Thus, this study seeks to draw on the multiple realities of participants in understanding how their perception of leadership may provide insight to increasing access to leadership for a broader group of students. The co-construction of knowledge is also an integral part of the research design; there is intent to situate data collection within the 'real world' context of secondary schools. In this way, the research aim is well-suited to a constructivist-interpretive paradigm. For the interpretivist, reality is constructed by the individual and their experiences (Armour & Macdonald, 2012). The interpretive paradigm

through which the qualitative methods for the study are derived is well suited to gain meaning through the lens of the student, rather than the lens of the teacher. Qualitative methods were applied in the study based on identifying qualitative research as an interpretive form of social inquiry and focusing on understanding phenomenon through accessing the meaning participants place on them. A case study approach with Year 10 students was chosen using two case study schools with interviews as the primary method of data collection, supported by a questionnaire.

Thesis Chapters

This Introduction Chapter has established the scholarly context and provided a background and rationale for the study. It also sets out the focus and approach of the study. Chapter 2 reviews the literature in relation to leadership more broadly, and student leadership in particular. This is followed by the Methodology Chapter which provides an insight into the research design and an explanation of the constructivist-interpretive paradigm and qualitative methodology. Chapters 4 and 5, the findings and discussion chapters, each focus on addressing the research questions. Chapter 4 focuses on research question one, presenting and discussing the findings around the students' perception and understanding of leadership. Chapter 5 presents and discusses research questions two and three through probing and analysing student access to leadership. To conclude, the findings and discussion are reviewed as a whole by distilling: the dominant emerging themes; implications for educators; limitations of the research; and highlighting potential contribution and future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

> If the concept of leadership is identified with extraordinary, finished products – the Ghandis and Goodalls of the world – the bar is set so high, the exercise of skill so refined, it places the whole field beyond our reach. But as soon as we say that leadership is composed of common, human skills, the matter is turned on its head. (Fish, 2011, p. 83).

Fish's (2011) analysis provides a key hypothesis for this research study: leadership opportunities appear to be available to a privileged few rather than being seen as a set of common skills the development of which is available to all people and, for the focus of this study, adolescents. This literature review critiques leadership concepts, practices and issues relevant to student leadership within the secondary school context. Whilst uncovering a significant body of knowledge on the general topic of youth leadership there appears to be few studies focused specifically on accessibility to leadership opportunities (formal and informal) for students.

The review begins by establishing relevant descriptions and explanations of leadership from both an adult and youth perspective. This is followed by an analysis of the variations between adult and youth leadership literature before the focus settles on exploring student leadership in the secondary school context, particularly around the concept of informal leadership, at times through service. The final two sections focus on the rationale for learning through leadership, and the notion of the value of leadership opportunities in the education of our young people and therefore the importance of these opportunities being accessible.

Defining Leadership

What Is Leadership?

Leadership is a sociological concept that has been researched extensively in an attempt to interpret and understand its meaning across various societal contexts. James MacGregor Burns once famously stated, "Leadership is one of the most observed, yet least understood phenomena on earth" (Rosch & Kusel, 2010, p. 29). There are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are people who have attempted to define it. Researchers and leadership experts alike have produced innumerable definitions, whilst finding the concept difficult to 'pin down'.

Despite a lack of consensus among scholars, there seems to be some common threads in the definitions. Leadership is an influence relationship between leaders and followers who drive change and outcomes through shared purpose (Daft, 2007; Jackson & Parry, 2011). Yukl (2002) also refers to leadership as requiring followers and a common goal. Kouzes and Posner (2015) refer to great leaders as being great learners, encouraging leaders to always be open to new ideas and the views of others. The core of effective leadership seems to centre around having a clear vision and well set goals; along with problem solving ability, confidence, emotional intelligence and a strong sense of ethical understanding (Kim, 2009). Many scholars refer to this combination as resulting in leaders having influence over followers. The true measure of leadership according to Maxwell (2007) is "influence, nothing more, nothing less" (p. 11). Kouzes and Posner (2016) describe contemporary leadership as more broadly distributed than traditionally accepted.

Leadership Theories and Approaches

The major concepts surrounding leadership can be grouped into specific theories and viewed along an historical timeline. Leadership theories provide a framework on which to hang one's understanding of leadership. The trait theory of leadership began in the nineteenth century and presents the idea that leaders are born with certain traits. "Traits are the distinguishing personal characteristics of a leader, such as intelligence, honesty, self-confidence and appearance" (Daft & Pirola-Merlo, 2009, p.37). The Great Man Theory prevalent in the 19th Century focused on the traits of one charismatic individual leader (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). This theory identified some people, and not others, as having innate traits suitable for leadership, hence the idea that some people naturally had more leadership ability than others (Jackson & Parry, 2011; Maxwell, 2007; Yukl, 2002). Trait theory appears to have diminished in recent times; it is now generally accepted that leadership skills can be developed. This view is certainly argued by this study.

Situational leadership arose as an alternative view in the mid twentieth century and has tended to dominate contemporary leadership thinking. Situational theory focuses on the situation determining the type of leadership required. Contingency theory is a form of situational theory and refers to the leader's ability to lead being dependent upon various situational factors, such as the leader's preferred leadership style and the followers' qualities (Fiedler, 1967). In more recent times these theories have evolved into 'transactional leadership', and 'transformational leadership'.

Jackson and Parry (2011) discuss transactional leadership as involving an exchange between the leader and follower where the leader uses rewards in return for followers' compliance and performance results. The nature of transactional leadership provides constraints in a change focused world and it may indeed do our young people a disservice to focus on any leadership style that reinforces a transactional relationship maintaining the status quo.

In contrast, transformational leadership focuses on change, where leaders are comfortable amidst disruption and where moving environments appear the norm. "Transformational leadership is characterised by the ability to bring about significant change" (Daft & Pirola-Merlo, 2009, p. 150). As distinct from the transactional leader, the transformational leader helps bring about positive change by moving group members beyond their self-interests and towards the good of the group or society (Dubrin, 2010). Learning to adapt to change and, even better, learning to lead through change are excellent skills to develop while at school and arguably, an essential life skill learning.

In contemporary contexts, change leadership is valued as a modern, connected and forward thinking approach. Equally, this thinking can challenge leaders as they grapple with constantly changing goal posts and have to continually adapt and adjust their leadership. Daft and Pirola-Merlo (2009) argue that "today's successful leaders value change over stability, empowerment over control, collaboration over competition, diversity over uniformity and integrity over self-interest" (p. 22).

The question for educators is how do schools prepare young people for today's change focused organisations and environments. Behavioural changes in both leaders and followers involve transformation of attitudes and motivations which are generally related to 'transformational leadership' (Jackson & Parry, 2008). Bowman (2013) agrees that for middle school students being 'in influence' rather than being 'in control' is the essence of effective leadership. He identifies that the way of reaching this is sharing a vision and enlisting others in a common purpose. Providing young people with the opportunity to work in the transformative arena with others is valuable learning for the future. Hughes, Ginnet and Curphy (2011) purport that charismatic or transformational leadership does not happen overnight. They argue that it takes time for leaders to learn and develop their vision, to inspire followers and to build trust. This ability to adapt to any given situation throughout a period of change is essential for the leader to be both relevant and effective. Teaching leaders to be flexible, nimble and adaptive appears

to be an essential component of any leadership education. This study is interested in the leadership teaching and learning opportunity for youth at secondary schools.

Acknowledging that leadership is a moving entity and that leaders in one situation may not be leaders in other situations brings the realisation that the role of leadership may be less about the individual traits of the leader and more about the situation and the context in which they find themselves. This relates to the concept of 'adaptive leadership', a developing theme within contemporary leadership literature (Hughes et al., 2011), which emphasises the need for a flexible and responsive style to conditions. Hughes et al. (2011) describe adaptive leadership as being able to successfully flex and adjust to changing environments or conditions. This seems a well suited leadership approach to enhance personal development learning for young people in their preparation for life. Certainly today's leadership is more about inspiration than it is about coercion or extrinsic motivation (Bowman, 2013; Hine, 2014).

McNae, (2011) highlights the belief that leadership is dependent upon context and situation and that it has different meanings for different people in different contexts. For young people, it is in the school environment where the opportunities for leadership most frequently and commonly occur. The school context is a dominant part of young people's lives; it is therefore an essential aspect to consider when investigating youth leadership (McNae, 2011). The scope of this study is on the broad opportunities schools might offer to students in leadership experiences and the view the students themselves have of these experiences. Perhaps, because of the contextualised and situational nature of leadership, understanding it from the many different perspectives of young people is difficult, complex and sometimes problematic due to the uniqueness of each situation in which the leader finds themselves (McNae, 2011). Asking questions of the students about their leadership experiences addresses, to some extent, this difficulty. Leadership has different meanings for different people and these meanings are ultimately dependent upon context (Harris, 2008).

Mitra (2006) refers to the traditional view of the Great Man Theory, as discussed on page 15, as where some people are considered 'natural leaders' above others and suggests that this theory has been replaced more recently with a greater emphasis on participative and distributed leadership. Hine (2014) describes distributed leadership as defined by the interactions between people and their situation. The important message is that leadership capacity is not fixed in style or approach but can be grown and developed (Harris 2008; Hine, 2014). Participative

leadership refers to "sharing decision making with group members and working with them side by side" (Dubrin, 2010, p. 113). Distributed leadership models also allow for this sharing of the leadership role amongst participants. Participative and distributed leadership approaches allow for a wider group of people to be involved and has the potential to increase accessibility to leadership opportunities for more young people. Distributing leadership amongst a wider group of people to allow them to participate in and experience leadership is an approach that offers much promise within the secondary school context where, as with the present study, access to leadership is the focus.

In contrast to the Great Man Theory, Van Linden and Fertman (1998) describe leadership as a combination of attitudes and skills which can be learned and practised. In considering this notion within the school context, Lombardi (2001) states that leaders are made, not born, and asks how we create environments to make leaders. Leadership can be learned as it is a pattern of practices, behaviours, skills and abilities which can be learned and strengthened with the desire to practise and listen to feedback (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Hancock, Dyk and Jones (2012) argue that adolescence is a critical time for leadership development. If indeed leadership involves skills and attitudes that can be learned and that improve with practice then there is a case for expecting leadership learning opportunities to be provided in education settings such as schools. Historically, leadership for students has been seen as a duty to be served as they moved through the school to senior school (Harris, 2003). The 'situation' young people find themselves in is not limited to the school, it is also affected by outside factors which may affect their overall views of leadership and of themselves as leaders. Understanding that leadership for young people may also occur in a club, a sport organisation, a church, a whanau or family, or within a group of friends is important when considering young people's views and experiences with leadership.

A useful way of viewing leadership is to consider that leadership experiences and activities fall into two broad categories: formal and informal (Jackson & Parry, 2011). A more formal role or position, such as a prefect or sports captain, tends to be the more traditional view of student leadership in a school. Viewing leadership as a formal position alone can limit accessibility for the majority and, in fact, favour a privileged few. Interestingly, Lizzio et al. (2011) report that students who hold formal positions have more positive views towards their peers and their school. Informal leadership is defined as an 'emergent property of a group or network' (Gronn, 2000). Informal leadership opportunities present themselves in day-to-day situations for young

people: at school, in the playground, after school, in whanau and family settings, on the sports field, and so on. Hine (2014) says you do not need a badge to be a leader, it is showing other people the way and how to do things.

While formal leadership roles produce benefits as a strategy for providing youth leadership experiences they have been criticised for their relative exclusivity with relation to the whole student body (Lizzio et al., 2011; Mitra, 2005; Whitehead, 2009). If informal leadership does in fact open up more opportunities for more students to enact their leadership then schools are obliged to provide the opportunity for all students in order to provide an equitable and fair education. It would certainly be interesting to find out how students view informal leadership opportunities and whether they understand the concept or not. McNae (2011) expresses concern about some schools presenting leadership only through formal positions and students not realising there may be opportunities outside of formally defined leadership. The motivation for the present study is therefore based on the need to find out how young people understand and define leadership, specifically informal and formal leadership.

In summary, this study is positioned within the body of knowledge that acknowledges leadership as both formal and informal influence. More specifically for the purposes of this study, leadership is defined as an influence relationship among leaders and followers focusing on authentic change and outcomes which are the result of shared purpose (Daft & Pirola-Merlo, 2009; Jackson & Parry, 2011). As explored more fully below, this study also approaches leadership as an act of service to others, both formally and informally and of value to all (Hackett & Lavery, 2011). It is with these definitions in mind that the next section explores in more depth a broadened view of leadership, that is, leadership opportunities beyond position.

More Than a Position
The idea that leadership has the potential to occur in ways that extend beyond an assigned leadership position potentially opens up the number of opportunities to experience leadership and broadens the very definition of leadership. Kouzes and Posner (2016) say: "Leadership is not a rank, a title or a place. Look it up in the dictionary…the word 'lead' literally comes from Old English word meaning "to go" or "to guide" (p. 6). Sinek (2014) identifies the challenge as being about creating a new generation of men and women who understand that an organisation's success or failure is based on leadership excellence and not management acumen

assigned to positional power. The question lies in what leadership excellence looks like in a given context.

McNae (2011) recognises that those individuals who hold formal leadership positions often receive certain privileges and are referred to as the 'school leaders' in an exclusive manner. The implication is that some students are more able to lead than others, are natural leaders and therefore their potential should be grown and nurtured while others are not afforded these opportunities. In contrast, Kouzes and Posner (2012) strongly argue that leadership is not defined by title or position, fame or wealth or indeed the family into which you were born into, nor being a hero. "Leadership is about relationships, about credibility, and about what you do. And everything you will ever do as a leader is based on one audacious assumption: that *you matter*" (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 329). This is potentially a very significant message to give any young person: you matter, and, certainly an interesting question to ponder: do young people feel they matter?

The secondary school context has a number of formal roles and positions available to students to experience leadership: class captains, student reps, form captains, prefects, student council members, sports team captains, student coaching opportunities, cultural leadership, and so on. There is a need to fill these positions annually and therefore it has the potential to become the sole focus for the student leadership experience. The allocation of these roles gives messages to students around whether they matter in leadership. This is supported by Hine (2014) in describing his study of year 10 students who were given an opportunity to nominate themselves for a peer support leadership role, with many more students applying for the roles than the ten or so roles that were available. As a result, leadership is available to some and not others.

Considering leadership as a social construct with the capacity to impact in social settings allows leadership to be defined across multiple groups and situations; both formal and informal. Whitehead (2009) emphasises that leadership is authentic when it results in pro-social outcomes, regardless of context. Lizzio et al. (2011) suggest that leadership can be used for good or bad outcomes with young people or indeed with adults. These researchers propose the potential that leadership has for positive social contribution and suggest peeling back the layers to understand what youth believe about the benefits of leadership beyond a role and explaining the outcomes of leadership in order to attract them to it. An understanding of this social contribution potential that links service to leadership is essential when attempting to broaden

the view of leadership and the potential to offer it to a wider group. This consideration is core to this study.

Covey and Merrill (2006) suggest that regardless of context, leadership is a way of leading your life, rather than a position. Tania, a Year 12 student in a New Zealand Catholic Girls Secondary School says: "Leadership is guiding others from where you are. I mean, you have been given that position because you deserve it and have the skills…the school couldn't function without us doing our part" (McNae, 2011, p. 39). This reference to 'being given that position…' views leadership as a role or position of authority. The view of positional leadership appears to be dominant in the literature amongst more traditional definitions of leadership. However, as Daft and Pirola-Merlo (2009, pp. 381-2) express, "… position power and leadership are not the same thing. …a person might hold a formal position of authority and yet not be a leader. Effective leaders do not rely solely on formal position to influence others to accomplish goals".

Hine (2014) cites "A longitudinal review of data revealed that student perceptions of the leadership program developed as time progressed" (p. 104). In Year 10, Hine described the comments made by students reflecting their understanding of leadership closely resembled features of transactional leadership, and positional roles. "In Years 11 and 12, these same views continued to reflect those transactional features, but included a focus on several aspects consistent with transformational and servant leadership" (Hine, 2014, p. 104). This finding is of note to this current study. Hine's work indicates that students in Year 10 have a narrower view of leadership, closely related to role and position. Whereas, the senior students have developed some understanding of transformational leadership through change and the opportunity to serve others as a form of leadership. This research study will probe what Year 10 students understand about contemporary leadership practices, how they would define leadership, how it is actioned in their school and how they personally have experienced it.

The Concept of Servant Leadership

In parallel to a growing interest in informal leadership, there are an increasing number of studies that focus on leadership as service or an act of civic engagement. Robert Greenleaf, credited as the seminal advocate of servant leadership, considered that a great leader is first and foremost a servant to others and that this simple fact is central to the leader's greatness (Greenleaf, 1991). In other words, "true leadership emerges from one whose primary

motivation is a deep desire to serve" (Sipe & Frick, 2009, p. 36). Servant leadership is a strengths based approach to working with people which depicts a mind shift away from the more traditional hierarchical views. The concept of servant leadership also provides an additional opportunity for broadening the thinking about leadership. The basic premise of servant leadership is deeply rooted within the leader's priority for serving others, ensuring that other people's needs are being served before self (Greenleaf, 1991; Tate, 2003). In general terms, leadership within the framework of servant leadership may be considered as simply an act of service to others. "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 & Pirola-Merlo, 2009, p. 172).

According to Hackett and Lavery (2011) there is potential to broaden the concept of leadership through service and to offer experiences to all young people. The key word here is 'all' students. In the context of a study on student leadership in secondary schools, McNae (2011) offers a perspective about participants in stating, "The young women indicated a disposition to serve others and show leadership for the good of other people" (p. 42). The students in this case study were in a New Zealand secondary school and saw leadership as a duty of service available to all students as they progressed through the school. They were interested in the opportunity and saw advantages for themselves personally. Hackett and Lavery (2011) agree, explaining that making a difference in a small way can develop a sense of hope in young people by "naming their own circle of influence" (p. 58) which can "put young people into the centre of their own lives". The authors say this can result in young people making better decisions about the world in which they live.

Furthermore, if students' understanding of leadership is based on leadership being a service to others, or a servant leadership model, then it may open up the opportunity to a broader group of students. "Everybody can be great, because anybody can serve" (Curtis, 2008, p. 85). Service can of course take place in a variety of forms, situations and contexts. Bowman (2013) discusses middle school student leaders as being intimately connected to the lives of others in their quest to 'give something back'. Leadership as service connects deeply into other people's lives; whether gardening for a neighbour, mentoring others, raising money for charity, or planting trees (Bowman, 2013). The core leadership lesson for middle school students today is that "respect for the common welfare remains the centrepiece of serving, productive, breakthrough leadership" (Bowman, 2012, p. 63).

Today many young people appear to find service to others engaging and an experience to be sought out. Some, however, are not so engaged. If all students are to be given the opportunity to develop themselves as leaders through service to others, the informal leadership model seems ideal as it encourages the sharing of responsibilities and decision making allowing all group members to be involved. "…the arts of leading and following are intimately linked and the roles interchangeable, based on the situation" (Higham, Freathy & Wegerif, 2010, p. 420). These authors highlight that the opportunity for informal and shared leadership must be real and authentic. Efforts to involve more students may backfire, however, if the students discover that having been given responsibility "they have no real authority to institute changes" (p. 420). Authentic leadership which is "grounded in the humanistic psychology of Rogers & Maslow" (Higham et al., 2010, p. 421) will allow for true development of the individual.

Hughes et al. (2011) refers to Maslow's goal of self-actualisation for human beings as being a foundation of human development. This developmental approach to leadership is grounded in actions that result in the leader's discovery of self. Higham et al. (2010) highlight that leadership education for students does not need to be about teaching them to become "Chief Executive Officers but instead it could be about enabling students to reflect their values through their actions…" (p. 421), developing values based human beings. One would only have to look at any school motto to begin to explore values based education in a school context. Covey (2003) perhaps best sums up the concept of servant leadership in his discussion about principle-centred leadership focusing on values and principles rather than practices.

Adult versus Youth Leadership

Application of Adult Leadership Literature to Youth

Studies about student leadership, both from student perspectives and adult perspectives, alongside new approaches for students to learn about leadership are coming to the fore as researchers grapple with balancing deficit views of young people with more positive youth development approaches (Arendt & Gregoire, 2006; Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt 2001; Funk, 2002). Dempster and Lizzio (2007) query whether this new focus on young people is due to the leadership literature being saturated with adult-focused studies. They propose that the area of student leadership may provide "a new point of entry for researchers interested in new insights" (p. 276). Certainly it is a new avenue of leadership research (McNae,

2011). For some time, insights into leadership have come from looking at adult leadership, often in a business context. Whilst this has correlations with young people leading it is not the same. Business leadership is about money, profit, products, stakeholders, customers and adults leading other adults. It is often about leadership versus followership, not about experiencing both as a form of education for life as it is for young people. This thinking drives the need for more studies to gain data and to glean an understanding around youth leadership and the perspectives of young people about their leadership experiences.

Many scholars refer to Roach, et al. (1999) and their ground-breaking analysis of sustainable development of youth through leadership and the relationship this has to adult leadership. These authors posited that theories relating to adult leadership seem to focus on an individual's abilities such as the abilities required to be principal of a school or CEO of a company. However, the literature upon which the research questions in this study are based point to leadership as being about far more than a 'position' as well as for people of all ages. Roach et al. (1999) go on to describe theories of youth leadership as being first and foremost situational, underpinned by the development of self-knowledge as a primary component of situational leadership and therefore of youth leadership. Dempster and Lizzio (2007) agree with the importance of the development of self-knowledge in youth leadership, whereas scholarship on adult leadership has tended to focus more on the leader's charisma and influence, often achieved through being in a leadership position. These authors explain that organisations seldom allocate leadership opportunities to their more difficult people as a way of countering the negative behaviours of those people. However, whilst realising that leadership experiences encourage self-knowledge, it is unlikely that a search for self-knowledge attracts youth to leadership roles and also unlikely that youth recognise the learning potential of taking on a leadership role. This study is particularly interested in the notion of the development of self-knowledge and its importance for youth. Much of the literature relates to adults discussing why leadership is important and their definitions of leadership development or training (Holdsworth, 2005; Mitra, 2005; Ricketts & Dudd, 2002).

There is a temptation to use the abundant adult leadership theories and concepts to better understand adolescent leadership. "It would be too easy to assume that using adult leadership theories and adult concepts offers the best routes to an enhanced understanding of student leadership" (Dempster & Lizzio, 2007, p. 278). After all, it is most often adults who plan, implement and evaluate student or youth leadership programmes and it is tempting for them to

approach leadership for young people with a 'we know best' attitude. To be meaningful to adolescents any leadership learning or experience "must consider their idealism, quest for independence and identity formation" (Van Linden & Fertman, 1998, p. 16). Lizzio et al. (2011) found that it is a student's sense of identification and not their level of achievement motivation that predicts their willingness to contribute and engage in leadership in their school. Again, there is reference to the formation of identity and to providing the opportunities for young people to develop 'who they are' and 'who they might be', as setting youth leadership apart from adult leadership. This study is interested in the student voice in leadership rather than teachers as adults who develop leadership programmes and opportunities for their students. Whilst teachers and other significant adults can contribute to the development of leadership opportunities, and they certainly play a part in providing access, it is the young people themselves who can drive the experiences in ways that meet their needs.

There certainly appears throughout the literature to be some tension in the theories and practices of adult leadership and how it relates to youth leadership. This requires some understanding in order to meet the needs of young people in the leadership arena. Hine (2014) refers to the 'striking dearth of literature associated with the subject of youth leadership (Archard, 2009; Hine, 2013; McNae, 2011). This research aims to provide a student's view of leadership with the hope that it will be impetus for change. "The greatest challenge for adults may be in learning to let go, allowing the project to take a different shape than planned and gradually giving up control over key components" (Curtis, 2008, p. 7). This may well be a message to schools around leadership for students. Who designs it, leads it and actions it? Is it the teachers *or* the students, or is it the teachers *and* the students?

The Voice of Young People
Curtis (2008) says youth want people to sit down with them and listen to what they have to say, to help them understand. Whilst acknowledging an oversupply of definitions, concepts and ideas on adult leadership Dempster and Lizzio (2007) agree that there is a growing interest in leadership from the young people themselves. Students appear to be leading themselves to leadership or at least appear to want to do so. The opportunity for students to have a voice seems to vary from school to school and is well explored by Dempster et al. (2011) in terms of "how listening to students is initiated, for what purpose and who controls the dialogue" (p. 17). As discussed, this study will attempt to explore the opportunity for a student voice in decision-making around leadership in schools. Mitra (2006) attempts to draw on qualitative data to

broaden the concept of distributed leadership to include student voice in decision-making in schools by tailoring the information towards students and focusing on the experience from their perspective. Such information is of real interest to the teachers in terms of broadening the leadership experience to a wider group of students. Increasing students' access to leadership opportunities is likely to be what young people are looking for.

McNae (2011) describes a new research agenda emphasising the importance of young people being involved in the planning of the own leadership development. There seems to be a gap in the literature around student voice and students having the opportunity to tell the school what, how and why they would like to experience leadership. This study intends to seek some of those answers from Year 10 students. The difference between adult and youth leadership phenomenon is highlighted in the findings of a commonly cited ten year participant-observer study of youth based organisations carried out by Roach et al. (1999). "Young people were found to emphasise 'the group, the situation and the moment' and accordingly to value 'mutual, shifting and emerging' types of leadership" (Dempster & Lizzio, 2007, p. 281).

Cassell, Huffaker, Tversky and Ferriman (2006) similarly report that elected form leaders (aged 9-16) typically used styles that focused on the goals and needs of the group and did not engage in traditional adult leadership styles of presenting ideas and using power-based language. It is in identifying these differences in the needs and goals between adults and youth in leadership contexts that we begin to see the importance of different models of leadership for each group, but recognising that common elements might exist. It would be interesting to design some of the research questions around leadership styles relating to peers' needs and goals. Whitehead (2009) voices a concern about the lack of strong empirical research into young people's understandings of leadership which includes students having the knowledge of how to access leadership. This provides the core research question of this study – exploring the gap in the body of knowledge around students' understanding of leadership and how to access it and hearing this from a student perspective. Much of the literature refers to the need for teachers to guide students. Dempster et al. (2011) refer to many teachers confusing guidance with telling; "'for' rather than 'with' the young people concerned" (p. 3). There can be issues in gaining access to true and authentic answers as it has been found that youth often say what they think adults would like to hear (Dempster & Lizzio, 2007). This constraint requires new approaches in practices when working with young people in order to truly hear their voice.

It is of importance to consider what happens to the leadership ability and promise of the students who are not selected as the designated leaders or who do not see themselves as leaders (Hackett & Lavery, 2011). These authors refer to the importance of listening to the student voice to identify themes and new thinking around student leadership. An increased opportunity for student voice may reveal how students see leadership and whether they consider it important to their education and whether they feel they have been given equitable opportunities to lead while at secondary school. The student voice is essential to gaining an authentic view of student leadership in this research study. The research questions and the methodology developed from this review of the literature reflect this.

Student Leadership in the Secondary School Context

Student leadership and student leadership development within secondary schools is a critical issue due to the implications it can have on the development of our young people and the dynamic nature of the possibilities it brings for the future (Archard, 2009; Hine, 2013; McNae, 2011). The secondary school is an excellent context for students to have the opportunity to experience leadership and the practices affecting access to leadership. "Outside the home, schools are where the majority of adolescent youth spend most of their time" (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2004, p.127). Today, students expect what Chapman, Toolsie-Worsnup and Dyck (2006) call "meaningful involvement in the educational process, engaging all students as stakeholders, recognising their unique knowledge, experience and perspective" (p. 1). It is interesting to consider what students term as meaningful; whether they feel their experiences in leadership in their school are meaningful and authentic.

The NZ Education Review Office released a report in June 2008 on Good Practice in Supporting and Engaging Senior Secondary Students (http://www.govt.nz/National Reports). The report explored five aspects of good practice for supporting and engaging senior secondary students: vision and goals, senior management involvement, high expectations, teacher leadership and responsibility and student leadership. There was a clear emphasis on leadership in the Report referring to "…the emphasis on high expectation and encouragement to succeed did not begin in the senior school but was an ongoing part of a student's experience from school entry" (p. 2). The Report highlights how important it is to hear what students think about the opportunities that have been offered to lead and how these opportunities are presented to

students. When discussing student leadership the report cites student leadership as a diverse concept: from coaching sport to cultural activities to school committees. It is interesting that the report only refers to student leadership in formal or assigned roles such as captains or class reps. The report goes on to provide a broader view, presenting the idea that the skills student leaders gain are important in their overall development while at school. More importantly, the skills gained through leadership are also identified as enabling students to develop the sorts of tacit knowledge and social skills that are important in life after school. If this is indeed true, then one has to question why the opportunity is offered to a restricted group of young people. Bowman (2013) comments that it is time middle school students stopped waiting for someone else to step up.

McNae (2011) describes the secondary school context as "diverse, dynamic and purportedly responsive to the needs of its students" (p. 36). She highlights that despite the fact that the school can be powerful in shaping young people's understanding of themselves and their impact on the world, there are few research studies which have focused on young people's thoughts, ideas, opinions and experiences with and about leadership. Dempster and Lizzio (2007) agree stating "there is little evidence that the concept of leadership has been adequately described from a student point of view" (p. 282). Bowman (2013) provides one of the few studies which explores the question of how students define or view leadership within a school context. Bowman posits that to lead others, middle school students need to have the belief that they matter and that they have the potential to make a positive impact on their peers and their school. This raises a number of questions, 'What do the students think about leadership, and the opportunities to lead in their school'? 'Is there an opportunity to have a positive impact on peers through leadership in smaller ways'? The answers to these questions will be taken into account in this research study as there appears to be a gap in the body of knowledge relating to finding out how students define leadership and how they respond to their understanding of it.

Education is about developing the skills, abilities, knowledge and understanding of students. In developing leadership capabilities, students require opportunities to access "the power of inclusion, and the power of language, and the power of shared interests, and the power of coalition" (Collins, 2005, p. 10). These learnings contribute to the development of the young person so they may take their place in the world. Part of this development is students having an authentic opportunity to speak up about their beliefs, concerns, needs, and aspirations. Hackett and Lavery (2011) criticise student leadership in schools; as they say often it is little

more than 'manipulation, decoration or tokenism'. This is further referred to in the work of Hart (1992) who believes students have little or no real participation as leaders in the secondary school context. Students can be left feeling dissatisfied and even used by the school. Lizzio et al. (2011) report the degree to which students are motivated to demonstrate citizenship behaviours in the school, including leadership, can be predicted most strongly by their level of identification with the school. There is a need to better understand how students identify with the school and whether they find their leadership experiences authentic, fulfilling or real and whether that encourages them to engage or not.

The New Zealand Curriculum

The New Zealand Curriculum (2007) developed by the Ministry of Education states "The New Zealand Curriculum is a clear statement of what we deem important in education" (p. 4). Considering that this curriculum and its achievement objectives are the framework for learning in New Zealand secondary schools it is necessary for this study to consider the place leadership opportunities might play in meeting these objectives and ultimately in the education of our young people.

The curriculum states that its vision is for young people who:
- will be creative, energetic, and enterprising;
- will seize the opportunities offered by new knowledge and technologies to secure a sustainable social, cultural, economic, and environmental future for our country;
- will work to create an Aotearoa New Zealand in which Māori and Pakeha recognise each other as full Treaty partners, and in which all cultures are valued for the contributions they bring;
- in their school years, will continue to develop the values, knowledge, and competencies that will enable them to live full and satisfying lives;
- will be confident, connected, actively involved, and lifelong learners.
  (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 8)

The curriculum sets out to develop young people who are confident, connected, actively involved, and lifelong learners. This connects strongly to leadership learning and the potential this learning has to add to education programmes in New Zealand secondary schools. Lodge (2005) argues that getting students involved in authentic leadership can contribute to school improvement and we need to determine "the degree to which students are regarded as being

active in participation in school life, and the purpose for which their voice is being used" (p. 125). This is validating and powerful for students, enhancing their motivation to be involved and to lead. If the involvement is active and purposeful, students will more likely feel listened to which may encourage them to connect more readily to leadership opportunities.

Informal Leadership and the Secondary School Context

The school is the primary social institution that transmits and grows beliefs, values, skills and behaviours associated with good citizenship (Boyask, McPhail, Kaur & O'Connell, 2008; Fischman & Haus, 2012). Harris (2004) points out that the concept of informal leadership can extend a school's perceptions of leadership and potentially engage significantly more school members in leadership activity. The informal opportunities are often times ignored, or seen as trivial or not leadership at all. Jones (2004) agrees, highlighting that formal student leadership based on having a position, has the capacity to only ever engage a small number of students. However, informal leadership activities and opportunities within classroom practices and school culture offer the potential for much wider student engagement. The idea of contribution through small activities can develop a student's value set and allow them a chance to step up and step out to help others or contribute in new ways which, in turn, may open up their perceptions of leadership. These activities may well connect to and deliver on the New Zealand Curriculum outcomes to develop confident, connected, actually involved lifelong learners.

Countless informal leadership opportunities are available on a daily basis within the school context such as: speaking out amongst your peer group, organising a sausage sizzle for charity, leading a kapa haka (cultural) item, taking hockey practice when the coach is away, tidying the PE shed or assisting the librarian. It may also include listening to a friend, or offering to help where help is needed. Informal and more casual leadership opportunities often require stepping up where decisions need to be made or where perhaps there is risk associated. Rosch and Kusel (2010) suggest creating a school wide team of staff and students to define leadership for them and their school and to outline practices to form a stronger and wider consensus as to what leadership is.

The majority of formal leadership positions in New Zealand secondary schools are available in Year 13, the final year of schooling. It seems that students often have to wait until then to begin leadership. In many schools, students seem to have minimal leadership opportunities available to them until they reach that senior and final year of school. This thinking limits access for a

number of students as formal position leadership can only ever engage a small minority of students (Jones, 2004). McGregor (2007) refers to *'process more than position'* and *'relationship more than role'* as being dominant themes in engaging students in leadership, suggesting that schools should focus on the process of leadership learning, rather than the positions of leadership. The opportunity to develop relationships and learn about people, including oneself, that leadership offers is perhaps more important than the role itself.

Some secondary schools are connecting to this thinking and offering leadership positions alongside many other experiences and activities where different students can experience leadership in small ways. Adolescents often feel they either *do* leadership or they *do not.* They have a leadership role or they do not. If they do not have a leadership role then they may not see leadership as anything to do with them. Despite the thought that leadership learning is congruent with many of the educational outcomes schools strive to achieve, it seems that some students can go through secondary school thinking leadership is not for them. "The problem is that most adults and adolescents rely on a definition of leadership that focuses on the transactional model of 'doing leadership tasks'" (Van Linden & Fertman, 1998, p. 16). In order to deeply understand leadership and to begin to widen the opportunity to lead, we need to consider the value of leadership as more than just 'doing tasks'. Leadership education may indeed be essential to the personal development and future success of our young people.

There appears to be some gaps in the body of knowledge around informal leadership and how young people understand it and experience it. Curtis (2008) believes this more informal approach to leadership could be described as a triangle of opportunity for students: from service to influence, to shared leadership. There are numerous studies exploring positional leadership in schools and the advantages it may provide for our young people, but very few studies exploring the broader leadership opportunities available in daily school life and beyond which may indeed grow leadership learning. To contribute to this conversation, the present study aims to explore small, less formal experiences as an opportunity for broadening how young people may view leadership and therefore potentially offering leadership to a wider group of young people.

Learning about Leadership

Why Bother?

The impetus for this research study is the need to explore views of, and access to, leadership from a student's viewpoint and whether leadership is in fact available to more than a selected few. An important underlying question is: do leadership experiences provide essential learning and develop essential skills for young people? Or, why bother to learn leadership? What does leadership offer young people?

Archard (2009) examined the public documents of 101 secondary schools in Australia and New Zealand researching the number of schools referring to student leadership as part of what they do in their education of young people. She found that 23% of the schools referred to their ability to develop student leadership skills and the positive effect that had on the students' futures. Although significant, it is interesting that the percentage was not higher given the potential. The role of educators in schools is to grow and develop the potential of the young people with whom they are working. This includes developing students' knowledge about problem solving, confidence, emotional intelligence and ethical understanding. These are amongst the 'soft skills' employers are increasingly asking for in their employees.

According to Cheung and Tsang (2002) there are ten characteristics of quality student leaders: leadership, empathy, attitude, dedication, energy, respect, service, honesty, ingenuity and passion. These are the 'soft skills', the humanistic skills, the skills that employers value and, more importantly, they are the skills needed to become a better human being. Schools deliver this soft skill learning in a variety of ways, both within the curriculum and outside of the curriculum. These are without doubt the qualities and skills required by student leaders, but they are surely the qualities we would like to see in all young people.

Funk (2002) refers to leadership development as essential in providing youth with the skills and understanding that is necessary to initiate positive change across peer groups, school, families and communities. Despite this, many schools and youth organisations struggle to offer youth or student leadership education or leadership opportunities to any but a selected few. The concept of youth leadership has largely been neglected in the literature (Karnes & Stephens, 1999). The secondary school setting is "…a powerful force in shaping young people's

understandings about themselves, their leadership practices and their actions in the world around them" (McNae (2011, p. 36). Secondary schools do seem to be increasingly aware of leadership as a learning tool and a vehicle for achieving educational outcomes and life preparation. Mitra (2006) describes leadership as a resource that has the potential in schools to provide opportunities for the students to achieve personal fulfilment, academic success and social gains.

Growing young people through setting a values-based learning platform with leadership experiences may make a considerable contribution to the development of young lives and be viewed as valuable by society as a whole. This idea accords with Keeffe and Andrews (2011) who present leadership as a way "to provide values education and to enhance the schools' public image" (p. 29). Leadership experiences have the potential to develop more positive relationships with peers, a stronger self-identification and stronger citizenship (Bowman, 2013). Hamilton and Hamilton (2004) discuss youth development principles as most central to any youth programme and as "a positive approach and universality, or the goal of all youth thriving; the importance of healthy relationships and challenging activities that endure and change over time" (p. 10). This reference to the opportunity for all youth to thrive is again a significant one to this research study. These authors do not refer to 'some' youth being provided with the opportunity to thrive and others being excluded from the experience, they confer that all youth should have the opportunity to thrive through experiences and challenges. Van Linden and Fertman (1998) state simply that employers are interested in adolescents who are leaders. If only some students have leadership opportunities those few are being given an unfair advantage over other students in terms of careers and future success. McNae (2011) agrees stating "…leadership opportunities acted as a dress rehearsal for events after they [the students] left school" (p. 46).

At their best, leadership development opportunities for school students encourage them to pursue an inner journey, not just to live more productive lives but also so they can have a greater life-giving impact on the world around them (Bowman, 2013). This is arguably education at its best. Leadership development and experiences ask people to step up and outside of their comfort zones and familiarity; to pursue an inner journey that will grow their thinking beyond themselves. Some interesting questions can arise around how young people view these leadership experiences: do they value them, if so *why*, or if not, *why not*? Also of significance

is the notion of whether young people are consulted about their leadership learning and whether the opportunities are congruent with their needs and wants.

Propp's (2007) landmark work has developed an understanding of the need to find out from the students themselves about their beliefs, desires and needs around leadership. Learning which focuses on the development of self-identity and self-worth may well strengthen adolescents' personal growth and should indeed be accessible to all adolescents. Kouzes and Posner (2016) explain that learning to be a leader enhances your feelings of self-worth and meaningfulness. Bonner, Jennings, Marbley and Brown (2008) agree that the "importance of self-knowledge is a potentially important component in the development of youth leadership" (p. 97). These scholars allude to the challenge for those working with youth, asking those who develop programmes in youth leadership to broaden their thinking to include all young people. Ultimately, mastering leadership goes hand in hand with mastering oneself, so much of developing leadership is developing the self (Bowman, 2013). This opens up the traditional views of leadership relating to a position and shifts the focus to self-leadership for all young people.

Accessible or Not Accessible?
Emerging literature on student leadership is identifying that positional leadership, the traditional view, limits 'other' opportunities to lead that may exist. McNae (2011) discusses student views as being influenced by what exists in the school already, the way the school presents leadership to its students. Accessibility relates initially to the students' understanding of what leadership is within the school context. Additionally, accessibility to leadership relates to students' motivation for, and interest in, leadership and what they perceive they may gain personally or how it may add to their skills toolset. Cheung and Tsang (2002) make the observation that where students lack the power to influence their own environment; psychological needs are unlikely to be met. This strengthens the case that students need to feel that they are being listened to, understood and responded to and that the leadership is meaningful and useful. Cheung and Tsang (2002) explain that this is sometimes how students find alternative ways to meet their needs; to influence their environment through more socially acceptable behaviour. Leadership opportunities can provide a positive harness for meeting these needs.

Today's young people face numerous challenges which require a different approach than in the past. "Among the challenges to be faced are an uncertain transition to work, the rising cost of higher education, family breakdown and isolation from parents, the implications of cultural influences" (Hodder, 2007, p. 180). Hodder identifies that self-leadership and the character-based qualities, developed through leadership learning, help build a foundation for facing life challenges. Unlike in past decades, it is unlikely a young person today will 'learn leadership' in an unstructured, ad hoc manner. "Back then, we had civics courses, and neighbourhoods and community centres. Where is a child going to learn leadership skills today?" (Fish, 2011, p. 82). Today, less of our young people are involved in the civics development provided in the past by scouts, guides, churches, and other character focused organisations. The contemporary school context is therefore likely to be the primary place where all youth are present. Therefore, what responsibility do schools assume in providing leadership learning? On the flip side, what are students' expectations of schools in terms of leadership education and does it belong to them individually or not?

Middle school educator Bowman (2013) identifies the challenge as creating leadership development opportunities that use the "…natural propensity of students to co-operate in communities of engagement – to feel fully seen, fully listened to, and fully trusted to contribute" (p. 61). This author further identifies the leadership dynamic in middle school as having young people who are "engaging and engaged, connecting and connected, and supporting and supported" (p. 61). This requires educators to critically consider their provision of leadership, the outcomes they are offering and to whom they are offering leadership opportunities. Schools consider part of their role to be in the development of good citizens and that schools are places where youth "acquire character and the habits of responsibility" (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2004, p.127). These researchers refer to the work by Stukas, Clary and Snyder (1999) which identifies the positive effects service learning has on self-enhancement, understanding self and the world, value expressions, career development and social expectations. These factors are highlighted in the education outcomes in secondary schools, yet some schools struggle to provide them outside of the regular curriculum. Potentially leadership learning can bridge the gap, particularly through the provision of service learning.

Given the evidence that leadership learning is beneficial to all students, schools need to consider how they are offering leadership and to whom and, in particular, whether they are

offering leadership positions to a small number of students only. Additionally, is a school aware of, and responding to, student leadership and how students want it?

Leadership Opportunities

As this literature review is highlighting, providing all students with an opportunity to experience leadership will benefit more young people than models which focus on a privileged few. "By the time the students reached Year 12, many had become stand out leaders characterised by a quality of humility as students who were 'quietly getting on with it'" (Hackett & Lavery, 2011, p. 59). The literature shows that teachers and schools often have a picture of the 'ideal student'. "…we need to distinguish between our imposed ideals and emergent realities, namely studying student leaders as 'who and what we would like them to be' as opposed to 'who and what they are'" (Dempster & Lizzio, 2007, p. 282). Much of the literature focuses on student leaders and their potential rather than the whole student population and their potential. Opening up access to leadership lies to some extent in the teacher's basket (Lizzio et al., 2011).

Much of the research refers to the importance of providing student leadership development programmes within secondary schools (Archard, 2009; Hine, 2014; McNae, 2011). Throughout the literature scholars identify the importance of leadership initiatives and opportunities, however, there seems to be little research peeling back the layers of how to access these opportunities while at school or whether these opportunities could be broadened. This is particularly true from a student's perspective as there also appears to be little research using the student voice to discover their feelings and opinions on their ability to access leadership experiences and opportunities.

Dempster and Lizzio (2007) point to the work by Schneider, Ehrhart and Ehrhart (2002) who discuss the strong correlations between peer nominations of leaders and teacher ratings of these leaders. It seems there is often a predictable pattern about who gets chosen for assigned positions and who does not. This thinking refers to teachers choosing the students who they see as leaders or perhaps recycling the same students for the roles and tasks because it may be easier or less risky. There is however a strong theme throughout the literature that "leadership belongs to everybody" (Hackett & Lavery, 2011, p. 58). Bowman (2013) puts it simply as

"leadership is everyone's responsibility. No one has permission to stand aside" (p. 59). The overarching message to middle school students is that it is time for all the heroes to go home and for leadership to become about all young people as tomorrow's leaders (Bowman, 2013). It seems that no one has permission to ask some students to stand aside.

If nobody has 'permission to stand aside' then are those who lead and deliver leadership experiences in our schools providing opportunities for every student? "Leadership for middle school students should provide a lens through which to view one's world; it is not a checklist of things to do" (Bowman, 2013, p. 63). This notion moves our thinking away from leadership as a role. This lens provides an opportunity to broaden a student's world view through the leadership experience; it is so much broader than a list of tasks.

Acts of Service

In considering the place of schools in the development of students, Hackett and Lavery (2011) identified that schools that offered opportunities for service across the student body tended to help a greater majority of students to 'step up' and develop their confidence through leading. This developmental process allowed students to slowly learn leadership through acts of service, both formally and informally. The concept of acts of service as a form of leadership or leadership as an act of service broadens the lens of leadership.

There is some literature which provides insight into the value of getting students involved in leadership through acts of service and small experiences which open up accessibility and allow young people to uncover their potential. (Hackett & Lavery, 2011). Bowman (2013) comments, "These ubiquitous social interactions also serve to reveal both the promise and power of creating vibrant leadership connections in the smallest of every-day, ordinary moments" (p. 60). Conant and Norgaard (2012) present the view that middle school students must find a successful method of making sense of this constant stream of interactions. Students need to stop viewing interactions as interruptions and begin seeing them as opportunities to lead and learn. It seems they need educators to help them to connect to these experiences and see them as opportunities for growth through leadership and that actually leadership opportunities are occurring in a variety of ways in various contexts all around them. Students need help to be able to understand that by getting involved in these experiences they may grow themselves, their skillset and their future.

Hine (2014) summarises one school's approach as teachers telling the students that they are all leaders through helping and serving others. In his study with middle school students, Hine notes that students responded well when "an emphasis was placed by the school on 'unbadged' leadership helping to 'reinforce the notion that everybody is called to fulfil leadership in some capacity" (p. 92). It is this concept of 'everybody has the potential to lead' which is the central focus of this study. Its aim is to broaden the thinking in schools around what, who and how leadership occurs and to find out where student thinking is, in relation to this notion.

Challenges

There is some evidence that a degree of negative attitude exists amongst students about leadership which limits their engagement. This may come from the roles and tasks that teachers often ask of students and how students might view these requests. McNae (2011) reports that "not all views of leadership [from students) were positive. Leadership was also perceived as doing jobs for teachers…" (p. 47). This results in some students avoiding leadership as they perceive it as fulfilling mundane tasks which take up their time. Some students avoid being involved in this extra 'stuff' as they find it adds to their load in terms of commitment.

Curtis (2008) believes that "sometimes youth want to participate more than they're prepared to participate. Training bridges the gap" (p. 60). Young people may want to step up and take responsibility but lack of preparation or lack of understanding of leadership may mean they do not know where to start. There appears to be a need for leadership education and for mentorship to connect young people to leadership. Students may struggle to understand the difference between formal and informal leadership or to find the confidence to explore leadership experiences beyond the formal positions they know exist in the school. To them, positions and roles may well be leadership, no more than that. Through observing teachers modelling and suggesting all sorts of opportunities to step forward into leadership students may well take a first step.

When left to their own devices, most teenagers have no innate confidence in their leadership ability (Grothaus, 2004). "Adults must help young people see themselves as leaders" (Van Linden & Fertman, 1998, p. 19). The motivational challenge to lead can, at a personal level, be understood as enhancing leadership self-efficacy. However, we need to be ensured that students feel safe and encouraged to entertain the possibility that 'I could be a leader' (Lizzio & Wilson, 2009). Teachers are the 'adult leads' in the school context and accordingly the responsibility

of opening up access to leadership experiences most often lies with them. Lizzio et al. (2011) maintain the quality of the teacher-student relationship is pivotal to students being able to access leadership. More often than not students develop good relationships with some teachers and not with others. This can mean that some students will have greater access to certain opportunities. Ultimately, mastering leadership is essentially the same as mastering yourself (Bowman, 2013; Kouzes & Posner 2011).

With relation to self-knowledge, Bowman (2013) describes middle school students as not realising that they have power and suggesting that they could access it if they just knew where to find it. He also states that power is all around, but it is often not visible or obvious. Some young people may find power frightening, or they may not understand it well enough to know how to access it, or they might not understand the relationship it has to leadership. It may be that young people see power as being bossy or being the dominant person in a group and that exhibiting power is challenging their peers and may seem negative in their eyes. Consequently, they may avoid it. As Hine (2014) notes, we want students to grow and part of facilitating that growth is to create a culture where it is acceptable to make mistakes.

It is about balance; non-authentic power will mean youth will fail. Equally, if youth are burdened by too much responsibility they will also fail (Curtis, 2008). Curtis describes youth as sometimes wanting to participate more than they are prepared to participate. If students feel that they really have no power in making decisions or in implementing changes in the school then they may fail to connect to leadership. However, by loading them with too much responsibility then the burden of that responsibility may turn many young people away from leadership. This is where education in leadership bridges the gap; it prepares and engages participants to consider leadership and teaches them about the use, and misuse, of power.

If we think of teachers as both leaders and learners then Kouzes and Posner (2015) capture it well in their statement: "Great leaders are great learners. They stay open to new information and to the ideas of others, and they're not afraid to experiment and to make mistakes" (p. 5). This highlights the relationship between leadership and learning and the challenge for teachers to allow students to make mistakes in order to grow. If youth are to develop a commitment to an ethic of service then adults need to model this ethic in line with values-based leadership (Tate, 2003). Adults in schools modelling servant leadership is the most effective form of

teaching it. Teachers then are the leaders of the leaders and as such hold the keys to developing opportunities for students to access leadership.

Lizzio et al. (2011) further describe that students' sense of identification predicts their willingness to engage in leadership in their school, not their level of achievement motivation. Cheung and Tsang (2002) refer to schools as having a 'paradoxical role' of being both a source of stress for students and a source of relief for students. They refer to the solution as being about creating a balance for students between the stress of the challenge, which can motivate, and the stress caused by the fear of failure, which can inhibit. Schools must assist young people to build a bridge between the challenge, and the fear of the challenge, if they are serious about growing access to leadership.

Van Linden and Fertman (1998) explain that adolescents fear 'bossing' others and this deters them from an interest in leadership because of what others will think. They may simply feel it is too much for them with all the other pressures they have to add an additional pressure of how their peers might respond to them. This risk may deter a number of young people connecting in any way with leadership. Adolescence, a time of self-exploration and formation of identity, may also inhibit students from connecting to leadership through conventional methods. The adolescent student fears what their peers may think of them.

Developing Youth through Leadership Learnings

In considering the role of leadership in developing youth, Fish (2011) believes that developing the competencies of our students becomes a question of finding and applying the right pedagogy. Competencies may be thought of as skills, characteristics, abilities or perhaps more accurately 'assets' when describing the development of young people. Benson (2006) challenges all parts of the community to rise to the responsibility of ensuring our young generation grows up healthy, successful and caring. Following this logic, leadership learning and experiences need to be cast widely in order to allow all students to be involved, otherwise we risk missing the potential of a large number of young people (Fish, 2011). To function optimally in future workplace contexts, students need opportunities to learn to create cultures of trust through transparent and integrity based behaviour without necessarily having to have formal hierarchical structures (Friedman, 2006). Leading others through service has the potential to offer these experiences and thus to develop skillsets for the future.

Understanding leadership is a starting point for students to increase their interest and confidence in leading. Fish (2011) states that "once that happens, the output is the most critical for change. If students can see it's making a difference they are more likely to continue to engage" (p. 83). A core component of encouraging engagement is, as Lizzio et al. (2011) describe, making students feel "safe, confident and encouraged" (p. 91). McNae (2011) points out that the students in her study described leadership as "working for the good of others and creating benefits for the school community" (p. 42). It appears that understanding why they are involved and the potential for positive outcomes attracts students to engaging with leadership. Alternatively, if students feel unsafe, under confident or disengaged, they are very unlikely to continue to engage. Fertman and Van Linden (1999) explain that similar to character education "leadership development is for all students" (p. 9). When young people become involved in civic activities that are relevant to them, they seem to feel more confident to work on bringing about change. (Banaji & Buckingham, 2010). It is the idea of feeling involved in something that young people can relate to that increases the confidence to engage. Lerner, Dowling and Anderson (2003) identify young people as resources on which the future must be built. They ask how we can ensure that youth realise and act upon their potential to contribute to self, others and community.

In 1990, the Search Institute released a much used and publicised framework of adolescent assets (40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents), indicators of the likelihood a young person will grow up successfully. The framework identifies a set of skills, experiences, relationships and behaviours and looks at correlations between young people's levels of assets and diverse outcomes (https://www.search-institute.org/). The framework is comprised of both external and internal assets. External assets are divided into support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time. Internal assets are divided into commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. Arguably there are aspects to this framework which one could argue have changed, moved, broadened or been redefined through the course of time. There is debate as to whether it is possible to measure 'life readiness' as young people move on from secondary school by using the Asset Framework. However, the framework does provide a guide for initiating thinking about adolescent development. Through this work the Search Institute has identified a number of 'gateway assets', which open the gate to success (https://www.search-institute.org/).

Furthermore, if we are going to ask young people their opinions and place them in positions of leadership then adults need to listen. Banaji and Buckingham (2010) conclude that young people are repeatedly encouraged to 'have their say' but they found "little evidence that people in positions of power are listening in a systematic and respectful manner - or, if they are, that they are doing anything in response" (p. 23). Of course, there are some secondary schools in New Zealand doing an excellent job 'listening in a systemic and respectful manner' to young people. These schools could be used as case study examples in the use of student voice to lead change in schools, particularly where other schools are struggling to find avenues for a student voice. "To invent a form of student leadership that has student fulfilment, academic success and social advantage at its core, our first task is to understand student leadership as students see it" (Keeffe & Andrews, 2011, p. 32). To work out how to grow students and to provide an environment that does this then we have to understand the students themselves. Any model or framework within the school context must understand young people and their needs and wants, from their perspective. It is important for adults to learn the fine balance between being supportive and getting out of the way (Curtis, 2008).

Hampton's Model of Youth Civic Engagement defines three stages of effective participation for young people in civic contribution and leadership and is useful in the current study: 1) projects, tasks and service; 2) input and consultation; and 3) shared leadership (Curtis, 2008). These three stages have much potential to contribute to an accessible student leadership framework for schools, from the simpler and more easily accessed tasks available daily in school settings and moving to opportunities for young people to have input and be connected. If we dig deeper underneath the 'doing of tasks' to the reasons for doing the tasks, we can connect this to the opportunity that leadership gives to develop assets in young people. Curtis (2008) refers to the building of a platform of shared leadership experiences amongst young people, shared leadership developed through students working alongside teachers and other adults to make collective decisions.

Mitra (2006) suggests a three-tiered pyramid of 'student voice' where, at the entry level, students share opinions or problems and discuss potential solutions. At the next level of the pyramid young people work with adults to address problems and, at the peak of the pyramid, young people take the lead to bring about change. This may be a simple model which could provide a way to build increased accessibility to leadership. This model may also connect very well with the three stages of Hampton's Model of Youth Civic Engagement.

Young people are often capable of more than we give them credit for. It is important to guide them and ensure boundaries are understood while, at the same time, making sure that young people have a voice loud and clear voice. "When I (the youth) am handed responsibility, I feel as if people trust me. I may make a mistake, but in the end, I feel I made a difference (Curtis, 2008, p. 54). It is becoming increasingly important to our young people to make a difference; to contribute to society in a socially impactful manner. "Adults have to trust that youth are capable young leaders. We can do it all with them, not for them". (Curtis, 2008, p. 28). A leadership disposition for middle school students is compelling: individuals lead their own journey of significance every day in how they listen and speak to themselves and others and how they inspire others to pursue goals for a purpose higher than themselves (Bowman, 2013). This reference to self-leadership being through our own journey and evolving into inspiring others to pursue goals greater than themselves provides a key for youth leadership development. We have a responsibility to our young people to accept this as the case and to use this knowledge as a platform for pushing opportunities in leadership to the next level for our youth. Bowman (2013) also offers that "leadership responsibility in a globally interconnected, interdependent world must be shouldered by everyone, right now" (p. 59). By encouraging young people to take up the responsibility of leadership and providing them with leadership learning opportunities, we are better preparing them for a collaborative and collective approach to their world.

Conclusion and Research Intent

> Leadership is not about position or title. It's not about organisation, power or authority. It's not about fame or wealth. It's not about the family you are born into…and it's definitely not about being a hero. Leadership is about relationships, about credibility and about what you do. And everything you will ever do as a leader is based on one audacious assumption: that you matter (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 329).

This literature review has highlighted some interesting theories, concepts, findings, assumptions and considerations around the leadership opportunities and experiences for and of young people. Emerging from the student leadership literature, there appears to be some different views in how leadership is understood, how it is presented, and who gets to experience it in our secondary schools. Moreover, a gap in the literature has been identified relating to understanding how students themselves view leadership and their access to it; including whether they choose to experience it, or whether they are given an opportunity to experience it

(Dempster & Lizzio, 2007; Holdsworth, 2005; Mitra, 2005; Ricketts, & Dudd, 2002; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003).

There are five themes which have helped shape the research questions and the research design. These five themes have also informed key headings for the Literature Review: **More Than a Position; The Concept of Servant Leadership; The Voice of Students; The Place of Informal Leadership; and Developing Leaders through Learning Opportunities.** Each of these themes, in turn, helps to provide a foundation for understanding access to leadership experiences for secondary school students. There are certainly leadership experiences available in our schools, however, much of the literature focuses on position based formal leadership and the tasks associated with it. There is little research around a broader definition of student leadership which includes informal experiences.

The question of accessibility arises throughout the literature under several key concepts: the confidence of young people, the understanding young people have of leadership, their fear of whether they can 'do it' or not and the need for a student voice in the development of leadership experiences. Nonetheless, the central focus of this study is young people's access to leadership opportunities. This is reflected in the articulation of the research intent set out below.

Research Aim

To investigate:

Student perceptions of accessibility to leadership within the secondary school context.

Research Questions

1. How do students perceive and understand leadership?
2. What do students say about access to leadership opportunities in the secondary school context?
3. How can leadership opportunities be more accessible for more students in secondary schools?

CHAPTER 3
METHODS

Overarching Research Design

A research design is considered to be a template used to translate the research intent of a project (Armour & Macdonald, 2012). A key part of the overall research design begins with the ontological assumptions which, in turn, give rise to epistemological assumptions, followed by methodological considerations (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). In this way, the research design is multi-layered; each set of assumptions and considerations fits within the next. Epistemological assumptions refer to knowledge, from where it stems and how it is communicated to others (Tolich & Davidson, 2011). The ontological assumptions address how people experience the world differently and with different perceptions (Maykut & Morehouse, 2000). From an epistemological view, the knowledge gained from the review of the literature and the researcher's beliefs guided the development of the research questions. Ontologically, the present study acknowledges the diverse understanding that participants have of the world and the understandings they bring to the research questions (Armour & Macdonald, 2012). This chapter explains and justifies the philosophical considerations and overarching research design chosen for the study before specifying, participant selection, data collection methods, data analysis, ethics and limitations.

Education research, which relates directly to this study, falls into the category of social science research as it focuses on people, organisations and interactions (Mutch, 2013). A paradigm is the overarching assumptions in the research within which qualitative and quantitative techniques reside. Armour and Macdonald (2012) refer to the importance of the applied field in education and how the results of qualitative research in education can genuinely affect the lives of people. With this opportunity to have an influence on people's lives, the research paradigm chosen for this study is both constructivist and interpretivist (Bryman, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Armour and Macdonald (2012) aptly describe it by saying that for the interpretivist, reality is constructed by the individual and their experiences. This relates well to secondary school students and their lived experiences of leadership and their real and perceived sense of accessibility to it. Knowledge is viewed by the researcher as emergent within qualitative design and, as such, is socially constructed during the research process. There is

then an attempt to develop the research through understanding the lived experiences of the participants (Mertens, 2005). Constructionism is an ontological position that proposes that social phenomena and their meanings are constantly being formed (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Leadership as a social phenomenon evolves and changes so a constructionist approach will likely result in the most useful data. The general aim of a constructivist-interpretive paradigm is to reconstruct and understand knowledge and experience through the eyes of the participants (Bryman, 2008; Ferkins, 2007). The interpretive paradigm systematically analyses people's intentions, interests and, most interestingly, their behaviours (Tolich & Davidson, 2011). The interpretive paradigm, upon which qualitative research methods are founded, is well suited to the research of leadership in a secondary school where gaining meaning through the lens of secondary school students, rather than the lens of the teachers, is valued.

Supplementary to capturing the participant perspective, a constructivist-interpretive paradigm also involved multiple realities, the 'relativist ontology'. Thus, the notion of co-created construction of knowledge between researcher and participant was a key epistemological assumption of the paradigm chosen for the present study, referred to as 'subjective epistemology' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This construction of knowledge during the research was important in the interviews where a questioning line was followed to uncover particular 'gems' from the students' perception. Finally, a naturalist set of methodological procedures that is research that takes place within the natural world, is also an important aspect of the constructivist-interpretive paradigm (Bryman, 2008). The questionnaires and interviews took place in each of the case study schools in as usual an environment as possible to gain as authentic data as possible. Qualitative methods were applied in the study based on the assumption that reality could only be constructed through interaction between the researcher and participants (Mertens, 2005).

Patton (2002) identifies qualitative research as an interpretive form of social inquiry focusing on understanding phenomena through accessing the meaning participants place on them. The social inquiry in this research was achieved through probing into the understanding Year 10 students have of leadership and their access to it. Part of this social inquiry was the traditional structures of student leadership within secondary schools and students' attitudes towards these approaches. A qualitative approach was particularly suited to the study; the research questions of this study provided an opportunity to explore and analyse the meaning students place on leadership and their ability to access leadership (Armour & Macdonald, 2012). Qualitative

research has many forms: observation, participation, interviewing, and ethnography; in most forms serving as a metaphor for knowledge, power and 'truth' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In order to support this qualitative framework, numbers and percentages were also derived from some aspects of the questionnaires to enrich and contribute to the findings.

A Case Study in Two Secondary Schools

For the purpose of this study a case study approach has been chosen using two case study schools with interviews as the primary method of data collection, supported by a questionnaire and document review. Armour and Macdonald (2012) summarise this research approach by posing three questions: "What kind of strategies might we use to support young people as active participants in the research process? What methods can best help us to help young people to share their experiences, opinions, feelings and perspectives? How might we conduct research with young people which engages them and effects change that impacts positively on their lived experiences" (p. 121). Strategies to support participants to be active in the research process formed a key part of the methodology for this study. This included critically analysing the way the questions for the study were worded and designed, how the room was set up for the interviews and how the participants were welcomed into the room. In this way, the focus was on the participants. Capturing the participants' authentic, lived and real experiences in leadership was the aim of the questioning, interview strategies and data analysis which sat within a case study setting.

Armour and Macdonald (2012) refer to case studies as offering contextually grounded and well detailed accounts of happenings in a holistic manner. Gathering the detailed experiences of the young participants has been the focus of the data collection within this study. Case studies are most commonly used within an organisation with intensive examination of phenomenon within the setting (Bryman, 2008). Two Year 9-13 case study schools were selected as data collection sites: one girls' secondary school and one co-educational secondary school in Auckland, New Zealand. The case studies were used as a method of building theory; a research strategy which focused on "understanding the dynamics present within single settings" (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 534), in this case a school setting. With this in mind, there is a description of the school context for each of the case study schools included in Chapter 4 Findings and Discussion to help us understand the context within which the leadership experiences have occurred. Yin (2003) refers to case studies as involving either single or multiple cases, and at various levels of analysis. He defines case study research as empirical inquiry that explores phenomenon within

real-life contexts where the boundaries between the phenomenon and the situation or contexts are not clearly evident (Yin, 2003).

This study has explored the boundaries within which leadership exists for students in the secondary school context. Does it exist in the classroom or outside of the classroom? For some of the students the question was whether personal leadership experiences existed at all. Given that the phenomenon of leadership is difficult to capture means that new knowledge could potentially change the boundaries of how it is perceived and approached by young people. The lack of consensus around what leadership is causes confusion about how leadership should look and be practised which can lead to inconsistencies in understanding, or people interpreting that they cannot be leaders (Rosch & Kusel, 2010; Van Linden & Fertman, 1998). The research questions, therefore, have become even more important if we are to dig deeper into the students' understanding of how they perceive leadership and why they have developed particular beliefs about leadership within the school context. The researcher was interested in the students' perceptions of leadership; this study therefore used a mix of data collection methods with interviews and questionnaires to explore the questions presented in the research.

Bryman and Bell (2007) raise the concern of external validity or generalisability of case studies, questioning how a single case study or even two case studies can be representative or apply generally to other cases. Of course, the answer is that they cannot be generally representative and it is important that researchers have an awareness of generalising data. When analysing data from case studies there is data from 'within-case' and data from 'cross-case' patterns. In this research the intention was to select the dimensions upon which the research was focusing and then to look for cross-case similarities and themes (Baxter & Jack, 2008). If findings were similar in both schools then it potentially raises the validity of the data collected across a group of one hundred Year 10 secondary school students across two contexts or case study sites through drawing analysis and conclusions from the emergent themes. Critics of the case study method doubt the use of a small number of cases has any reliability or use in other contexts (Armour & Macdonald, 2012). This has been firmly kept in mind and in order to gain a diverse set of responses across a broader student body, two quite different schools in terms of culture, students, gender balance, structure, decile rating and approach to leadership were selected.

Case studies are "limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the researcher" (Merriam, 1998, p. 42). When dealing with young people in a school one must be very aware of their sensitivity

and work with integrity including demonstrating an understanding of their age, their context, their potential fears and their interests and needs. The ethics section of this chapter addresses the ethical issues which may arise when undertaking research with children or adolescents. What distinguishes a case study according to Bryman (2008) "is that the researcher is usually concerned to elucidate the unique features of the case. This is known as an idiographic approach" (p. 54). Ferkins (2007) suggests that in case study research it is quite common to employ multiple case studies to establish the generality and validity of the findings.

By using two case studies in two different secondary schools, one single sex and one co-educational setting, different decile ratings and different communities whilst also having similar features such as being situated in Auckland City the researcher aimed to increase the reliability and validity of the findings. To increase the reliability and validity of the findings and to provide as broad a perspective as possible, the researcher chose two distinctly different secondary schools situated in Auckland City. One is single sex, the other is co-educational; they have different decile ratings and comprise different communities. To achieve this three sources of data were collected:

1. Self-completion questionnaires
2. Semi-structured interviews
3. Review of documents to establish the nature of the context

Before detailing the data collection methods, the next section explains and justifies the choice of participants involved in this study.

Participant Selection

The two case study schools were selected from within Auckland City; one in the central city and one in east Auckland. To ensure confidentiality at the request of each of the schools they will be referred to throughout the study as School A and School B. These two schools were chosen because they presented two different contexts in which to explore student leadership and to give as broad a perspective as possible within the confines of this study. Both school contexts are described in Chapter 4 Findings and Discussion. School A is a single sex girls' school with a high number of Pacific students and with a strong multi-cultural environment. School A has no formal junior leadership programme. School B has a high percentage of New Zealand European students and provides a junior leadership programme available by selection.

Additionally, both schools were able to be readily accessed for the research through the Associate Principal; both schools were willing to be involved in the study and felt it was beneficial to their students (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The two selected schools both had a school wide 'teacher lead' for student leadership; the Associate Principal in each school had a desire to develop students as leaders. New Zealand has a method of categorising schools based on a Decile System indicating the extent to which the school draws their students from lower socio-economic communities. Decile One schools form the ten percent of schools with the most students from low socio-economic communities (https://www.education.govt.nz). The Government Education website confirms that a school's decile is not an indication of the overall social mix or of the quality of education, highlighting that deciles are related to the funding available to assist with barriers and issues (https://www.education.govt.nz). Each of the Associate Principals signed the Consent for Ethics Approval (Appendix A) and provided the contact for the data collection process, including making the initial contact with the school staff and students in relation to the research study.

Dempster and Lizzio (2007) point out that there is little evidence in the literature that the concept of leadership has been adequately explored with a student voice. This study has focused on attempting to draw from an authentic student voice, therefore context and participant selection was important. The selection of participants for the study began with the Associate Principal in each of the schools offering the opportunity to be involved in the questionnaires to the form class teachers at Year 10 level. The first two form teachers to volunteer their class in each school were selected and all of the students in these two classes completed the questionnaires. This resulted in a total of 100 questionnaire participants in Year 10; 50 in School A and 50 in School B, all of whom were 14 or 15 years old and in their second year of secondary school education in the New Zealand Education System. The 100 students in the four classes within the two schools completed the questionnaire and were then offered the opportunity to take part in the interviews. The students self-selected to participate in the interviews by completing the questionnaire and then volunteering when the form teacher asked for those who would be interested in taking part in a thirty-minute interview. Whilst this potentially creates a limitation in the interview data, as those who volunteered are more likely to be leaders or, at least to be interested in leadership, it was important ethically that students got to choose whether they would like to be involved or not. Six students were chosen from the volunteers for the interviews in each school; the first six to offer to participate. These twelve students took home the Consent Form for parental or guardian consent (see Appendix B).

The researcher had some initial assumptions around research participants which emerged and evolved, affecting and forming the methodology of the research. For example, initially it was intended to use Year 12 secondary school students (aged 16-17 years) as participants with the assumption that they would have a deeper understanding and experience of leadership than more junior students and that they would be able to articulate this understanding. After consideration and anecdotal discussion with teachers and students, Year 10 students were chosen. Teacher feedback indicated that schools were keen to get students started in leadership earlier while they are juniors, in order to give them more exposure to learning about leadership and with leadership experiences and therefore it was important that the research captured this. A second example of an assumption that the researcher made with relation to the participants was the feeling that students would not understand leadership outside of a formal role and so the research questions were designed carefully to ascertain the students understanding of leadership in both a formal role and in its broader informal sense. And thirdly, the researcher predicted that it would be best to speak with teachers as well as students in the research. Teachers are able to paint the school context in which the experience has occurred from their perspective, however, from both the literature review and anecdotally it became clear that there are already many studies which have gained teacher perspectives.

There is an identified need for more studies capturing the students' voice (Dempster & Lizzio, 2007; McNae, 2011). Therefore, student voice became the focus of the data collection for the study and gaining feedback from the students became the focus of the methodology. An additional assumption was that students would 'open up and talk' more freely if there were two students present in the interviews rather than one. If there was one student they might feel awkward and it might be difficult for them to speak (Armour & Macdonald, 2012). To gain as much authentic data as possible in as inclusive and comfortable environment as possible, the interviews were timetabled for two students to be present.

Data Collection

Bryman (2008) describes triangulation as the use of more than one method or source of data in the study of social phenomenon so that findings may be cross-checked. In this study the use of self-completion questionnaires and semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity to cross-check data in combination with the school website for each of the case study schools

(document review). Armour and Macdonald (2012) point out that triangulation can be used to promote the credibility of qualitative research; by triangulating researchers are less likely to draw unwarranted conclusions. This study used a triangulated approach drawing on three sources of data, "which are cross-checked with one another to limit the chances of bias in the methods and sources employed" (Grix, 2004, p. 132).

As noted above, there were three sources of data collected from the two case study schools:

1. Self-completion questionnaires (n=100)
2. Semi-structured interviews in pairs (n=6 with 12 interviewees)
3. Review of documents to establish the nature of the context (n=4)

The two primary sources of data were the questionnaires and the interviews, as the focus was on gaining a strong student voice in the findings, however, it was important to provide a contextual understanding of the school in which to place the findings. This was gained through each of the schools' websites which contain exerts from the Educational Review Office (ERO) Reports. Each of the three methods is explained fully below.

Self-Completion Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a method of conducting a survey aiming to gather quantitative data to generalise and relate to a population (Mutch, 2013). The review of literature identified the need for a student voice when gathering data around student leadership and the gap in the number of studies gathering data from a student perspective. Therefore, it was important that the questions were designed to best derive the data from student conversations and feedback. In acknowledging the importance of students having the confidence to speak authentically, Armour and Macdonald (2012) advise engaging young people in research methods that put them at ease or where the questions are designed with them in mind. Mutch (2013) refers to questionnaires being useful when you "want to study particular groups…because you want to generalise about them…or use their responses or comparisons for development" (p. 114). It was the latter purpose, to explore and analyse the responses to contribute to the development of student leadership in secondary schools, which drove the choice of a questionnaire for the present study. The questionnaire was used to guide the interview design and to support the interview responses. In an emergent approach, the researcher looked for common trends and themes in the questionnaire data which provided a lead for some of the questioning in the interviews which contributed to answering the key research questions. The Questionnaire for

the study contained ten short answer questions which took approximately ten to twelve minutes to complete. (Appendix C)

A Likert Scale was chosen for the questionnaire, keeping in mind that scales can be nominal, ordinal, interval or ratio (Bryman & Bell, 2007). In a Likert Scale respondents show how much they agree with a statement using a continuum with a number of selected choices available (Mutch, 2013). The questions in this questionnaire used a four response scale of strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree. Armour and Macdonald (2012) offer guidance about the questionnaire design, suggesting that the first few questions should be easy, with more complex thought provoking questions presented later in the questionnaire. They suggest short, precise questions that are easy to understand; this study focused on these factors in the questionnaire design. Mutch (2013) suggests keeping the questions simple, being aware of language and literacy barriers in order to gain the information you need. The researcher thought about the choice of open questions versus the choice of closed questions, as this changes the complexity of the questions and the depth of the data analysis. Closed questions provide already determined answers with check boxes for participants to agree or disagree (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Armour and Macdonald (2012) describe these as easy and useful for the start of a questionnaire with the added advantage of being easy for analysis from a researcher's perspective. Open questions are more explorative with the ability to dig out new thinking and ideas (Armour & Macdonald, 2012). The earlier statements in this questionnaire were kept simple with statements such as 'I would consider myself a leader' and 'have you had any formal leadership roles…if yes, name them'. Being factual the latter question was easy to gain a response from.

From Question 4 onwards, the questions were more open, requiring broader thinking and opinion. The questionnaire started with closed questions which required a circled response; ensuring the questions were simple to follow, easy to answer, and directly related to the topic (Bryman, 2008). This was followed by a number of open questions where participants were asked for a response to a statement in an attempt to gain deeper opinions and thoughts. By contrast, the closed questions were designed to gain an initial response of 'yes I would call myself a leader' or 'no I would not'. This was then linked to the next question which is 'have you had any formal leadership roles while at secondary school?' The researcher was attempting to gain data on whether there was a relationship between those who saw themselves as leaders and those who have had formal leadership roles. The next set of questions asked about informal

leadership experiences, attempting to ascertain whether the students understood these informal experiences as leadership.

Bryman and Bell, (2007) suggest three 'rules of thumb': always bear in mind your research questions, what do you want to know? And how would you answer it? These were useful in the design of the questions, linking them back to the research questions, being clear about what we wanted to know and thinking about how I, as the researcher, would answer it. When taking demographics into consideration for developing the questions for this study the researcher considered the respondents' [students] age, year level, leadership experience and understanding of leadership. The aim was to create questions that could be understood by the respondents, were easy to complete, and encouraged engagement. With the respondents being Year 10 it was important that the research tools worked within the students' understanding and comfort zone. Questions are the most effective when they explore the dimensions of an issue and consider the respondents' knowledge, interest, attitudes and the reasons driving their responses (Tolich & Davidson, 2011).

The self-completion questionnaire is a broad sweep of a larger number of participants; the semi-structured interviews are with a randomly selected small group with more in-depth questions. Bryman (2008) identifies prominent types of questions for both the questionnaire and the interview as being factual questions providing personal information; factual questions about others; informant factual questions about the general context and questions about attitudes, beliefs, normative standards, and knowledge. Bryman (2008) goes on to suggest that the best data is gained from "more than one and (most likely) several of these types of questions" (p. 239). This was very much kept in mind during the questionnaire and interview design phase in order to create data that was authentic and informative.

Semi-Structured Group (Pair) Interviews
This study consisted of six Year 10 students being interviewed in each of the case study schools in six interviews with twelve students in total. The students were part of the group who completed the Questionnaires in their school and then volunteered to take part in the thirty minute semi-structured interviews. Mutch (2013) provides a definition of an interview as being a specialised form of communication between people for a stated purpose which is associated with some agreed upon subject matter. Mutch adds to this thought by saying "an interview is literally an interview, an interchange of views" (p. 120). Bryman (2008) talks about the

structured interview as ensuring that each respondent answers exactly the same questions and the researcher being aware of any variations. The semi-structured interviews in this research, whilst working within a framework, allowed for some flexibility and the ability to follow themes. Grix (2004) identifies four broad types of interviews: structured, semi-structured, unstructured, and focus groups. For the purposes of this study, semi-structured interviews in pairs were chosen; pairs may be considered as groups.

The literature points out that structured interviews do keep the data more concise and in some ways this reduces researcher bias; there is potentially more unreliability and reduced validity in the analysis when semi-structured interviews are utilised. Semi-structured interviews were chosen over a more formal method primarily to put the young people at ease but also to truly hear the student voice in a conversation which could follow a subject line of interest within the research questions. In the semi-structured interviews the interviewer had in mind certain questions which may or may not follow a predetermined order (Grix, 2004). This allows for a framework with the additional flexibility to follow the interesting directions the interview may take (Bryman, 2008; Grix, 2004; Mutch, 2013). In addition, the interview questions were provided to the research participants before the data collection took place. This was to help the students feel comfortable about the interview process. The semi-structured interviews were also designed to take the form of a conversation in order to gain real thoughts and experiences and to ensure the resulting data was as authentic as possible. Armour and Macdonald (2012) highlight the challenge of the power imbalance between the researcher and the young participants when researchers are interviewing children or adolescents. They point out the importance of creating a pleasant environment in which researchers can establish a rapport with participants. Establishing rapport begins with the request for participants. Qualitative interviews require 'the interviewer to establish a relationship with the interview participant. If the subject matter is not contentious, this may involve just a brief discussion at the start to put the participants at ease' (Mutch, 2013, p. 120). All participation was voluntary and participants needed to feel there was no pressure to take part. Participants must also be aware that they can withdraw at any time (Bryman, 2008; Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2001).

With regards to the number chosen, Armour and Macdonald (2012) describe the number of people being interviewed as "being determined by the research question, the type of interview selected and the size of the project" (p. 85). Twelve interviewees seemed to provide enough data for findings to be rich whilst not making the transcribing process too difficult. Each of the

12 interview participants was coded to avoid identification through names, preserving their anonymity. The six interviews were numbered 1-6 and each interview participant was coded as either Student A or Student B. For example, student comments were labelled with codes such as 4B or 3A; meaning Student B in interview 4 and Student A in interview 3. Bryman (2008) points out the importance of not leading interviewees in the interviews and of employing methods to ensure the interviews are authentic and real and how this adds to the validity and reliability of the data. The researcher was aware of this risk and counteracted it through close preparation of the interview questions, allowing the participants freedom of response and permission to lead the discussions to gain authentic data in a semi-structured manner whilst still keeping to the Interview Guide (Appendix D) as a map and coding all of the comments accurately.

A helpful perspective about interviewing is presented by Armour and Macdonald (2012) who suggest "through interviewing we can learn about places we have not been and could not go and about settings in which we have not lived" (p. 84). This is true of research with children and adolescents as it requires the researcher to describe experiences that young people have had which are not accessible to adults. Gehret (2010) suggests interviewing students who are in formal leadership positions and those who are not in any position to gain an understanding of both groups' perceptions of leadership in their school. As discussed previously, the students volunteered for the interviews which made it rather difficult to pre-select those who had leadership experience and those who did not. However, in the questionnaire responses there were several whole form classes and so there was an authentic mix of those with some leadership experience and those with no leadership experience.

Lizzio, et al. (2011) comment that it is clear that more 'direct conversations' with students (e.g. interviews, group discussions and case studies) will lead to "greater insight into their lived experience" (p. 95). Direct conversations were the focus for the interviews. Lietz (2010) refers to "the interplay between questions and answers as a complex communication process between researchers and respondents, their assumptions, expectations and perceptions" (p. 249). This study deliberately encouraged the student voice to be heard, with students' perspective on accessibility to leadership and the formal and informal leadership opportunities afforded to them. The setting for the interviews and the ability of the researcher to relax the participants was important in gaining young people's authentic understanding and truly hearing their voice. As discussed, the participant interviews were conducted in pairs rather than larger focus groups.

Armour and Macdonald (2012) explain that while group interviews provide direct information about similarities and differences in participant opinions and experiences they also provide less depth and detail than single participant interviews. They identify the advantages of individual interviews as "allowing for close communication between the interviewer and the participant" (p. 84). Interviewing students in pairs encouraged those who might be overwhelmed by being interviewed alone or overshadowed by others in a group situation so that the study gathered the richest possible perceptions. Interviews were recorded using two recording devices and transcribed using methods such as conversation analysis and discourse analysis (Bryman, 2008). This was to allow for accuracy in the data and reduce the researcher bias.

The interview guide which was provided contained a list of questions, prompts, and follow-up questions to ensure the interviews had a framework. This ensured that questions did not move too far away from the topic and provided a broad framework of themes to allow the greatest opportunity for capturing the most useful data. Additionally, there was enough flexibility for the researcher to dig deeper into the students' perceptions of leadership (Mutch, 2013).

Document Analysis

Text is a commonly used source of data that can be gathered or created using various methods (Mutch, 2013). Whilst this method was a very small part of the data collection of this study (referred to as document review), it still required some deliberate consideration. The documents in the study are websites relating to School A and School B which were used to support and inform the findings, through scoping the context of the two case study schools. The documents used in the data gathering were: the school website, the New Zealand Curriculum, and the Education Review Office (ERO) Report. This information was used to describe each of the schools in terms of student population, school decile, learning focuses, and school values.

Data Analysis, Validity, Reliability

Mutch (2013) describes the importance of analysing qualitative data to identify salient themes, recurring ideas and patterns of belief, thus linking people and contexts together. Searching for recurring ideas from the data on accessibility to student leadership was the core focus of the data analysis. It is challenging identifying these recurring patterns, as they are not always obvious or do not link to the context (Mutch, 2013). Furthermore, the results of the data analysis

are really only of value if they can be used in the real world; that is if the leadership findings are useful to teachers, to schools and to the students themselves. The researcher in this study has been constantly aware of the application of the findings being presented in an authentic manner for educators working with young people (Armour & Macdonald, 2012). This relates to reliability and validity as they both contribute to authenticity. Reliability, according to Hinds (2000), refers to the consistency of the data and whether or not the same results could be obtained in a different context. The concept of validity, is related to whether the research possesses strength, worth or value to the field and refers to "the extent to which a question or variable accurately reflects the concept the researcher is actually looking for" (Davidson & Tolich, 2003, p. 31). Mutch (2013) refers to validity in rather simple terms as meaning whether your research actually measures what it aimed to measure. The aim of this research project was to ensure the way the data was gathered, analysed and presented was reliable and valid and reflected the phenomenon being investigated (Cardno, 2003). Armour and Macdonald (2012) suggest research methods that use students in the shaping of the research agenda will improve the reliability, validity and ethical acceptability of research with young people. The student voice is the focus of the gathering of data to shape the findings of this study.

Grix (2004) raises some common criticisms of qualitative research in the data analysis; the perception of 'anecdotalism' which raises questions about the representativeness and generality of the research and how this can lead to questions about the validity. When gathering the thoughts and perceptions of the participants about leadership it is important that the question design allows for enough specificity and also provides an opportunity to peel back the layers of thinking to provide some depth of understanding contributing to the data analysis. When analysing the data in this study, the researcher looked for significant generalisations and patterns to create themes of learning about leadership accessibility. The sample was relatively small; with 100 questionnaire respondents and 12 interviewees which aided the analysis. Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001) suggest keeping the data simple through setting up questions in a way that practical implications can be easily identified. They refer to closed questions as creating easily counted answers and also as a method of imposing categories on respondents which may limit their answers but may therefore limit the generality of the research. For example, rather than yes/no answers add scale options such as the Likert Scale that has been used in order to provide boundaries, making the analysis easier. Additionally, providing the opportunity to comment as well as rate a statement allowed respondents to

provide an explanation or further information. This reduced the boundaries for the respondents and allowed for them to provide salient themes and deeper focused thinking.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis has been used as a data analysis method with this research study. "Thematic analysis is a qualitative strategy that takes its categories from the data" (Mutch, 2013, p. 164). This method is also known as constant comparative analysis. In thematic analysis the themes that emerge are of the greatest importance and the researcher should let them speak for themselves (Mutch, 2013). As the data was gathered and the themes analysed new thinking began to emerge from the interview conversations around the leadership feelings and experiences of the students that were not readily found within existing literature and previous studies. The strength of a quantitative analysis lies in its reliability (Bryman, 2008; Tolich & Davidson, 2011). It is possible, when using thematic analysis, to obtain some quantitative data from "verbal responses to open-ended questions and from interview transcripts" (Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2001, p. 236). Whilst this study intended to steer away from quantitative approaches, the process of 'content analysis' has been used with some key themes. Content analysis is where percentages of responses is an advantage to the statistical analysis of this study, (Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2001). These percentages are intended to give educators clear messages around the students' feelings about whether or not leadership is accessible to them. Qualitative research does not attempt to generalise about the whole population; rather it provides data about what people said or did in a particular context. The data in this study is applicable to the young people within the contexts of the two case study schools and from this one may draw general conclusions about young people and their accessibility to leadership with the proviso that the data was gained from students in two schools only.

Grix (2004) points out the risk of qualitative research methodology immersing the researcher into the social context which may lead to a lack of objectivity and a temptation to use personal opinion instead of evidence. To address this, the analysis included interview transcripts that were coded, and categorised in terms of the key concepts and concerns of the project (Armour & Macdonald, 2012). Even though the interviews were semi-structured to allow for some deeper layering the Interview Guide provided a map or plan for the structure of each interview, which avoided the temptation for the researcher to follow too many random paths or lines of thinking or questioning away for the themes of the research. Each interview was digitally recorded, transcribed and then the direct quotes from the students were separated into the three

main themes. Each interview participant was coded with the interview number and as either Student A or Student B to provide clarity in analysis. The questionnaire comments were grouped under each of the questionnaire questions and then placed into the themed data 'buckets' which related directly to the research sub-questions: theme one focused on defining leadership; theme two focused on why bother with leadership and theme three focused on accessibility to leadership.

Mutch (2013) cites LeCompte and Preissle's (1993) work on comparative analysis as being extremely useful in providing an analytic process. The steps in this method of analysis are:

- Perceiving: Based on first impressions. What is the researcher's impression of students' understanding?
- Comparing: Comparisons between differences and similarities.
- Contrasting: Things that don't go together. Differences in experiences with leadership, opinions and approaches to leadership.
- Aggregating: Groupings and things that go together. Identifying trends, themes and approaches to leadership that could be aggregated.
- Ordering: Patterns and themes. The researcher worked on the research tool design to ensure the best opportunity for capturing patterns and themes.
- Establishing linkages and relations: This occurred throughout the data collection.
- Speculating: Speculation occurred pre, during and post data collection using the researcher's personal and professional experiences.

Interestingly, the three theme 'buckets' evolved alongside the emerging research sub-questions into three new buckets as the research analysis took place. The three new key themes were: how students perceive and understand leadership; their experiences in accessing leadership; and, how leadership can be made more accessible. This comparative analysis process was used in analysing the data in this study through choosing the theme in which to place each comment. This meant groups of similar themed thinking were compared and contrasted to find similarities, patterns and connections amongst the data.

There were several assumptions and perceptions held by the researcher pre the data collection, some of which are described in the participant selection section of this chapter. Lincoln and Guba (2005) describe a framework for judging data authenticity based on: fairness, ontological and educative authenticity and catalytic and tactical authenticity. It seems that achieving either

one of reliability or validity does not ensure that the other will also be achieved (Davidson & Tolich, 2003). These researchers explain that "validity is strengthened by triangulation of findings" (p. 34). Collected perspectives from the data can be triangulated to form a view of reality that will contribute to the value of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). Triangulation can gather information from several different entities. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explain "triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation" (p. 5).

Increasing Validity and Reliability

Researchers need to be prepared to forewarn those reading the research of their biases and any assumptions they have made and the influence these may have on the research findings (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The researcher in this study has declared any biases in the study limitations section. Bowman (2013) points out that structured interviews do strengthen validity and suggests that structured interviews keep the data more concise and reduce researcher bias (Bryman, 2008); semi-structured interviews, on the other hand, increase the chance of unreliability and reduce validity in the analysis. The researcher was aware of this risk and has counteracted it through the close preparation of the interview questions, allowing the participants freedom of response and permission to lead the discussions in order to gain authentic data in a semi-structured manner. This was also whilst keeping the research questions at the fore and the Interview Guide as a map to reduce bias and avoid inconsistent data. Bryman (2008) agrees and points out the importance of not leading interviewees in the interviews and of employing methods to ensure the interviews are authentic and real, thus adding to the validity and reliability of the data.

The data analysis in this study focuses on determining common themes that emerged from questionnaire to questionnaire, from interview to interview, from the interviews to the questionnaires and from one case study to another (Bryman & Bell, 2007). It was important not to discount any themes that arose. Transcripts were transcribed and analysed individually, themes extracted and the recurring themes woven into the study as a whole. Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to the analysis of the data that has been collected as data reduction in preparation for write-up and analysis. There were challenges when distilling qualitative data from the large amount of data from the interviews in terms of reducing it to what really mattered. The researcher gathered the data under the three primary themes, reducing it by placing the data in one of the three 'buckets' of feedback so that recurring themes could be identified.

According to Tolich and Davidson (2011) there is an uncomplicated division that can be made between the emphasis on the reliability of the data and the emphasis on the validity of the data. Positivists stress reliability and interpretive researchers tend to emphasise validity, as in the case of this research study (Bryman, 2008; Grix, 2004). Of importance, is whether the data is valid and whether it answers the research aim and research questions. The researcher has kept this at the forefront in the research questions, methodology, tools, data collection, analysis and validation of the data which all contributes to the rigour of the study. The chosen interpretivist approach requires the researcher to look for meaning and values which lie beneath the raw collected data. Such notions and concepts justify the data's existence and signify importance (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The researcher continually sought meaning and values from within and beneath the participant comments and through comparing comments and finding commonality.

During the interviews any rich 'research moments' were investigated and important sub-themes in conversations followed whilst keeping within the Interview Guide as discussed. This was important in order to seek the participants' truth and to provide the most authentic answers to the research questions from the young people's point of view. The emphasis on listening to the student voice in the research methodology arose from the gap in the body of knowledge identified in the literature review. There are very few studies which provide an authentic student view of leadership.

In seeking the meaning beneath the research one must consider pre-existing knowledge and perceptions that the researcher takes with them into the process. The researcher in this study notes the pre-existing knowledge and perceptions she has of the secondary school context as a former secondary school teacher and currently as a tertiary educator. Previous research and teaching in the field of leadership by the researcher is also acknowledged.

Ethical Considerations

For this study an ethics application was submitted to the AUT University Ethics Committee (AUTEC) "intended to prompt researchers into briefing participants appropriately and managing data collection and storage; so participants come to no harm" (Armour & Macdonald, 2012, p. 21). The practice of ethics approval keeps the researcher and the

participants safe. Part of a research ethics committee consideration is whether the research questions will add to the body of knowledge and whether the methodology will achieve what it has set out to achieve. The risks of ethical issues in social research are able to be broken down into: "harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy, whether deception is involved" (Bryman, 2008, p. 118). Harm to the students in a study such as this could be from a variety of sources: emotional harm from perhaps exposing their answers to other participants, emotional harm in how they feel during the interviews, not informing them of processes so they fully understand or creating an environment where they feel deceived or threatened. Data so collected is unlikely to be honest or real (Bryman, 2008). Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001) believe there are underlying principles to ethical research: duty of care, respect for individuals, respect for culture and dignity and the need for protection from harm. This study intended to address these principles through the researcher developing an understanding of the context and participants in each of the case study schools before the research proceeded. Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001) point out that the perceived value of any research project is an ethical issue in itself; including the acknowledgement that if people are being asked to devote time to the research they need to feel it is worthwhile. "In the widest sense, the subject matter of ethics is the justification of human actions, especially as those actions affect others" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 73).

The researcher was very aware of doing no harm and of these associated risks. All data from both the questionnaires and the interviews will be confidential. Participant names have been coded to ensure anonymity. The schools have been coded as School A and School B to ensure that their identity remains confidential. Participation was voluntary, both for the questionnaires and the interviews. Participants were fully informed prior to being involved in the research. Ethics is about responsibility and rights; and given that this study focused on working with adolescents it was particularly important that the research practices kept an ethical perspective at the forefront. "In the areas of health, education and sport the research is usually conducted to make a difference in the quality of children's and young people's lives" (Armour & Macdonald, 2012, p. 67).

The research was intended to contribute to the quality of young people's lives gained through enhancing and encouraging thinking about their opportunities in leadership. This research study aimed to provide benefit for the participants through increased self-awareness through exploring their own leadership and considering how they might access leadership opportunities

in the future. It is hoped the results of this research will encourage educators to think about how leadership is occurring in their school. These outcomes were kept in mind throughout the research process.

Alignment with Kaupapa Māori Research

In New Zealand, the Māori Ethics Framework references tikanga based principles: whakapapa (relationships), tika (research design), manaakitanga (cultural and social responsibility), and mana (justice and equity) as the guiding principles in relation to ethics in research.

While this research is not framed from a Māori world-view, nonetheless, the principles of a Kaupapa Māori approach are acknowledged and worked into the research process, that is:

- Rangatiratanga – which acknowledges the authority and responsibility of community and the researcher.
- Wakaritenga – which acknowledges the legitimacy of the research produced.
- Kaitiakitanga – Guardianship which acknowledges the responsibility of the community and researcher to protect the knowledge shared with them.
- Nohotahi – Co-operation – that is, working with communities to ensure successful outcomes for all.
- Ngākau Māhaki – Respecting the rights of individuals and communities the researchers work with, including their knowledge.

Whilst cultural differences and similarities were not part of the research questions within this study, the methodology and the way the research was undertaken acknowledges the importance of the bi-cultural society in Aotearoa. This study considered issues of representation, legitimisation, power relations, benefits, and accountability (Bishop, 2005). Much of research ethics refers to trustworthiness, which according to Mutch (2013) "means you have clearly documented the research decisions, research design, data-gathering and data-analysis techniques and demonstrated an ethical approach" (p. 109). The concept of trustworthiness is threaded through Kaupapa Māori Research. Kaupapa Māori Research refers to the importance of fully informed prior consent based research where participants fully understand the research methodology and aims before the research begins. Interviewed participants, whilst known to the researcher, have not been identified within the analysis, results or write-up.

Informed Consent and Confidentiality

Informed consent requires participants to be given as much information as possible, "participants needed to make an informed decision about whether or not they wish to participate in a study" (Bryman, 2008, p. 121). In this study consent forms were provided to the participants. All participation must be voluntary and participants must feel there is no pressure to take part and they must also be aware that they can withdraw at any time (Bryman, 2008; Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2001). Participation was voluntary and the students knew they could stop at any time in both the questionnaires and the interviews. Those taking part in the interviews were recorded with permission sought before making digital recordings and before including any data from the participants in any material to be published or circulated to others (Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2001). As noted earlier, all participants were coded as the number of the interview they were in (1-6) and either Student A or Student B. Each participant questionnaire remained anonymous. Babble (2010) defines true anonymity as "the situation when not even the researcher knows the identity of the participants" (p. 67). With the questionnaire, the researcher did not know the names of the respondents, however the interview participants were known to the researcher, but not identified within the analysis, results or write-up. "Confidentiality extends to how the research will be published and presented" (Armour & Macdonald, 2012, p. 71). The researcher recognises that children are a particularly vulnerable population (Armour & Macdonald, 2012). Whether or not children can provide consent is debated with varying viewpoints in the literature. To address this, a written consent form was signed by both participants and parents/guardians. Within this process, the researcher informed participants (and parents/guardians) of the nature of the project in written form.

As there was a power differential between the researcher (adult) and the participant (under the age of 16), there was a risk the participant may have felt coerced into taking part and answering questions they may not have wanted to. To overcome this, the interviews took place at the school in as familiar an environment as possible and in a room with an open door. As explained earlier, all participants were voluntary participants. The written interview information gave students the option to 'pass' on answering a question or terminate the interview if they found it too difficult. The primary researcher's personal experience as a teacher working with students and young people enabled her to provide as relaxed an environment as possible.

It is equally important to work ethically in terms of data representation. A key driver of research is to contribute in an original way to knowledge, "hence the data and their representation need

to be original and authentic" (Armour & Macdonald, 2012, p. 22). The authenticity refers to situations such as whether the excerpts from the interviews are quoted word for word or whether the participants have been appropriately selected and are representative of students in New Zealand secondary schools. Conducting research with young people in schools presents additional expectations with relation to ethics. "Some schools and some systems are more accommodating than others, but all will want to see what the benefits of the research will be for their school…and young people generally" (Armour & Macdonald, 2012, p. 22). These researchers also point out that some forms of research, such as these case studies can, raise concerns about reputation for the school and that this will need to be addressed by the researcher in terms of confidentiality. Schools may be "very reluctant to support research that looks like it might compare schools…" (Armour & Macdonald, 2012, p. 68). The schools were both asked if they would like their name to be kept confidential and both agreed for this to be the case. They are known as School A and School B throughout the study.

Limitations of the Study

All data has its limitations and as such the data in this study is limited by several factors. First, the two case study schools are in the same city which is New Zealand's largest city, Auckland. This limits the data in terms of the urban influences on the participants and means the study does not provide a broader national perspective. There is, as a result, no consideration of the leadership views of rural adolescents or of those in schools situated in smaller cities and towns. Equally, there are no South Island schools in the study.

Moreover, the size of the questionnaire sample, only 50 participants in each school, may not provide a broad cross section of views. This limitation was alleviated somewhat by the random selection of the classes and through the inclusion of all of the students in the two classes in each school. Bryman and Bell (2007) point out that the decision about sample size is not an easy one and it is mostly affected by time and cost. These scholars also discuss the challenge that most surveys have when there are high levels of 'no response'. This concern did not limit this study as the teachers were overseeing the collection of questionnaires from those who had agreed to take part.

An additional limitation in this study was that the respondents are Year 10 students only, which means there is no senior student perspective. However, this is a fresh approach in the literature as most studies to date have focused on senior students. Also, many schools are interested in

developing their Year 10 students in leadership to provide a longer leadership development pathway while at secondary school.

With only twelve students interviewed, gaining deeper analysis was limited by the small number of students, all of whom had volunteered to be interviewed. It is this self-selection of the interview participants that potentially provides the most limitation to the data gathered from the interviews. The likelihood is that those who volunteered had an interest in leadership or are leaders themselves. This was counteracted by ensuring that the data analysis was constantly crossed referenced from interviews to the questionnaires, from one case study school to the other and that the findings and conclusions were drawn from the broad data and not from single comments. Davidson and Tolich (2011) describe the idea that everyone in a larger population (in this case each Year 10 in each of the secondary schools) has an equal probability of being included in the research, which leads to gaining information about a larger group from a smaller research sample. The concept of probability sampling certainly contributed to the place that the questionnaires have had in this research study, potentially providing implications for a wider group of young people. The next two chapters present the findings and discussion for this study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

LEADERSHIP AS STUDENTS SEE IT

This chapter examines and integrates findings from the one hundred questionnaires and twelve interviewed students across the two case study schools. The case study schools are named School A and School B to ensure confidentiality. School A is a Central City single sex girls' secondary school and School B is a co-educational school in East Auckland. The context for both School A and School B is explained and analysed in this chapter before the findings are presented and discussed. Each questionnaire comment is referenced to either Case Study School A or School B (CSA or CSB) in the body of the discussion. As discussed in the Methods chapter, the student interviews are labelled 1-6, with each of the pair of students in a single interview coded as School A or B. For example, a comment may be assigned to 2B which would be Interview 2, students from School B. This allows the researcher to connect comments from students to each school and to compare and contrast from student to student and school to school.

As explained in Chapter 3, key themes were derived from the analysis of the questionnaires and interview data which are also supported by various sub-themes. The structure of this Chapter begins with a summary of each case study context, which is followed by two major sections, **student meaning of leadership** (explaining leadership, positional leadership, informal opportunities, leadership as a stepping up, am I a leader?), and **emerging themes of leadership** (place of confidence; being seen as bossy, helping others).

Case Study Context

The NZ Curriculum (2007) makes a clear statement of what is important in a school's provision of education and provides the framework of learning in our secondary schools. A strong answer to why leadership is important for students lies in how it can potentially meet the curriculum outcomes. One of the education visions for young people in the NZ Curriculum is that they will be creative and enterprising, and that they will seize opportunities to secure a strong future for New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2007). In doing so, the curriculum in action encourages teachers to work with students to continue to develop the values, knowledge and

competencies to lead full lives. This aspirational vision connects to leadership, allowing leadership experiences to potentially deliver on some of these key outcomes for schools.

New Zealand schools have decile ratings to determine how much government funding they will be allocated to help resource them. The Decile Rating is a 1-10 scale, with the lower the rating the more funding the school receives to support student learning (education.govt.nz). The two secondary schools chosen are a Decile 3 and a Decile 9 school. Both schools requested that their identity remain confidential, therefore, the websites are referenced as 'name withheld'. What follows is a summary description of the context for each Case Study School.

School A (CSA)

School A was one of the first secondary schools to be established in New Zealand, educating young women since 1888 in Central Auckland, New Zealand. It is a Decile 3 girls' school providing education for Years 9-13. With their 'Educated here - Equipped for the World' aspirational catch phrase, School A seeks to connect local thinking to global thinking which seems to resonate with a leadership development approach. The school's values are: pride, respect, integrity, diligence and empathy. The school claims a century-long tradition of academic, sporting, and cultural excellence, and an environment in which students can aim high and find success within their reach.

School A is described on the website as a vibrant and diverse environment, with students representing over 60 different cultures, predominantly Pacific Island. The cultural makeup of the school is: Pacifica 50%; Māori 25%; European 5%; Other 3%. The 1200 female students have access to a wide range of subjects, co-curricular activities and multi-purpose facilities. The information available highlights how the staff work hard to ensure that students gain the highest qualifications they can, encouraging them to develop a love of learning and a zest for living, preparing them to fit comfortably into our bi-cultural, multi-ethnic society. School A commits to offering a balanced academic, social, physical, and cultural education so that all students can grow into strong and self-reliant young women. (NAME WITHHELD, 2015. Retrieved from confidential website). The website talks of a desire for students leaving the school knowing that they have been offered the best possible opportunities to succeed in whatever path they choose. While there are limited leadership positions available in the junior school, such as form reps and class captains, there is no formal leadership programme.

The Education Review Office Report (ERO) for School A does not refer to Student Leadership, although it does refer to the attributes of the students and the factors that impact on learning. Here it states that the school has a broad definition of success for its students, encouraging the girls to achieve their potential across academic, cultural, and sporting contexts with students benefiting from a broad curriculum that supports their holistic development (ERO Report 2016). The school website describes the context as being: "A safe, disciplined and friendly atmosphere where students are expected to work hard, respect themselves and others, make life-long friends and have fun". The ERO Report refers to the staff as a group of very able, committed teachers with a creative curriculum and modern learning resources. The report says that the school provides the opportunity for its students to belong with confidence to a community that is a mix of the different groups that make up New Zealand society. (NAME WITHHELD, 2015. Education Review Office Report).

School B (CSB)

School B is a Decile 9 coeducational school in east Auckland with students originating from 48 different countries. The school roll is 1993 students. The vision of School B is to provide an exceptional learning community that challenges and supports students to pursue excellence and to develop the skills, attitudes and values they will need to succeed. The aspiration is to create outstanding citizens "who are moral and respectful" (NAME WITHHELD, 2015. Retrieved from confidential website).The school has an ethnic composition of NZ European 35%; Chinese 16%; Māori 10%; other Asian 10%; other European 9%; Indian 8%; Pacific 6%; and Other 6%. This is a multi-cultural, diverse environment creating a vibrant culture within the school. School B highlights that their teachers establish high quality learning environments where students discuss and share existing knowledge and interact with new information, concepts and ideas. Students are encouraged to be interactive with teachers, technology and their peers to develop understanding and, most importantly, to apply their knowledge to problem-solving. (NAME WITHHELD, 2015. Retrieved from confidential website).

School B's website includes statements that relate or could relate to students developing leadership skills and having leadership experiences. Student Leadership in School B is separately identified as a strong positive element/component of the school and is based on the school's value of encouraging a partnership between students, teachers and parents. For this reason the school places considerable emphasis on the development and support of student

leadership at all levels in the school. At Year 9 and 10 a Junior Leadership Development Programme is available which involves informative and project-based activities. Approximately 50 students are nominated by teachers for this programme each year. There are only limited positions in leadership available in the Junior School in School B, namely a form representative for each class and sports team captains. (NAME WITHHELD, 2015. Retrieved from confidential website).

The website highlights that there are programmes and opportunities available to all students; students are encouraged to join and contribute to a wide range of student-led councils and groups including, for example, the Service Council which organises fundraising for charity groups, the Environment Council which organises recycling schemes in the school and planting days on Motutapu Island and the Sports Council which organises lunchtime coaching and inter-house competitions. Students of all levels are also encouraged to assist in leading a wide range of House activities such as fundraising and inter-tutor group competitions. The Education Review Office has identified School B as an exceptional school with a balance between demanding the highest academic and behavioural standards and expecting students, staff and parents to be accountable for their actions. There is also emphasis on providing a caring and personal environment in which everyone is treated as an individual and accorded respect and dignity at all times. (NAME WITHHELD, 2015. Education Review Office Report).

What Do Students Mean by Leadership?

This section relates to the first research sub question: how do students perceive and understand leadership? There were a number of questions in the questionnaire and the interviews that related to the students' views and understanding of leadership. The Year 10 student participants described their views of leadership throughout the interviews and questionnaires, both prompted and unprompted. The following findings are a combination of the questionnaire and interview data which has been analysed and discussed to draw findings and conclusions. The first discussion is how these students described and explained leadership.

There were several key themes which evolved during the data collection and analysis relating to how the students viewed leadership: common goal, formal position, informal opportunities, stepping up and helping others. These form sections in this chapter.

Explaining Leadership

Leadership is an influence relationship between leaders and followers focusing on authentic change and outcomes which are the result of shared purpose (Daft & Pirola-Merlo, 2009; Jackson & Parry, 2011). This definition of leadership provides some key words which are found throughout the literature: influence, change, outcome, shared purpose. Additionally, in the innumerable leadership definitions across a significant amount of the leadership literature there are numerous references to leadership being incredibly difficult to define. Rosch and Kusel (2010) describe leadership as one of the most observed and scoped, yet least understood, phenomenon that exists. However difficult it is to define there are some common threads in the literature referring to leadership being, in simple terms, about a group of people working towards a common goal or purpose. Yukl (2002) refers to leadership as requiring followers and a common goal. There were many instances in the case study data of students also seeing leadership as being about someone stepping up from amidst a group of people with a common goal or purpose. One student said: "They're [the group] just agreeing on a common goal and working towards that" (4A). Another said, "For leadership I think it's when you as a person or anyone else steps up to kind of unite the group for a common purpose" (1B). Bowman (2013) purports that for middle school students being 'in influence' rather than being 'in control' is the essence of effective leadership. He claims the way to achieve this is by sharing vision and enlisting others in a common purpose.

When talking about leadership the students in the study often used single words which depicted traits of a leader to describe leadership itself. Daft and Pirola-Merlo (2009) define traits as the distinguishing individual and personal characteristics of a leader which are often used to describe leadership. The students very strongly associated traits with leadership, describing leadership through words such as courage, strong minded, support, helping others, sharing ideas, encouragement, confidence, guidance, responsibility, stepping up, and motivating others with leadership. This is reflected throughout the findings. There is much evidence to suggest that contemporary leadership is more about inspiration than it is about coercion or extrinsic motivation (Bowman, 2013; Hine, 2014). One student summarised, "I think leadership is taking your initiative and taking charge in a good way. It's not like being bossy and saying you have to do this my way, but actually taking charge not because anyone is forcing you but you believe that someone has got to take charge" (1A). Two words describing leadership appeared or were implied often throughout the data collection: motivation and confidence. Students perceived that motivation and confidence led to students to do something more than others were prepared

to: "being a leader you have the confidence and you have the motivation to do something others wouldn't" (1B). Interestingly, while the literature focuses on the difficulty of defining leadership, many of the students in this study seemed to quickly and succinctly give their personal definitions which mirrored many of the definitions in the literature; a number of students said leadership is about group, followers, goals, personal attributes and stepping up.

When young people are handed responsibility they feel that people trust them. When adults trust a young person he or she is most likely to be motivated to be responsible (Curtis, 2008). Styles and ways of leading others were referred to a number of times throughout the data with many of the comments relating to autocratic leadership such as, "I dislike being in charge" (CSA). Other students defined a leadership style or way of taking responsibility as needing to be loud and concluding that, for this reason, it was not for them. "Because I'm too shy and really quiet" (CSA). The implication is that quiet and shy people may perceive that they cannot lead, depending on how leadership is defined. One participant shared, "I have knowledge of what it takes to be a leader but I don't think I possess some of those traits" (CSA). Several interview participants referred to being aware of their personal command style or autocratic approach that related to taking control: "I think the experience of leadership in secondary school is a big step up to taking control of situations that need your control" (1C), shared one participant. Another stated that "good leadership is when a leader makes the people they're leading blindly follow them" (1A). These views of an autocratic style of leadership were strongly present amongst the questionnaire participants, more so than the interview participants. The interview participants shared more about a distributed, participative and empowering style of leadership. Hine (2014) describes distributed leadership as defined by the interactions between people and their situation.

The important message is that leadership capacity is not fixed in style or approach but can be grown and developed (Harris 2008; Hine, 2014). If leadership style and capacity can indeed be grown and developed then both individual students and schools can gain much from student leadership experiences, particularly from the perspective of building a school culture and from preparing young people for a solid future in both their career and in life. Keeffe and Andrews (2011) present leadership as a way to provide education on values and to thus enhance the school's public reputation and image. A student who agreed with the opportunity to learn values through leadership said, "Leadership values are what you learn from and what you get out of it" (3A). There was also plenty of awareness of learning from making mistakes "although

you make lots of mistakes you actually learn from them" (3B). These students referred to their personal gains from leadership, summarised well by the comment, "I think it really does help you in the future." (3B). The following two sections provide a discussion of various approaches to leadership about which the students spoke; formal positional approaches and informal opportunities as well as how students view these experiences in terms of the potential they have of adding to their development.

Positional Approach to Leadership

Leadership has different meanings for different people and these meanings are ultimately dependent upon context (Harris, 2008). Historically, leadership for students in the secondary school context has been seen as a duty to be served as they move through to senior school (Harris, 2008). The study data highlighted many students viewed leadership in schools as primarily based on being in a formal position or role, such as a form representative or a sports captain with these opportunities increasing as they moved through the school. Indeed a number of students viewed leadership as predominantly, or even solely, this way. When asked who the leaders in the school were, some students identified those students in roles, particularly roles in the senior school with answers such as, "the Head Students and the Student Executives" (5B). Comments such as "I wouldn't want to put the whole responsibility on me" (CSA), referring to a formal leadership position or role" and "I would not consider myself a leader because I would like to give the opportunity to the seniors" (CSA), referring to senior formal leadership positions. When questioned about their personal leadership ability, many of the young people chose to talk about their ability to lead in a position of leadership or the opportunities they had experienced in a leadership position or that they had never had a leadership position. They saw themselves as doing leadership in a role or not doing it at all. Their definition of leadership was connected to the holding of a position in order to lead. For example, one participant stated, "In the times when a leader needs to be appointed I am okay with stepping up and taking that role…" (CSB).

This view of leadership as a formal position was particularly obvious in the questionnaires with students making comments such as: "I do not see myself as a leader because I usually do not participate in leadership roles" (CSA), and "I may be a good leader, but I do not like leading, too much responsibility" (CSB). Many students referred to the self-esteem boost and extra opportunities that come from being selected for a position and how valuable that can be. In fact, some students felt strongly that having a position gave them a mandate to lead and without

a mandate it was difficult to take the lead. "With an assigned position it's like we have all agreed on this and everyone is made aware…I think people like an assigned position because other people have said this person is good" (4B). Having a formal position seemed to make some students feel more comfortable about stepping forward to take the lead. Additionally, students describing leadership as a formal assigned position also spoke of difficulties they had in accessing leadership, as formal positions are limited in number and therefore more difficult to access. "There are two people who are going to get form rep and sports rep; there are things (roles) you can do but you are going to have to hunt for them…..in order to find leadership roles" (3B). The development of students as leaders in schools is commonly achieved through strategies around formal leadership roles or through extracurricular activities. These strategies are often criticised for not providing access to and consideration of the whole student body (Lizzio et al., 2011; Mitra, 2005; Whitehead, 2009).

Informal Opportunities

In contrast to this role-based approach Hine (2014) suggests that a person does not need a badge to be a leader, rather leadership is showing other people the way and how to do things. This prompts us to consider the part that informal leadership opportunities may play in providing leadership experiences for students. Fish (2011) questions whether, in today's society, a child will have opportunities to learn leadership skills. He describes how historically organisations such as scouts, guides and other civic groups which utilised both formal and informal leadership experiences are just not as prevalent. As highlighted, formal roles in schools are limited in number and therefore are not available to everybody. This is supported by Hine (2014) when describing what happened in a study of year 10 students who were given an opportunity to nominate themselves for a Peer Support leadership role where there were many more student applicants than the 10 or so roles available and how disappointed the students became at the lack of opportunity. This is confirmed by the students in the present study who also repeatedly reported the same shortage of roles. "Competition for roles is much higher in college because there's always going to be someone better than you" (5A). Or, as another student put it, "There are really just sports captains for juniors. I reckon the juniors don't get much of an opportunity to like step out and show you they are leaders. They kind of give it to the seniors…" (5A).

In order for schools to be places of learning about leadership for a broader group of students both junior and senior, informal leadership opportunities must be considered. Strom (2014)

describes it aptly, "with formal authority we can influence what. With informal authority we can influence who" (p. 31). The semi structured nature of the interviews allowed the discussions to evolve and the researcher to dig a little deeper. Many of the student participants were aware that wider opportunities for leadership exist outside of a role, but they did not always know how to access them. Students initially started talking about leadership related to a role or position, however, once they were prompted to dig deeper into their experiences many began to discuss other less formal opportunities to lead. They spoke of informal leadership experiences both within the classroom, within the school and amongst their friends and families. "To be honest I think it's just teaching people or teaching yourself…you're pushing them into a direction to learn something or to do something or you're helping them achieve something that they didn't think they could do" (2B). This student went on to say, "Leadership is basically everywhere. You always have the opportunity" (2B). This is an insightful comment to broaden perspective and opportunity. There is additionally a strong theme permeating the literature that "leadership belongs to everybody" (Hackett & Lavery, 2011, p. 58). This is captured by Bowman (2013) who urges that the overarching message to middle school students should be that it is time for all the heroes to go home and for all young people to strive to be tomorrow's leaders.

Sinek (2014) places the challenge as being about creating a new generation of men and women who understand that an organisation's success or failure is based on leadership excellence and not management acumen assigned to positional power. Contemporary views of leadership as flexible, participative, adaptive, distributed and based on empowerment have created new leadership practices in adult contexts which, although to be considered with caution, may fit equally well with the informal student leadership discussion. Daft and Pirola-Merlo (2009) argue that "Today's successful leaders value change over stability, empowerment over control, collaboration over competition, diversity over uniformity and integrity over self-interest" (p. 22). Those students in the study who had experienced leadership generally viewed themselves as leaders and seemed more likely to conceive leadership, at times, as more informal, flexible and adaptive than those who had not experienced leadership at all. One student who emphasised their informal leadership contribution described it simply: "I would call myself a leader because I like to share my ideas with others and teach them things they might be struggling with" (CSA). Another stated: "You can always help friends make the right choices, keeping them accountable to follow the right path" (3B). The emergence of these patterns of thinking around

informal, casually occurring leadership were evident in the thinking of most of the interviewed students; albeit there was also evidence of more traditional and historical views of leadership.

The compelling factor was the level of understanding the students had of the possibilities that opened up from having a broader approach to leadership. Various statements indicated this broader understanding: "I think it's the opposite of a boss. A boss is someone who will tell people what to do and assign roles but a leader is someone who will discuss with everyone and make sure everyone feels okay about something and then they will decide from there and push the whole team along with them instead of like having someone from above with authority" (4B). This statement illustrates a more informal approach to leading others. As one respondent described: "It [leadership] means to have courage and simply to be kind" (5A). One can both have courage and be kind in a formal or informal environment, however certainly no formal role is required to allow courage and kindness to flourish. This also simplifies leadership and, as people understand it better, makes it more accessible.

Harris (2004) points out that the concept of informal leadership can extend a school's perceptions of leadership and potentially engage significantly more students in leadership through the increase in available experiences. Interestingly, in the data there was evidence of students thinking about leadership being about helping others and service and how this thinking might relate to informal leadership approaches within a school: "I'm not officially a captain or anything like that but when we get into smaller groups we always choose different people to take charge because it's better for everyone to share the leadership experience" (4A). Throughout the data collection there were many references to leadership being about helping others and this is explored in more depth with Chapters 4 and 5. One student summarised a service approach when describing leadership by stating "You have to be there for people no matter what. It's not all about yourself" (5A). This comment represents a common view amongst the students that leadership involved aspects of service to others in a formal or informal manner. Hine (2014) refers to teachers playing a role in reinforcing in students that we are all leaders, helping and serving others whether or not we wear a badge. Some students referred to the lack of visibility of leadership roles, "You must be really alert because they're not really advertised a lot. They're not really advertised at all but then they're there" (3B).

Servant leadership and helping others are focused on in more detail in a separate section in this chapter, however it is important to note here that helping others was discussed by the students

as informal leadership throughout the conversations. As one student summarised, "If people understood the entire process of helping others and not advising, I think a lot more people would view that as a leadership role because they understand what it is about" (1A). The concept of leadership as serving others and the willingness of leaders to help out was very prevalent in the study. Whilst students did not use the actual word 'service', it was clear they understood that leadership was about helping and supporting others beyond themselves. This fits well with the emerging themes in the literature where servant leadership, or the role of the leader in serving others, is a growing understanding. Put simply, a servant leader is a person of character who puts people first (Sipe & Frick, 2009). This comment relates extremely well to the students' description of leadership as helping others and putting other people first. This was summarised well by the comment, "You don't have to have a high important role to be a leader; little jobs need leaders as well. So anyone can be a leader" (CSB). The concept that leadership is available to everybody, coupled with the idea that it is about helping people, provides an accessible way of thinking about leadership.

Leadership as Stepping Up

While talking about leadership the students also consistently referred to it as being about 'stepping up', moving outside of your comfort zone, and a self-development opportunity for them. Despite the discussions around the challenges of leadership throughout the literature, the notion of stepping up does not seem to be present in adult themed leadership. Dempster and Lizzio (2007) highlight the importance of the development of self-knowledge in youth leadership. These authors talk of the development of self-knowledge coming from, in part, the challenges associated with leadership activity. The students themselves saw the stretch of stepping up to lead as being challenging, "[it's]…going to push you to what you can do and … know that you can do better. Participants also spoke of the opportunity to step up as an advantage to grow. "Leadership to me is just a way of coming out of your shell. A way to put yourself out there, try new things and go for it" (1B). It requires students to stretch themselves and, in fact, this pressure to step up was disengaging for some young people, putting them off wanting to be involved. "I think if you are a coach or captain or any leader you would have a lot more stress to achieve "(4A). The need to face up to the challenges was succinctly summarised by one student, "You have to be there for people no matter what the situation is" (5A). This type of comment indicates that students view leadership as being, at times, big and difficult. This feeling of it all being too big was threaded throughout the data and seemed to constrain some young people from even considering leadership. Some students reflected this

fear of the size of leadership in their comments: "no I'm not a leader because no one listens to me and I'm not brave enough" (CSA).

Alternatively, many students spoke of leadership challenges as being a positive thing and as an opportunity to enhance their capabilities. "Leadership roles give you a lot of skills that you can't get anywhere else … you're always out of your comfort zone. You learn to think on your feet, keep level headed and be open minded to other people" (1B). Dempster and Lizzio (2007) refer to there being an ongoing interest in leadership from the young people themselves because people see themselves as gaining by stepping outside of their comfort areas. There is a clear message here in the data that this stepping up and stretching oneself is mostly seen as valuable learning by young people even though they know it is difficult:

> To me, leadership is being able to look up to someone and someone who'd be able to push you to like your limits. But not forcibly but like help you and give you the extra shove you need to help you achieve … (5B).

Students made reference to the personal gains they hoped to make from moving outside of their comfort zone and to being able to encourage others to step outside of theirs as captured by the following sentiment, "Like you need motivation and they're there to help you and support you throughout your tough times and stuff" (5A).

Am I a Leader?

The motivation to accept the challenge to lead can be described as an opportunity to enhance self-efficacy which begs the question; how can it be ensured that students feel safe and encouraged to entertain the possibility that 'I could be a leader' (Lizzio & Wilson, 2009). Weinberg and Gould (2003) identify the lack of consensus as to what leadership is as causing confusion for people and leading to an inconsistent understanding of leadership, or worse, to people misunderstanding and thinking they cannot be leaders. The discussion so far has identified some inconsistencies in how leadership is understood by young people, particularly relating to whether it is seen solely as a role or whether other informal experiences count as leadership. McNae (2011) adds support to this by referring to the contextualised and perspective nature of leadership which makes it difficult for young people to understand.

Before asking whether students see themselves as leaders it is vital to understand whether students think leadership is something that involves them, or whether potentially they could be involved, or whether they see it for other people and not for them. One student stated, "I

wouldn't call myself a leader because I do not engage much in leadership roles or groups around the school" (CSB). In contrast, a student who strongly agreed that they would consider themselves a leader commented, "Since primary school I have taken up various roles e.g. class councillor, class leader … I am also known as a teacher's pet" (CSA). These students were responding to one of the key questions of the study, the statement in Question One 'I would consider myself a leader' and in these cited cases they are relating their response to whether or not they had a leadership position or role. Students who had a positional view of leadership and who had never had a leadership role concluded that they therefore had none of the skills for leadership; they stated it simply was not their thing and therefore they did not bother with seeking opportunities to lead. It does seem that the way the students were viewing or describing leadership may have affected whether they saw themselves as leaders or not; their perception of leadership either engaged them or disengaged them. Several students in School A commented, "…I'm not confident enough" or "I am shy and really quiet" or "I disagree with me being a leader because I might be a bad influence for the others and I don't want to be one" (CSA). These comments related to the perceived traits the students felt that leaders should have and their opinion about whether or not they possessed these traits. As already identified in this chapter, this more limited definition of leadership as a role or position and nothing beyond that means, as Jones (2004) identifies, that only a small minority of students will ever be engaged in leadership or see themselves as engaged.

As a contrast, other scholars view leadership more broadly and less formally. Ultimately, mastering leadership is essentially the same as mastering yourself (Bowman, 2013; Kouzes & Posner 2011). There were students in the study who connected their view of themselves as a leader to their self-leadership, or lack of it, or to their personal innate leadership traits or lack of them, rather than measuring it on actual leadership experiences. For some students, their perception of their leadership ability was seeing it as just the way it was, with them believing that there are people who have the traits of leadership innately and others who do not and that it is not possible to learn or to improve these traits. "I can't lead people clearly or with confidence" (CSA). "I'm very shy and don't have the skills to speak up and lead people" (CSA).

Lizzio and Wilson (2009) report the degree to which students are motivated to demonstrate citizenship behaviours in the school, including leadership, can be predicted most strongly by their level of identification with the school. There was evidence of students who identified

strongly with the school and who were more optimistic in their approach to leadership, talking about their personal traits and finding opportunities to grow their leadership skills. "It's really important to have leadership roles like in schools and stuff because that's what's going to build your confidence and that's what's going to help you become a better leader" (1A). The students who defined themselves as leaders were almost, without exception, optimistic about the positive potential of leadership experiences. There was a clear correlation between those who identified with having personal leadership ability and those who had an understanding of their current skills, as well as an openness to develop them further. "It makes you shine in your friends' group and in your year group. People start knowing you" (2A).

When asked to respond to Question One, the first statement in the questionnaires: "I would consider myself to be a leader", the respondents were given four choices of response in the Likert Scale: strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The majority of responses fell into two main categories: disagree or agree. There were no respondents in the one hundred questionnaires who strongly disagreed that they would consider themselves a leader and a small number who strongly agreed that they were a leader. The following discussion highlights the key research questions relating to the students perceptions of themselves as a leader. For these key questions only, percentages are offered which provide clarity around the level of understanding that the students had of leadership which was affecting their decisions over whether leadership was for them or not.

In School A, 52.9% of questionnaire respondents on the Likert Scale said they agreed they were a leader and 33.8% of the respondents disagreed they were a leader. Only 7% strongly agreed they were a leader. Whilst it is reassuring that over half the students saw themselves as a leader there are also some other interesting findings here. First, this means that in School A just over one third of the students did not see themselves as a leader at all and, as already discussed, this may mean that they shy away from any leadership experiences. Second, how were each of these groups defining leadership? Perhaps they were relating it to having a position or role. However, of the students who disagreed that they were a leader, surprisingly only 17% of the questionnaire comments related leadership to a role or position. This would suggest that for some students a role or position does not feature. One might perhaps have expected this percentage to be higher, although we could argue that at least 17% of the students are relating their understanding of leadership to having a role.

The data from this first question for School A was then compared with Question 2: Have you had any formal leadership roles while at secondary school (e.g., sports captain, leader of a group, whanau leader, etc.). This was to determine whether those who did not consider themselves a leader had had any formal leadership roles while at secondary school. Of the 33.8% who said they were not leaders only 13% had held any leadership positions while at secondary school. This may be indicative of a relationship between how the students view themselves in relation to leadership and whether or not they have had any leadership roles. This provides evidence that they may consciously or subconsciously be relating their leadership ability to whether or not they have held a leadership position as some of the data has indicated. The data indicates that 55.8% of the total group of respondents in School A had not had any formal leadership role while at secondary school (either within the school or outside of school). Additionally, it is indicated that over half the students are being set up to believe they have no ability to be involved in leadership because they have never been given a leadership position. This of course has validity if students are identifying leadership with a role or position. It may be that over half of the students see themselves as not leadership material and therefore they do not bother to seek leadership opportunities out. Bowman (2013) argues that unless students have everyday opportunities to tap into the power leadership experiences provide, they will not fully develop their abilities or see themselves as leaders. Furthermore, it is unlikely they will seek out opportunities unless they see themselves as leaders.

In School B, 56% of questionnaire respondents said they agreed they were a leader and 28% said they would not consider themselves to be a leader. It was heartening that 16% of the respondents strongly agreed they were a leader, although again one might have expected it to be higher. The most compelling figure in this piece of the data was that of the 28% who said they were not a leader none of them had held any formal leadership position while at secondary school. This strengthens the discussion above about the relationship between students' perception of themselves as a leader being weaker when they have never had a leadership position. Interestingly, School B has a Junior Leadership Programme for selected students which may have had some impact on this 28% who thought they were not leaders because they were not selected for this programme. This is a similar number to School A. In School B, 64% of the total students had not had any formal leadership role while at secondary school. This was larger than in School A, and may be because the leadership programme is only available to selected students. Potentially, a large group of students is being set up to believe that leadership is not for them. Student comments ranged from a positional orientation to more

informal notions of whether they saw themselves as a leader or not: "In times when a leader needs to be appointed I am okay with stepping up and taking that role …" (CSA) to the more informal approach "I am the oldest of my siblings so most of the time they look up to me" (CSB).

Some respondents disagreed that they were a leader through making comments such as, "I do not see myself as a leader" (CSA) and "I can't lead people clearly and with confidence" (CSA). These responses, rather insightfully, define leadership as having two key components: clarity and confidence. Equally perceptive is the student who said, "I would call myself a leader because I am the leader of myself and I make my choices and lead myself to paths" (CSA). Of the comments made by students in School B next to the disagree statement on the Likert Scale, 80% did not see themselves as a leader and also made a comment relating to their experience with roles or positions. This was higher than in School A. A large number of these young people talked about their leadership ability or their interest in leadership in relation to whether they had experienced a leadership position or not. Interestingly, of those who agreed they were a leader there were only a couple of comments relating to role. It is important to highlight again the leadership programme for approximately 50 students in the junior school in School B which the students spoke about often in the data. One could argue that this affirms that nearly half the students did consider themselves a leader and/or considered themselves to have some leadership qualities; surprisingly high considering the difficulty adolescents are known to have in talking about themselves and their abilities. Bowman (2013) comments that it is time middle school students stopped waiting for someone else to step up.

Student leadership development is commonly advanced through strategies of formal leadership roles (Brady, 2005). As identified, a compelling finding which became clear during the data analysis around the 'am I a leader' question was the notion that how the students view and define leadership may actually affect them accessing it. As discussed, it became clear that there was a relationship between how a young person defined leadership and whether they had experienced a formal leadership role which, in turn, impacted on whether or not they viewed themselves as a leader. This thinking was informed by such comments as, "I'm not a leader and I have never had a role" (CSA). Additionally, it was clear in the research that there was a correlation between the students' view of their personal leadership capacity and their experience in a formal role; having had experience even once meant the student was more likely to see themselves as a leader. This conclusion was bolstered by these comments such as,

"I'm not a leader because I have not had any formal leadership positions at school' (CSA). This thinking limits access for a number of students, as formal position leadership can only ever engage a small minority of students (Jones, 2004). Rosch and Kusel (2010) suggest creating a school wide team of staff and students to define leadership for them and their school and to outline practices to form a stronger and wider consensus as to what leadership is. This approach may provide students with some broader thinking on which to hang their understanding of what leadership is, how it functions and how it can be learned.

The comments by students who disagreed that they were a leader were at times rather confronting in their criticism of their personal shortcomings in terms of leadership ability. Additionally, they saw this as being the way it was for them and set in concrete with a 'great man' view that some people have the ability to lead and others do not (Jackson & Parry, 2011; Maxwell, 2007; Yukl, 2002). Students openly discussed their perceptions of their lack of leadership ability and their perceptions of how to develop their personal traits of leadership which they saw as essential in order to call yourself a leader. This included many of them concluding that they just did not have these traits: "I disagree with me being a leader because I might be a bad influence for the others and I don't want to be one" and others identifying ways of developing their skills: "No one is going to be born an amazing leader, you're only going to become a better leader after experience and getting outside your comfort zone" (1A). Some students in the questionnaires were particularly critical of themselves, making comments such as, "I make really stupid decisions" and "I don't have the confidence and I'm too lazy" (CSB). Interestingly, these comments actually reflect a certain degree of self-understanding of what a leader is. Self-understanding is highlighted in the literature as an important component of effective leadership. While these students firmly state that they are not leaders, they exhibit self-knowledge, self-analysis and self-understanding. This data could suggest that some of these self-defined non-leader students actually could be insightful leaders of themselves, and with others, despite their thinking to the contrary.

It is important to note that these are the authentic perceptions from these students and therefore contribute to whether they might seek out or attempt leadership experiences, and whether they see themselves as a leader or not. Their perceptions of themselves may or may not accord with how their friends, teachers or parents see them, but nevertheless they are their perceptions. If we sit down and listen to youth we will find a whole new side (Curtis, 2008). Individual understanding of personal skills and abilities may have been formed from experiences,

feedback, success and failure and may be shared or merely an individual's perception. These perceptions may encourage, block or inhibit individuals connecting with leadership opportunities. As discussed in the limitations section of the methodology in this study, the interviewed students self-selected and therefore, not surprisingly, they were much more positive about leadership and saw themselves as leaders more than the respondents in the questionnaires.

The interviewed students spoke of themselves as leaders; some referred to informal experiences alongside formal experiences relating to their leadership. Comments were made about broader informal ways they saw themselves leading such as, "When we had netball games, when my coach didn't come and stuff like that I would be the person who made sure our team was doing drills …" (4A). McNae (2011) expresses concern about some schools presenting leadership only through formal positions and students not realising there may be other opportunities outside those formal positions in which they can experience leadership and become a leader. The result, of course, is that many students do not see themselves as having leadership ability. Hine (2014) agrees and presents the idea that students' perceptions of leadership and themselves as leaders develops as time progresses. The Year 10 students in this study exhibited considerable depth and breadth of understanding about themselves as leaders which one may have expected to see exclusively in senior students. Such statements as, "being a leader you have the confidence and you have the motivation to do something others wouldn't" (1A) indicate an understanding of the basic requirements of leadership as defined in the contemporary literature (Jackson & Parry, 2011). Additionally, the depth of understanding of themselves as leaders first and foremost is shown in comments like, "I would call myself a leader because I like to share my ideas with others and teach them things they might be struggling with" (CSA). The students here were opening up the possibilities to call themselves a leader through focusing on simpler, skill based definitions of leadership. This will be discussed further in the Accessibility section of the Findings and Discussion. The following section discusses the themes that emerged from the research, beyond meanings, as the students discussed leadership.

Beyond Meaning: Emerging Themes of Leadership for Youth

As the students defined and discussed leadership in this study and as they analysed whether they saw themselves as a leader, the importance of the student voice with its power to drive new thinking for student leadership in schools emerged. Recurring leadership themes began to arise during the data collection as evidence of some commonality in the students' thinking. These themes, although related to some of the discussion presented so far in the findings, provide a 'deeper dig'. As the conversations took place, three key themes emerged to add to the body of knowledge relating to leadership for students: the place of confidence, leaders being seen as bossy and the concept of leadership as helping others.

The Place of Confidence

With any discussion about leadership comes the consideration of the relationship it has to self-knowledge, in this case examining what youth know about themselves, including their perception of confidence. The literature highlights the importance of the development of self-knowledge in youth leadership, whereas, while self is acknowledged (Jackson & Parry, 2011), adult leadership scholarship has tended to focus more on the leader's traits, behaviour and influence, often through a position of leadership (Bonner et al. 2008; Dempster & Lizzio, 2007). Several of the questionnaire and interview questions were designed to get students talking about what encouraged them to engage in leadership, what challenged them and what got in their way or deterred them. As a consequence, it was inevitable that the students would raise the topic of confidence in the discussions, comments and feedback. There were many comments made such as: "Confidence is something that builds. It's not something you're born with" (3A). "You need to have a bit of courage like 'I can do it' sort of thing" (3B). The understanding students had of themselves and their confidence level was reflected in these comments. Students talked frequently about the relationship between leadership and confidence and how they had responded or reacted in given situations and whether confidence had played a part in their level of engagement with leadership. Some said they had the confidence to lead, others said they did not have the confidence to lead. "Because I'm not really confident in leadership" (CSA).

Leadership has been recognised as a 'place' of learning confidence and gaining a sense of purpose (Curtis, 2008). Students also perceived there to be a positive correlation between an

individual having confidence and in that person choosing to lead or being chosen to lead. They reflected that sometimes only small amounts of confidence are required. "You get confidence when you're talking to people on the bus, saying thanks to the driver or saying hi to random people" (3B). At other times leadership requires greater amounts of confidence than young people are able to muster: "No I'm not a leader because no one listens to me or I'm not brave enough" (CSA). Some of the students who said they felt it was related to bravery or courage found having confidence a challenge and almost all of these students said they did not see themselves as a leader. Many students referred to a lack of confidence in the questionnaires and interviews as definitely forming an inhibitor to them and to others in seeking out any leadership opportunities. The important message the students shared here was that there were two sides to the confidence coin; the 'I have confidence, I can lead' or 'I don't have confidence, I can't lead' message. 'Don't have confidence and so won't try leadership' seemed to be the catch cry amongst many of the self-described non-leaders. There were many students in the study who were not confident in their ability to be a leader. They just did not have the confidence and therefore concluded that leadership was not for them: "because I have never had the confidence to be one" (CSB). Many of these students saw having confidence, or not having confidence, as a 'done deal' and just the way it was and this either encouraged them or stopped them from seeking out any opportunities to be involved in leadership.

Both students who identified as leaders and those who identified as non-leaders saw having confidence in yourself meant you had a head start in terms of leadership. "Being a leader you have the confidence and you have the motivation to do something others wouldn't" (1A). Whilst the place of confidence in leadership is not surprising or new, students identified some key behaviours and attitudes they saw as related to developing confidence: early opportunities to try leadership, the removal of negative thoughts, the spontaneous jumping in and the positive result of putting yourself out there were identified as common catalysts to start leading. "Once they get that first step that's when they're going to find the courage to go ahead and find more opportunities" (1A). This first step to try leadership was seen as extremely important to the students.

Importantly in the findings, there was considerable data relating to how difficult it can be for young people to ignore the negative feedback from peers and how this can erode their confidence to try leadership or take that first step. "Even though you're the leader your say and opinion can never be right" (3B). The fear of how their peers might respond seemed to be

keeping some young people from leadership. Lizzio et al. (2011) found that it is a student's sense of identification and not their level of achievement motivation that predicts their willingness to contribute and engage in leadership in their school. Developing a sense of identification for young people includes developing confidence. The students in this study had a sense of their level of confidence, or their perceived lack of confidence, in relation to leadership. As a student from one pair offered, "…you just need to be confident. To be a leader and stand out you just need to get rid of those negativities, like those judgmental comments. You just need to be confident and believe you can" (1B). Many of the students who had started leadership and who saw themselves as leaders spoke of how they had started at primary school or from a teacher picking them as a leader early on in their education which gave them the confidence to believe they could lead. "When we were in primary school I think leadership was done fairly well, everyone had a job around the classroom" (1B).

It is certainly not surprising that confidence is an enabler or inhibitor in engaging students in leadership and that the earlier someone encourages and instils confidence in young people the better. There was a feeling amongst students that once someone had been identified by the teachers as a leader then they continued to be given opportunities.

> I think leadership should be offered to everyone, not just a few people because often I think people just feel like I wasn't a born leader, I don't have the confidence and so the leadership roles are often given to a certain group of people. (1A)

There are those who put themselves forward and those who do not as identified by this student: "The first person who has the confidence they go up to the teacher and say they want to be the class rep. But there's heaps of kids over there who want to but they can't because they don't have the confidence" (3A).

Essentially there are two key findings from this study relating to confidence. First, the students who described themselves as leaders said that some of their peers who described themselves as non-leaders actually had significant leadership potential and if they were just given the chance to try leadership that would have increased their confidence to be involved. "I don't have the confidence and so the leadership roles are often given to a certain group of people, not to everyone. And when that happens all these people who do have the potential to become a good leader, they never become a good leader because they haven't had the opportunity presented to them" (1A). This student summarises the perceived unfair playing field very well:

It's always the kids who have already been there who have the confidence from a long time ago. They are the ones who have already been given the opportunities which make them look like the best leaders when in actual fact they haven't improved since primary school, they've just been given the opportunities. (3A)

There is a salient student leadership message to educators here; the students who see themselves as leaders know that there are others who could be involved if somebody just gave them the opportunity.

The second key finding relating to confidence (and connected to the first), is that some students just do not get an opportunity to lead. This finding identifies a small lever which has the potential to initiate change in whether students try leadership. Students spoke of a lack of confidence stopping them from starting leadership or stopping them from stepping up to lead even once. "There's heaps of kids who want to (try leadership) but they can't because they don't have the confidence… they've never had the confidence to bring that confidence out" (3A). These students are stuck as they need confidence to begin. Additionally and most importantly, it seemed that stepping up to lead once meant that you were more likely to step up twice. The notion of providing all students with a chance to lead or step up once in a non-threatening manner is important if we are to unlock the confidence barrier to leadership for young people. "There's a lot of people you know who would actually become a very good leader but they just don't have that step of confidence and motivation to become a leader" (1A). Grothaus (2004) believes most teenagers do not possess an innate confidence in their leadership ability when just left to their own devices. There is no doubt that more can be done to help young people see themselves as leaders, to give them a confidence boost. The young people in this study were asking for help for themselves and more importantly for their peers through the chance to have one experience in leadership to lift their confidence. Statements such as, "I don't yet have the ability to lead a group well enough, but I would love to learn qualities so that I can become a leader" (CSB) tell us that young people are keen to develop themselves and their ability and they need help from educators to get them started.

The considerable amount of data in this study relating to the importance of confidence gives a message to educators that there is a need for learning and support to encourage students to think differently and to give them the tools to step forward to seek out leadership opportunities. It is important for adults to learn the fine balance between being supportive and getting out of the

way (Curtis, 2008). This balance is essential in providing authentic opportunities for all students to experience leadership.

Being Seen As Bossy

People need encouragement to perform to the best they are able, leaders have an understanding that one person might not be encouraged by the same thing as another person (Kouzes & Posner, 2015). Whenever leadership approaches or styles are discussed, the use and misuse of power becomes part of the conversation. The use and misuse of power by the leader over others, or by others over the leader, was of interest to the students in this study, along with the challenges this brings for the leader. The students seemed to understand that power and leadership have a relationship with each other and they made comments demonstrating their understanding of this. "I think a good leader is someone who doesn't use their power as an advantage to themselves" (1B). Despite the fact that there were no questions within the questionnaire or interviews that directly related to the concept of power, the topic came up frequently. This could have been predicted perhaps once the students started to talk about how they would describe leadership and particularly related to the challenges and barriers to leading others. The students voiced power throughout the data as 'being bossy', selecting the word 'bossy' when discussing the power the leader was perceived to have by their peers and the power that peers may have over the leader. Daft and Pirola-Merlo (2009) identify three outcomes which may result from the use of power by the leader: compliance, resistance or commitment.

The idea of resistance from their peers seemed to worry the students; with them either questioning how they might achieve commitment from the group as a leader or more commonly with them worrying how their peers might perceive them if they tried to achieve these outcomes. The students made comments such as, "it can also be very frustrating if you are the person in the leadership position because you can't make everyone happy all the time … people would start turning against them [the leader]" (1B) and "I don't really lead people, I don't like telling people what to do. I also dislike being the centre of attention" (CSB).

The students were happy to help others to step up, or to have others help them to step up. However, students described a 'not so good leader' as one who actually makes you do something, who uses power over you and who seeks compliance as suggested by Daft and Pirola-Merlo (2009). It was clear students were concerned about those who used power to gain

compliance. As one student explained, "I think a good leader is someone who doesn't use their power as an advantage to themselves … because I'm the leader I'm going to help you to do something which normally you wouldn't be able to do" (1B). The word 'boss' or 'bossy' arose in the data numerous times, most often relating to how some leaders were negatively viewed by others and how they personally did not want to be seen as bossy. "I think it's important to have a good leader…they should definitely be appreciated instead of just being insulted for being too bossy or like you're not the boss of us" (1A). Being seen by their peers as bossy or a 'know all' put some students off being interested in leadership and was an obviously fearful thought for these young people, particularly as it may see them ostracised by the group and isolated from their peers.

All interviews involved some conversation, initiated by the young people themselves, around the fear that others may think of them as 'bossy' leaders, telling people what to do, and the use of power. Some students voiced their distaste of this criticism from others: "There are a few people who are not confident themselves to step up and be a leader but when there is a leader they're kind of always making bad comments" (1A). An understanding of the potential impact of how a student might use power over others was prevalent in the interview discussions and also present, to a lesser extent, in the questionnaires. Some students appeared to shy away from any leadership opportunities to avoid appearing bossy simply because they could see no other way to lead. This was reflected through comments such as, "I think they should definitely be appreciated instead of just being insulted for being too bossy" (1A). The fear of being rejected or made fun of or separated from the group was referred to throughout the data. "It's like a 50/50 chance because they can take it the wrong way or they could take it the good way and you're still putting yourself out there …" (1A).

Some students gave the solution to being seen negatively by their peers in just doing it anyway: "You just need to be confident. To be a leader and to stand out you just need to get rid of those negatives, like those judgmental comments" (1B). McNae (2011) explains, however, that not all views of leadership from the students' perspective are positive. She identifies the pressure put on student leaders by others, something that is particularly prevalent in the teenage years. The students in both McNae's study and in the present research study referred to how difficult it made it for the leader when their positional power was challenged or when the group used power upon the leader to 'put them in their place'. "I think when you're assigned a leadership role … you obviously have more pressure on you. There's other people nagging on your case"

(3A). The students who had experienced negative responses to leadership voiced their dissatisfaction: "If you don't have the guts to do that (lead), let them do that. Like honestly" (1A).

Students who had experienced leadership were frustrated by the attitude of some of the other students towards them when they were doing their best. The fear of how the group may respond to them as a leader and to their perceived power was referred to by some students as a factor that puts some people off leading. The perception of the group that the leader needs 'knocking off their perch' may stop some young people being attracted to leadership, or alternatively, it may make them more determined to lead effectively when in a position. One student gave a great example:

> Sarah was our form rep last year and 'she felt the pressure one day' and she started crying because nobody would listen to her. That set an example to me to not let the pressure build up … one day she just sorted it out. She said "I'm your form rep and I don't care what you do to me but I am a leader … and I don't want to be treated this way as a leader. (3B)

When one considers that adolescence is the age of the formation of identity it is hardly surprising that young people would want to be accepted by their peers rather than rejected for standing apart from the crowd.

Kouzes and Posner (2015) refer to strong healthy relationships needing to be built on trust and sincere concern for others. It is difficult for students to risk their relationships with their peers and step into leadership, trusting that their peers will support them. Several students spoke of the challenge of speaking up or stepping up to lead when you are not in a formal leadership position as being particularly difficult, as you have no assigned power or mandate and are more likely to be seen as bossy. "With an assigned position it's like we have all agreed on this and everyone is made aware ... when you're stepping up its almost like who does she think she is to step up and why does she think she can do it?" (1B). This comment provides key learning for educators about how students feel about whether they have the right to step forward to lead if they do not have a position or another mandate to give them permission.

The students referred to people not listening, or others thinking you're full of yourself or bossy, or of people leaving you out of the 'in crowd'. "To stand in front of those girls and point out your opinions that this is right and that's wrong, that takes a lot of courage and a lot of leadership" (2A). The young people felt they sometimes needed a mandate to be listened to,

otherwise they did not feel they had the right to tell others what to do or to 'boss them around' and it helped when that mandate was a position. Curtis (2008) says it is about balance; if power is non-authentic then young people will fail. They will also fail if they are burdened with responsibility. He describes youth as sometimes wanting to participate more than they are prepared to participate and that education in leadership fills the gap. From what Curtis (2008) and these students are saying, it seems that leadership education for the wider student body around the use of power, respect for others, conflict leadership, and communication, is needed. In the words of the students this would include an understanding of the term 'bossy' and how this can be captured in a strengths based approach to grow leadership interest and potential.

In their study, Cheung and Tsang (2002) refer to the role schools have as a source of stress and a source of relief for students. They suggest creating a balance for students between the stress of the challenge and the stress caused by the fear of failure or the fear of looking silly in front of peers. This balances the motivation to lead and the fear that may be stopping students from leading. These scholars highlight the nature of adolescence and the formation of identity as providing barriers for youth because they worry so much about what their peers think. This has been confirmed in the data in this present study; young people are fearful of what their peers think. It was particularly clear in the interviews, even though the students had self-selected to be interviewed, that most of them were aware of being careful with peers and they were aware that this awareness and in some cases fear was a blocked access to leadership for many students. This finding is compelling; students need a culture of leadership within the school which sheds a positive light on leadership for young people, encouraging and giving them permission to be involved. Students do not want to be seen as bossy, so they need those who are providing leadership experiences to acknowledge their fears and to provide opportunities. There is a need for programmes of learning providing alternative thinking in order to provide solutions and put young people's fears at rest.

Bowman (2013) describes middle school students as not realising that they have power and suggesting they could access it if they just knew where to find it. Findings from the present study supports Bowman's conclusions with the data showing many students find the thought of power over their peers frightening which disengages them from leadership. Seemingly, many young people may not understand power enough to know how to access and use it in a positive manner. Bowman (2013) highlights that it may be that schools are overloading some students with responsibility and yet proving them with no learning around leadership practices,

as a result they often do not use positional power well. Extending leadership practices through educating students in the informal, smaller, daily opportunities available within the school context takes some of the fear out of power and the complexity out of leadership. Helping students understand the notion of power as other than 'being bossy' allows them to define and assess it with a broader view, rather than assuming that people think they are just being bossy. Lizzio et al., (2011) describe making students feel safe, confident and encouraged is paramount if students are to engage in leadership. It is largely a matter of educating young students in leadership practices so they can understand leadership better and therefore feel safer trying it out.

Helping Others

Hine's (2014) study found that transformational and servant leadership views were more developed in senior students than in the more junior students. Interestingly, the present study found that many of the junior secondary school students had a clear understanding of elements of leadership that aligned with servant leadership. In defining and discussing leadership, many students included the notion of helping others, generally citing it as an important component of leadership or as a general way of viewing it. "Leadership is including others and basically just listening to other people's opinions" (3B). A more direct approach towards helping was offered in the following statement, "If people understood the entire process of helping and not advising I would think a lot more people would view that as a leadership role because they understand what it is about" (1A). Students spoke of helping others; this seemed to be understood by them as being deeply connected to leadership. Although students spoke of helping and supporting others, unsurprisingly they tended not to use the word service or to mention servant leadership.

An understanding of the concept of servant leadership or service to others was certainly evident in the interviews, although students did not define leaders as servants or even use the word service but rather they presented the concept that leadership was about others not yourself and they related helping others to leadership. As one student stated: "The people they're the leader of, it's more important for them to be successful, for them to have a good time doing something because they know it will benefit them, not themselves" (1A). This aligns with Sipe and Frick's (2009) work, from which they identify true leadership as emerging from those whose primary motivation is that deep desire to serve. There was much data generated in the present study that indicated that many of the students were actually able to consider others, think beyond

themselves, and were passionate about doing so. "I'm going to help you do something which normally you wouldn't be able to do" (2A). This was very prevalent in the interviews where students referred again and again to leadership being about helping others.

Often simple acts of helping were discussed: taking netball practice, giving up your seat on the bus or helping the PE teacher. Students viewed the leader's role as being "to like help people, to make sure they are actually having what they deserve and (the leader) is someone who is selfless" (1A). The idea of selfless leadership and of leaders putting themselves aside for a greater good beyond themselves was seen as effective leadership and in some ways necessary for leadership to exist. There was considerable reference to leaders not putting themselves first; "they don't really think about themselves as much as they would about other people" (1B). This supports some of the early work in the literature on servant leadership initiated by Robert Greenleaf (2002). The notion of servant leadership is deeply embedded in the leader's first priority of serving others, to ensure that other people's needs are being served before one's self (Greenleaf, 2002). Servant leadership is a more contemporary view of leadership and perhaps requires some movement of thinking away from more traditional models relating leadership to simply having followers and a common goal.

For most of the students, 'helping others' was seen as a desirable trait for young people to develop and something that is transferable from context to context. 'Helping others' as a theme within a leadership education programme could be used to encourage students to consider involving themselves in leadership as the skills are highly transferable. The likely result of instilling the habit of service in youth has considerable long term benefits to families, schools, communities and the young people themselves (Curtis, 2008). Packaging leadership as 'helping others' simplifies the concept of leadership and therefore may make it possible for some who have not been involved before to become involved. One student described why she thought she was a leader by saying: "I'm always motivated and determined to do anything, kind, helpful, treating others how I want to be treated …" (CSA). Helping others fits into the 'soft skills' that schools wish to develop in their students and those which employers are looking for in their employees. The students in the study saw 'helping others' as leadership. "People come to you for help if they're stuck or something. And I guess that is a kind of form of leadership. Like being able to help someone along the way."(4B). Lombardi (2001) states that leaders are made, not born. Traits such as 'helping others' are able to be developed through leadership education and schools providing experiences so students have an opportunity to learn how to help others.

If leadership is as the students say, 'helping others', then it really does simplify the notion of leadership. If it is indeed largely about helping others then it can be tried out in simple ways across a wide variety of situations. Opening or broadening our understanding of leadership and making it more easily accessible to a larger group of students is the key finding of this research.

Servant leadership is a contemporary view of leadership which has emerged in recent years in the literature relating to adult theories around service to others (Sipe and Frick, 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2016). These Year 10 students had a decent grasp of the meaning of service, helping others, the sacrifices, the challenges and the rewards involved in leadership. As one student said:

> It's not because I'm the leader I'm going to make you do something you don't even need to do. But instead, because I'm a leader I'm going to help you do something which you wouldn't be able to do [by yourself]. (1B)

Servant leadership and service are discussed further in Chapter 5 with regard to methods to make leadership accessible for students. It is important to connect this discussion with the concept of 'helping others' as this is how the students themselves have described service and how they seem to understand it. This is an important finding in this study as there is considerable potential to broaden the concept of leadership through service, which young people see as helping others, and to offer these experiences to all young people. It is equally important, however, to talk about it in their language. Therefore, this study offers the notion of the 'helping others' as a youth centred approach to servant leadership. The students have named it, recognise its importance and want to know more about how they can develop it. Hackett and Lavery (2011) agree there is potential to broaden the concept of leadership through service and to offer these experiences to all young people rather than a selected few. They report that schools offering opportunities for service across the student body were more inclined to help a greater majority of students to step up. This study challenges educators to go one better and focus leadership on helping others as named and understood by the students, rather than service which tends to be an adult led concept. Educators have an opportunity to respond to this student voice and to reframe leadership from service to helping others; and connecting more students to the broader range of opportunities that exist within the secondary school context.

CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
ACCESSING LEADERSHIP

Accessibility to leadership for secondary school students is the focus of this research study. When we consider accessibility to leadership it is perhaps summed up well by this student: "I think it's really important to have leaders wherever you are, like it's really an important thing" (CSA).

The key elements discussed in this part of the findings focus on research sub-questions 2 and 3. The first research sub-question is: 'What do students say about access to leadership opportunities in the secondary school context'? The second research sub-question is: 'How might informal leadership opportunities influence access to leadership for students in secondary schools'? Many of the statements and questions in the questionnaire and interviews related to students talking about what they thought was important about leadership, why they thought it was important, and what they could gain from it. Additionally, students spoke about their personal experiences with accessing leadership while at secondary school and their ideas of who had access and how more people might gain access. Lizzio et al. (2011) suggest that leadership can be through social contribution to drive change and that peeling back the layers, as this current research has attempted to do, allows us to find out what youth think are the benefits of leadership outside of a role. The first section of this chapter therefore discusses challenges and blockers which inhibit access, leaders and non-leaders, and leaders seeing leadership in others.

An additional major aspect to emerge from the data collection and analysis relates to the idea of why bother with leadership, which is also included within this chapter, and incorporates a discussion on personal development and developing leadership opportunities which are available for more than a privileged few students. Findings relating to access through formal and informal leadership are then discussed. Finally, findings that focus on emerging themes to open up access are discussed as: simplify it, teachers choosing, why wait to lead. Kouzes and Posner (2012) highlight that leadership can be learned. They define it as a pattern of practices and behaviours alongside a set of skills and abilities. If it can be learned, then access to learning leadership is vital.

Is Leadership Accessible?

Much of the interview discussion revealed an 'us' (as leaders)' and them (as non-leaders) situation. Of interest, the interviewed students pointed out the gaps in opportunities for some students and the inequities across the student body when accessing leadership opportunities. Many references to their experiences of leadership were in the primary school context.

When asked in the questionnaire to respond to the statement: I can get access to leadership opportunities in this school, over 84% of the students in School B agreed. However, only one percent strongly agreed and one percent disagreed. In School A, 70.5% of the students surveyed agreed that they could get access to leadership opportunities in the school, 13% of students strongly agreed and 16% of students disagreed. Additionally, it is worth noting that when the students in the questionnaire were asked if they were interested in having more leadership opportunities, 60% in School A said they agreed and 14.8% said they strongly agreed. In School B, 56% said they agreed and 28% said they strongly agreed. These students were sending a clear message that they wanted more opportunities to experience leadership. The interviews provided an opportunity for the researcher to dig a little deeper to find out if there was a trend among the students who disagreed they could get access. Generally, the students who said they agreed that leadership was accessible in the school, also said they would like more opportunities to be available. Again, a clear message to educators. There was a general feeling amongst interviewed students that "leadership is basically everywhere" (3A). "Leadership is pretty much everywhere and it's really easy to access" (3B). Simply summarised by one student who stated: "everyone in the group is a kind of a leader in their own type of way" (5A). This links to the strength of an informal approach to leadership and how it has the potential to allow more students to become involved (Hine, 2014). Those students with a less positional, more informal view (Hine, 2014; McNae, 2011) find that there is more access to leadership. Those with a positional view may see limited access as they focus on the limited number of roles available in the school.

There appeared to be a significant trend in the data that the students who saw themselves as leaders also found leadership to be easily accessed. Whereas the students who felt access was somehow restricted often saw themselves as not having leader traits or characteristics. "If you don't get in that group of people who are generally chosen for leaders, you're going to miss

out from the whole of your intermediate and high school life" (3A). This is compelling when one considers that if students are not chosen for a leadership role at an early age it may either motivate or deter them from trying leadership. This is certainly an interesting theme that has emerged. Young people's view of whether it is worthy of their time and energy to connect with leadership experiences appears to be a catalyst to whether they are motivated to seek opportunities. How they measure 'worthy' was discussed in the previous chapter under the heading: Realising the Value of Leadership.

Challenges and Blockers Stopping Access

There is an old saying that people do things for two reasons: either because they want to or because they have to (Gray, 2004). Getting young people to want to engage in leadership is, in part, about them wanting to overcome the challenges. One student in the interviews defined leadership in a simplistic form as: "leadership to me is just like a way of coming out of your shell" (2A). In the adolescent years, when young people are finding themselves and forming their identity, there are risks associated with 'coming out of your shell', in showing confidence or in being the person to take the lead amongst your peers. To be meaningful to adolescents, any leadership learning or experience needs to consider young people's idealism, their quest for independence and their formation of identity (Van Linden & Fertman, 1998).

The first challenge to engaging in leadership is sometimes confidence. Many students referred to a lack of confidence as being an inhibitor or a blockage, stopping them seeking out any leadership opportunities. These students made comments such as: "I can't lead people clearly or with confidence" (CSA). Confidence indeed appears to be a limiting factor in students presenting themselves as available for leadership as discussed in Chapter 4. Students identified increased confidence as providing increased opportunity for leadership, often gained in simple ways: "you learn that you get confidence when you're talking to people on the bus, saying thanks to the driver or saying hi to random people" (3A).

The second challenge or constraint in accessing leadership opportunities for young people seems to exist in their attitude towards personal growth. A good example is the student who says: "I'm not a leader because I can't cooperate with others and listen to other people" (CSA). Whilst the student is saying they are not a leader, this statement actually implies they have an understanding of some of the growth that may be required to become a leader. The student identifies two blocks to leadership; a lack of cooperation and a lack of listening.

A third challenge or block to engaging with leadership that the students revealed is that students worry about what other people will think. For adolescents, what people think of them can be a strong inhibitor. "I've missed lots of opportunities, probably because of what people think" (5A). This concern was raised many times during the data collection with students saying that it stopped them, either completely or on a number of occasions from trying leadership. "You shouldn't feel so offended when it does happen [people giving you a hard time] because a lot of the time when people are in the wrong they take it so harshly" (3A). The young people highlighted feeling afraid of making a fool of themselves. In a student's view: "if you're not leading properly then they won't cooperate with you" (3A). The fear of what others think, the need for young people to gain acceptance from other young people and the desire to fit in can all be counterproductive to young people putting themselves out there to lead. "There are a few people who are not confident themselves to step up and be a leader but when there is a leader they're kind of always making bad comments" (3A). One student proposed that: "someone's got to do it and if you're not going to do it, let the other person do it" (3D). If we could find a lever to place underneath the rock of fear and the lack of confidence in young people to enable them to begin, or even to want to begin, to step forward then we may catalyse some change.

Despite the difficulties, students felt they learnt from the challenges they had experienced; it made them a stronger leader and a stronger person. "Everyone should be a leader, more than just one person. We all have different opinions to share. If we have the same person all the time it's the same opinions all the time" (4A). It is through having the courage to share these opinions and overcome the challenges that sometimes one begins to lead. Strom (2014) describes it as learning wisdom, suggesting that we do not minimise the risks and hardship but highlight the learning from adversity as a positive. He describes wise leaders having learnt the hard way. There was considerable discussion from the students about making mistakes and the place that making errors has in leadership and how not getting it right can play a role in personal development and learning about yourself. Many students were aware that leadership can provide this opportunity. "I think it's [leadership] really good for yourself inside because although you make lots of mistakes, by making mistakes you actually learn from them and I think it really does help you in the future" (1C).

Leaders and Non-Leaders

Much of the literature focuses on student leaders as we would like them to be rather than who and what they are (Dempster & Lizzio, 2007). This results from adult centred approaches to

youth leadership. Bowman (2013) identifies the leadership dynamic in middle school is in having young people who are "engaging and engaged, connecting and connected, and supporting and supported" (p. 61). This research is interested not only in who young people are but in who they say they are. Additionally, the historical literature on leadership focused on one charismatic individual leader based on the Great Man Theory (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). There are a couple of interesting trends when we examine the relationship between those who have had formal positions and their opinion on access to leadership. In School A, 55% of questionnaire respondents said they had had no formal leadership position, yet 87% of those students said they could get access to leadership. It seems they could get access but not as a formal leadership role. They understood that there were other opportunities beyond a role. In School B, 64% said they had had no formal leadership positions at secondary school and a convincing 91% felt they could get access to leadership opportunities. This is potentially compelling evidence that the participant students knew leadership was available even though they had never had a leadership position. Some students said that if you want an actual position or role rather than other more informal opportunities then you needed to seek it out yourself. "If you want a leadership role they're not giving it to you, you need to find the leadership roles and you need to work really hard because leadership roles at [School A] they're there. They're not very common" (3A).

These findings show that there was access to leadership, yet somehow many of the students had not gained any experience in leadership, formal or informal, and saw themselves as non-leaders. In School B it was compelling to find that of the students who said 'No I'm not a leader' (28% of the questionnaire respondents), none of them had experienced any formal leadership roles. To further add to the leader vs. non-leader discussion, in School A, of the 33% who said they were not a leader, only 13% had ever held a formal position as a leader. This lack of ever having had a role appeared to be closing down the students' ability to see themselves as a leader in either a role or a less formal leadership situation.

As stated in the Methodology chapter, the students who self-selected for the interviews all saw themselves as either currently or potentially a leader and hence had put their hand up to be interviewed. Most of these students had experienced leadership either in the school environment or outside in the community. It was not surprising therefore that they offered to be interviewed. Interestingly, almost all of these interviewed students were very aware that there were other students who could lead if the opportunity was opened up, or if they just chose

to step up. This widening of the opportunity to lead for those who have not had a chance previously is discussed elsewhere in the findings and has emerged as a strong theme of access in this research study.

Leaders Seeing Leadership in Others

Kouzes and Posner (2015) refer to great leaders as being great learners and encourage leaders to stay open to new ideas and the views of others. In essence, there were two clear groups of students in the data when talking about whether they had access to leadership or not. The first group (the self-identified non-leaders) said they did not have the skills, ability or inclination to be a leader and therefore they were not open to finding ways to access leadership opportunities. Lizzio et al. (2011) describe a students' sense of identification as predicting their willingness to engage in leadership in their school. This first group were the self-identified 'non-leaders' who appeared to have not sought opportunities and/or to have not been offered the opportunities. The second group were those who identified themselves as leaders. This group said that their peers who were the non-leaders, actually did have the ability to lead, however, they had not been given a chance. This group of 'leaders' seemed annoyed that some of their peers had not been given any opportunity to have access to leadership as they knew what their peers were missing out on. They raised this several times in the interviews to make sure that their message was heard. The fact that some young people are worried about other young people not having access to the learning that leadership can provide is an important finding in this study.

When discussing making leadership available to all students, the interviewees frequently compared secondary school to primary and intermediate school leadership experiences. Students found primary school leadership very available and accessible: "when we were at primary school I think this [leadership] was done fairly well. Everyone had a job around the classroom" (1B). Students felt at primary school, everyone was seen as a leader and they saw how each person's strengths were appreciated and how opportunities for growth were given. However, there seemed to be a need to be seen as a leader early on. "…if you don't get in that group of people who are generally chosen for leaders, you're going to miss out for the whole of your high school life". "People who from a young age got their first opportunity" was a common response when asked who gets chosen for leadership roles. "They've been given the opportunity earlier so they've already built up their confidence" (1B). There is a message here to secondary school educators.

Hackett and Lavery (2011) ask what happens to the leadership ability and promise of the students who are not selected as the designated leaders or who do not see themselves as leaders. The findings from the present study tell us that the self-identified leaders speaking up for the non-leaders is what could make a difference to non-leaders connecting to leadership. Hackett and Lavery (2011) refer to the importance of listening to the student voice to identify themes and new thinking around student leadership. The students are relying on educators to listen.

> I know heaps of my friends from intermediate school and things, they're amazing people. They've just never been given a chance to become a good leader and I know if they were given the chance they could be amazing leaders. (1A)

Why Bother With Leadership?

Leadership capacity building is a key factor in sustainable school improvement (Dempster et al., 2011), but whether students are aware of the benefits and capacity of student leadership is another matter. This section explores what students think they might gain from leadership experiences as part of their overall education, what value it might hold for them in terms of future development and what would encourage them to bother with leadership experiences. Bowman (2013) says that "leadership responsibility in a globally interconnected, independent world must be shouldered by everyone, right now" (p. 59). It seems pertinent then to ask the question, why is leadership important. One question in the questionnaires drilled to the core of the 'why bother with leadership' theme by asking for a response to the following statement: 'leadership experiences are important in your secondary education'.

In their answers, 61% of the students in School A agreed that leadership is important while you're at secondary school and 32.8% strongly agreed that it was important. Therefore, a total of 99% of the students agreed with the importance of leadership experiences while at school. "I think it really does help you in the future because it teaches you things that you really won't be able to be taught from anything else" (3B). There were no students who strongly disagreed. In School B, 56% of the students agreed and 44% strongly agreed. The students in this second school also felt strongly that leadership was important while at school with no students disagreeing at all and 100% of students agreeing that it was important. The results in both schools were surprisingly similar irrespective of gender, culture or decile. These results send a very clear message to schools and the staff who lead them: leadership is seen as important to students.

Some students in the questionnaires appeared to believe that leadership was for others and not for them so therefore they could not see the advantages in leadership experiences. This suggests that the students had not really considered it. "Usually I do not participate in leadership roles" (CSB). Some students said they were unable to find a 'why' to be involved. This is again an important message; that some students are just blocking leadership out as an option and so it needs to be presented to them in a different way in order that they feel invited to participate or contribute. For many it was about finding a reason to be involved initially; leadership needs to be made less complex so that students are confident to get involved.

> If people understood the entire process of helping and not advising, I would think a lot more people would view that as a leadership role because they understand what it is about and they'll definitely understand why they're doing it. (2B)

It was evident through the interview conversations that many young people know that if people understand 'the why' they are more likely to connect with the leader and their leadership. Equally, if people understand the benefits of leadership experiences they are again more likely to want to be involved and to want their peers to have the same opportunities. The reasons for a leader doing a task or taking an action was important to the students. "There's an actual reason for making you do something" (1B). "Good leadership is someone who actually puts ideas in front of them" (1A). This relates well to many leadership concepts and theories which refer to the importance of goals, vision and values in enhancing people's understanding of why they are involved in leadership and increasing their desire to connect. Lizzio et al. (2011) highlight the importance of understanding the key factors which influence high school students' motivations to engage in formal and informal leadership in their school. The 'why bother' to lead was clear to those who had experienced leadership but seemingly less clear to those who had not; they just needed help to find and connect with the opportunities to lead. Lizzio et al. (2011) found in their findings that students who held leadership positions were different from their peers with more positive views, stronger identification with the school, and stronger leadership motivation for both themselves and others. Whilst we have identified some students who feel leadership is not for them through this study, it is very important to revisit this section when discussing how students can encourage their peers to engage in leadership. "You just need to be confident and believe that you can. Obviously in the first try you won't see the good results…and then you can try and something will happen" (1B).

Propp (2007) identified the need to find out from the students themselves their beliefs, desires and needs around leadership. Matching these beliefs, desires and needs to what can be gained

from leadership will to provide clarity for students. Through teachers listening to students' understanding of leadership for both themselves and others they will develop a better understanding of further ways young people may connect with leadership.

Personal Development

Leadership development for middle school students begins with a quest to discover who you are, what matters to you, and why you would bother to be involved in anything (Bowman, 2013; Hine, 2014; McNae, 2011). Discovering who you are is a core focus of adolescence. One of the reasons young people would want to be involved in leadership is to develop themselves. Ultimately, mastering leadership goes hand in hand with mastering yourself, so much of developing leadership is developing the self (Bowman, 2013). A chance to make themselves better as part of their adolescent growth was identified by the students as a reason they would engage in leadership. "Even in everyday situations you need personal leadership qualities" (1A). Fish (2011) argues that as soon as we accept that leadership is made up of common human skills, not some high bar of expectation or of 'superhumaness', we turn the traditional approach of providing leadership on its head. The development of common human skills was cited by students as a reason they would see leadership as positive for them personally and something to be sought out. "[Leadership opportunities] teach you certain things. They build your confidence in speaking publicly, or to other people" (1C). Another student shared: "it teaches you organisation and responsibility skills" (1D). Perhaps most importantly as quoted several times elsewhere in the findings: "it teaches you things you really won't be able to be taught from anything else" (1D). This last comment is particularly insightful; several of the interviewees referred to the personal learning gained from leadership as being rather unique and not able to be gained from other experiences. Kouzes and Posner (2016) refer to learning to be a leader as enhancing your feelings of self-worth and meaningfulness.

Students believed leadership opportunities helped them to think on their feet, to keep level-headed and be open minded towards other people. They saw these traits as being desirable, learnable, and a reason 'why' to get involved. "When you go out into the real world and you're working, those skills come in really handy because you can lose a lot just because you just can't do certain things like that" (4B). Furthermore, several students spoke of leadership goals they had set for themselves to grasp opportunities that came their way, including aspiring to leader roles such as a prefect, sports captain or a role outside of the school context. They believed these opportunities set you apart from others and developed your profile. "It makes

you shine in your friends' group and in your year group. People start knowing you" (1A). Some lessons that are learnt through leadership are gained from both having roles and from the wider leadership experiences. "I think it's really important to have leadership roles in schools and stuff because that's what's going to build your confidence and that's what's going to help you become a better leader" (1A).

Bowman (2013) explains that more positive relationships with peers, a stronger self-identification and stronger citizenship result from leadership experiences. The students in the present study also talked of interpersonal skills, increased confidence and other personal skills developing from leadership opportunities. They identified other skills too such as communication, moving outside your comfort zone, handling feedback, coping with the negatives, overcoming challenges, giving an opinion, understanding hard work, responsibility and motivation of self and others. These abilities and skills are the 'softer' skills that schools and employers are looking to develop in their students or employees. The important point here is that if this is what young people potentially gain from leadership then it needs to be available to all young people. "Obviously you know how your parents, your family, they'll always be teaching you things but they can never teach you some little things like confidence and supporting others. That will really help you in the future" (1D).

There was a certain degree of competitive attitude towards gaining leadership positions in each of the case study schools which showed that students valued having a position in leadership as an opportunity in their development despite that they knew these positions were limited. The interviewed students almost all referred to looking for opportunities to shine and be seen in the junior school, so they could get a prefect role or another leadership position in the senior school. It seemed that, to some extent, students were in the 'waiting room' for leadership, waiting until they were in the senior school when they could gain a much sought after position as discussed earlier. Much of the justification students gave for seeking leadership is the potential it has as a personal development experience for them. Often this was tied directly to having a role in which to learn and practice the skills of leadership however, they also referred to more informal experiences.

> I would not consider myself as a leader because I'm still a junior student of this school. I would like to give the opportunities to the seniors, but when it gets to the time I'm a senior I would take the opportunity to be a leader. (CSA)

The researcher probed the interview conversations to initiate a broader conversation about leadership in a less formal situation amongst friends, peers or family, and how this could provide learning and development for the students. This encouraged students to think beyond positional leadership as described in the section above.

Beyond a Privileged Few

Fish (2011) believes that developing the competencies of students is about using the right pedagogy with them. It seems that the right pedagogies firstly encourage students to understand leadership by defining it broadly enough to allow a wider group of young people to be involved. "It doesn't have to be just one person; it can be all of you. Like anyone has the opportunity to be a leader in any situation" (5B). Secondly, it's about opening up the opportunity to develop students' skills and abilities through leadership, opening it up to all students. "What I'm learning now in the leadership course is that the leader can be anyone, anywhere at any time…" (5B). These skills are the skills of effective human beings and as such the opportunity to develop these strongly humanistic skills should be open to all students, not limited in access to a privileged few. An important part of this development of skills and abilities is the learning that comes from trying and making mistakes. "I think it's really good for yourself inside because although you make a lot of mistakes, by making mistakes you actually learn from them" (1B). Hine (2014) says that we want students to grow and that part of facilitating their growth is to create a culture where it is acceptable to make mistakes. Leadership development opportunities for middle school students call them to embark on an inner journey, so they can live more productively and contribute to the world around them (Bowman, 2013). Students know that some of them are getting more chances to develop these skills than others. The school is considered to be the primary social institution given the role of transmitting and growing beliefs, values, skills and behaviours associated with good citizenship (Boyask et al., 2008; Fischman & Haus, 2012). Providing leadership capacity is a key factor in sustainable school improvement…it is important to understand the factors which influence students' motivation to engage in formal and informal leadership in their school (Lizzio et al., 2011).

Part of the discussion of whether or not to bother with leadership experiences relates to the future development of young people, including their careers. "The people who really stand out as a leader or like someone who is out there, you see them and it's also for their careers…you have that little base starter" (2A). Lerner et al. (2003) refer to the concept of positive youth development and to young people as resources on which the future must be built. Question 7

in the questionnaire asked students to rate whether leadership experiences are important to develop skills for a future career. In School A, 48.5% of students said they agreed and 48.5% of students strongly agreed. Therefore, a total of 97% of students noted leadership as important to their future career. In School B, all students acknowledged the importance of leadership to their future careers with 40% agreeing with the statement and 60% strongly agreeing. Interestingly, this was the statement in the questionnaire that the highest number of students rated as strongly agree. Students very definitely identify with leadership experiences being good for their future career and that this learning is important while at secondary school - not for some students - but for all students. This provides motivation for all students to find ways to consider leadership. "If I am given the opportunity I would probably take it or I would work towards the opportunity" (CSB).

The school aged females in McNae's (2011) study believed that leadership was a quality that future employers value and that from holding a leadership position they would be more likely to get a job. Furthermore, there was a general understanding that emerged in the student comments in this current study, that learning about leadership and having leadership experiences is an advantage when moving into a career and also as preparation for life. Providing young people with the opportunity to work in the transformative arena is valuable education for the future (Hughes et al. 2011). These authors refer to personal development as the 'transformative arena' meaning experiences in leadership can affect change in young people's lives. Students saw this as clearly advantageous: "because it will look good on your CV as well if you're applying for things outside of school" (5B). It is no surprise that educators have the responsibility of preparing young people for their 'preferred futures' (Kelly, 2003). There was much evidence in the literature of the place student leadership plays in the culture and identity of schools, however, it is not a focus of this research study. The challenge for middle school educators is to create leadership development opportunities that leverage students' willingness to cooperate in communities of engagement; to feel like they have been completely listened to, completely seen and completely trusted (Bowman, 2013).

Access through Formal or Informal Leadership

In the secondary school context there is an opportunity for students to participate in both formal and informal leadership experiences. As one student put it: "there's leadership in everyday life" (4A).

Small Informal Opportunities to Lead

With so few assigned positions in secondary schools, particularly at the junior level, there appears to be an opportunity to encourage leadership development through routine daily actions. Students themselves identify these as real or authentic opportunities: "I'm doing like the smaller jobs like welcoming and if there is anyone new, knowing their name and getting to talk to them because that's a big part of being a leader, knowing who you're leading" (4B). This insightful quote implies an understanding of the nature of informal leadership as being available to all young people. Hine (2014) supports this, noting that a recognition of 'unbadged' leadership helps to reinforce with students that everybody is in some way called to leadership. There are more opportunities for a broader group of young people if we redefine the boundaries of what is and is not leadership. Students gave examples of day to day, informal leadership such as giving up your seat on the bus, your daily organisational skills, simple routines, talking up in a sports team, encouraging fellow students, assisting teachers to quieten the class. "There's leadership in everyday life for example. There's leadership opportunities for example in the classroom. The teacher's talking, you can tell the person talking next to you to quieten down and then you're leading by being a role model" (4A). There are challenges in students accessing informal experience; they will not always pick up on the opportunities that exist in daily life. Additionally, students sometimes feel they do not have permission to access these informal experiences.

Students were aware that an assigned role or position did give automatic access to leadership and that with casual or more informal experiences you often had no mandate and therefore sometimes no power, particularly with peers.

> With an assigned position it's like we have all agreed on this and everyone is made aware…but when you're stepping up it's almost like who does she think she is to step up and why does she think she can do it…it's actually much harder to step up and do something. (2A)

McNae (2011) says it is not surprising that students associate effective leadership with performance of tasks as part of having a role in the school for that is how some schools have portrayed leadership. When asked about leading amongst their friends, helping friends with decision making and so on, students were clear that it was challenging. "A lot of people think that's just being bossy, it's none of your business" (1A). "It's not regarded as leadership when in actual fact it is. It's something that isn't given thought to. It's something that should be given thought to because it takes a lot to stand up to someone" (2B). The attitude students have towards non-positional leadership may either enhance or limit their accessibility depending on whether they are able to identify 'smaller' opportunities to lead. "Friends are just friends. No leading there. It's actually not seen as leadership but if you're giving your opinion that makes you a leader" (3B).

Students referred to their need to develop an understanding of the process of stepping up to lead, particularly informally, which could help in opening up accessibility for them. They wanted to know how to start. Curtis (2008) says youth want people to sit down with them and listen to what they have to say, to help them understand. Students identified the need for some education and learning to be provided to clarify their understanding of both formal and informal leadership and to help them see leadership differently. Students are seeking understanding, particularly in small everyday situations: "only a true leader at heart could actually step up and say 'even though you're my best friend, I care about you and that's wrong'. Not everyone could do that. I know it's hard for me to do that" (2B). The leadership learning students are seeking focuses on helping others and the everyday opportunities to lead that are available in the secondary school context. They are interested in making leadership available to a broader student group. As Bowman (2013) urges, leadership responsibility in our globally connected world must be shouldered by everyone, and right now.

Both Formal and Informal Leadership
McNae (2011) speaks about certain privileges being given to those who hold formal positions. She highlights that these school leaders get privileges that others do not get. This is of concern when we consider the discussion in Chapter 4, Why Bother with Leadership, and all the advantages for and development of young people that are highlighted in this section. Interestingly, in the research questionnaires the list of informal experiences identified by the students in School B was 50% longer than the list of formal leadership roles they had experienced. This is significant as it reveals that students know and understand that informal

leadership opportunities are available and they can name them. In School A, it was quite different; 48% listed one or more formal roles they were involved in and only 22% indicated an informal leadership experience in which they had been involved. This appeared to be the only larger disparity between the two case study schools and, interestingly, School B has a formalised Junior School Leadership Programme. The students in School B were defining leadership more as a formal role; perhaps due to the fact that they have a leadership programme at Year 9 level. A number of students seemingly cannot access formal roles, but equally might not understand that there are informal experiences available. Either they do not know these informal experiences exist or they do not view them as leadership. It's not surprising that students describe leadership as positional or the completion of tasks (McNae, 2011). Students are presented with formalised positions, such as prefects, resulting in the perception that leadership is about formal roles (Bowman, 2013; McNae, 2011). There is potential here to change students' views of what leadership is and to increase accessibility through a leadership education programme which broadens their perception and understanding of leadership to include both formal and informal learning and experiences.

Kouzes and Posner (2016) say: "Leadership is not a rank, a title or a place. Look it up in the dictionary…the word 'lead' literally comes from Old English word meaning "to go" or "to guide" (p. 6). Some students highlighted a need for learning about how to take the lead in a smaller, informal and casual manner without 'rank or title'. As one of the students previously quoted commented about these smaller experiences: "when we had netball games when my coach didn't come and stuff like that I would be the person who made sure our team was doing drills and stuff like that" (1B). This student understood that although she was not the assigned leader there were still small, seemingly insignificant, places where she could step up. Developing students' understanding of informal leadership may be as simple as role modelling the stories from others who have tried it.

One of the advantages of a less formal approach to leadership in the teenage years is the smaller amount of pressure it may place on the student, compared to the pressure of a formal position. Students do feel the pressure as highlighted in Chapter 4:

> When things would go wrong like they wouldn't listen or you'd lose a game by one or two, then they'd [the team] pressure me and they'd pull me through more leadership lessons and it just raises the bar a little. It just pressures me a lot. (3A)

There were many references to the pressure of being in a formal leadership position. Sometimes referred to as pressure, sometimes as responsibility, and often as requiring courage. This is discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and 5. "When D felt the pressure one day, she started crying because nobody would listen to her" (3A). With experiences of an informal nature, some of the challenges and pressure may be either removed or diminished significantly. "To stand in front of those girls and point out your opinions that this is right and that's wrong and that takes a lot of courage and a lot of leadership. You're just nobody to them" (3A). There seemed to be a level of understanding amongst the students of the reasons why you might step up but not necessarily an understanding of how to step up. Again this requires educators to provide the tools to enhance leadership opportunities in schools.

McNae (2011) refers to the growing body of research focusing on youth leadership that emphasises the importance of involving young people in planning their leadership. "On Wednesday when I did shout at that girl just to say that you're doing this wrong, I didn't want to be mean; that kind of inspired me to shout at more girls" (2B). Some students are caught in a more autocratic style of leadership, where perhaps they understand leadership as they have experienced it when being led by others. This may stop them from seeing leadership in a new way both formally and informally. This provides some real incentive to create a space in the curriculum, or outside of it, for learning about contemporary leadership practices and models and opening up student minds to a broader view of leadership from both a formal and informal perspective. Kouzes and Posner (2016) describe contemporary leadership as more broadly distributed than traditionally accepted. The more recent adaptive leadership, distributed leadership and servant leadership models all provide learning about current leadership practices; learning that is available through both informal and formal leadership education. It was interesting to see how the discussion in the interviews evolved once the young people had been provided with some prompts to peel back the layers of thinking from the more formal roles to experiences occurring in flexible and informal contexts. This may indeed allow for a broader definition of leadership and therefore open up access for a wider group of students. We are all leaders, we need to serve others regardless of whether we wear a badge or not (Hine, 2014). "You have to be there for people no matter what your situation is. It's not all about yourself" (5A).

Emerging Themes to Open Up Access

Hampton's Model of Youth Civic Engagement defines three stages of effective participation for young people in civic contribution and leadership and is useful in the current study: 1) projects, tasks and service; 2) input and consultation; and 3) shared leadership (Curtis, 2008). These three stages have much to contribute to an accessible student leadership framework for schools and relate very well to the student feedback relating their perception of leadership to each of these three stages.

During the data collection and analysis, emergent themes came from both the responses the students gave to the questions and from the wider discussions. These themes provide new knowledge on accessibility to student leadership and are considered in the findings of this research study. The students were asked to respond to two statements that related specifically to access to leadership in the questionnaire. Statement 4: It is easy to be involved in leadership in this school and Statement 5: I can get access to leadership opportunities in this school. The interviewed students were asked whether they felt they had access to leadership opportunities at the school and whether they perceived any barriers. Accessibility also arose in the answers and discussion relating to other questions in both the interviews and the questionnaires. From this data three key themes emerged: simplify it, teachers choosing, and waiting to lead.

Simplify It

Perhaps the most significant hurdle for young people seeking leadership experiences is their perception of what leadership involves and in them sometimes making it more complex than it actually is. Changing the perception of the complexity of leadership for young people may result in increasing their engagement with leadership. "Once people get the first step that's when they're going to find the courage to go ahead and find more opportunities" (1A). As discussed, Lizzio et al. (2011) describe the importance of making students feel safe, confident and encouraged. The current study has identified how simplifying leadership will likely make students feel 'safe, confident and encouraged' and therefore more willing to be involved. Simplifying leadership has the potential to improve access to it, through students having a better understanding of leadership and feeling safe and confident in trying it. One student stated: "it [leadership] means to have courage and simply to be kind…I tell people what to do without actually telling them so they don't feel offended or disheartened" (4B). This seems a

simple and accessible way of viewing leadership. Or as another student stated quite simply, "I encourage people to do more than they think they can do" (3B). This again demystifies the concept of leadership and makes it about just being kind and encouraging of others to do the same. Understanding leadership in this way makes leadership possible for anyone who is willing to be kind and encouraging. It seems sensible to distil leadership to something you can understand and can control yourself in terms of how and why you might be interested in being involved. As already highlighted, Fish (2011) suggests that as soon as we say leadership is not about setting the bar so high that nobody can reach it but rather it is a set of common human skills, then we turn the thinking upside down. One student agrees with this thinking: "I would consider myself to be a leader because I am self-manageable and stick to the thing I do with all my heart" (CSA). This approach is both simple and achievable.

Sharing leadership amongst a group can also simplify it. Many of those who identified themselves as not being a leader also referred to a personal lack of confidence to follow their ideas or begin to engage, because it sounded too difficult or too complex. However, if the leadership is shared amongst the group then it may seem less insurmountable for individuals. It seems from the data that some young people find leading difficult; it sometimes just sounds too hard to get started: "once they get that first step that's when they're going to find the courage to go ahead and find more opportunities" (1A). This statement sums up the importance of simplifying or facilitating the first step in experiencing leadership. The students told stories to support this: "we went on a leadership day course. It was awesome because I was such a conservative child so it was like just amazing that the teachers realised that I actually had some leadership skills" (6B). This tells the story of a one day course used as a first step to try leadership, giving this young person a message of encouragement to come and test the leadership water. Simplifying leadership has the potential to open up access to leadership for those who have not had access before.

Teachers Choosing

Teachers themselves also have the potential to control, open up or close down accessibility to leadership by the way they provide opportunities for their students. "Teachers, they help to a certain extent if they're already looking at the group and sometimes like they say I'm confident in these people" (2A). Schools consider part of their role to be in developing good citizens and growing students of good character who understand responsibility (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2004). Much of the responsibility for developing these good citizens sits with the individual

teachers. Most students believed that to a certain extent leadership opportunities were either offered by teachers or controlled by teachers. "I'd say in order to be chosen a leader you have to be sociable as well. Like you have to make connections throughout the school" (5B). They said that teachers often selected the same students or the ones that they 'knew' could do the job as it was just easier for the teachers that way.

> There are two people who are going to get form rep and sports rep but you are going to have to hunt for them and you are going to have to be almost everywhere, like talk to teachers…to find leadership roles. (3A)

The students saw the lack of roles and teachers selecting for positional roles as restrictive for them and, to some extent, unfair and inequitable. Comments were made such as: "in Year 11 they tell you that you have to stand out and it just builds the pressure…" (4C), or: "the captain or the main leader would be just one person and that's not fair for the people who want to become a leader" (3A). As already discussed, roles and positions are few in the junior school which limits accessibility for leadership considerably if the only opportunity to experience it is in a formal role. "In Year 9 there's basically only two roles for leadership; like the class rep and sports captain and to be one you have to apply and you do need that courage to apply" (3A).

Grothaus' (2004) comment is again relevant. He believes that teenagers do not possess an innate confidence in their leadership ability when left to their own devices. Interestingly, the students who saw accessibility to leadership as the most unfair were those who had been in the leadership positions and saw themselves as leaders. These students felt awkward about the opportunities they had been given compared to the opportunities other students had been given. They saw these 'non-leaders' as having the ability to lead but not having been given the chance to lead by the teachers. As said best by the students: "I think that they should offer leadership education and opportunities to everyone, not just a few people…the leadership roles are often given to a certain group of people" (1A).

Bowman (2013) says that the challenge in connecting students to leadership lies in the types of leadership development opportunities being offered and using young people's natural desire to be seen, listened to and trusted to contribute. If schools encouraged students to try leadership framed in some of these desired outcomes then students may see it as advantageous to them and their future. The traditional view of leaders possessing innate qualities that others do not have may be underpinning some of the decision making of the teachers around who gets to lead

and who does not. Opportunities are sometimes given to those perceived as the 'natural leaders'. Therefore, how the school presents leadership and views it may in turn affect how the teachers themselves perceive leadership and how opportunities are presented to students.

Alternatively, some students felt it was up to students themselves to find leadership opportunities, not the teachers, and that they could find authentic opportunities if they tried: "if you want a leadership role they're not just giving it to you, you need to find the leadership roles and you need to work really hard because leadership roles at [School A]…they're not always there" (3B). These students tended to be those who saw themselves as leaders. However, most students spoke of the fact that the same students often get to lead and others never get a chance and that it was not fair. There was some frustration voiced that the roles often go to the same small group of people. "They [teachers] pick on good girls. Instead of asking the whole class" (2A). Selection processes seemed to the students to be somewhat ad hoc and inequitable. "If they say 'hands up who wants to be a leader" people get kind of self-conscious" (2A). Students wanted access opened up more equitably: "they should do something in a way…where they could actually open it up more" (2B). One student said it depends on the situation: "...I guess it just depends how they're assigned and who the person is a lot of the time" (1B).

Lodge (2005) has challenged educators saying that they need to determine how active students are in school life and whether their voice is being heard before making any decisions over who gets to lead. The message from the students to teachers in this research study around the selection processes and opportunities for leadership is well summarised in the following comment: "only after giving everyone the opportunity you're also seeing who has the potential to be an amazing leader" (6A). Students seemed aware that a student voice is often absent in the selection of leaders and in decision-making around leadership; from who gets chosen for roles to how leadership is offered and presented. Opening up access to leadership lies, to some extent, in the teachers' basket (Lizzio et al., 2011). Teachers have the potential to offer students a more active role in the decision-making around leadership. Students frequently spoke of other students they knew who would be good leaders if they were given the chance to be part of leadership within the school.

> There are lots of kids who do have the potential to become a leader but are never seen as a leader and because they are never seen as a leader they lose confidence and eventually they don't ever have the motivation. (2A)

The need for re-evaluating how leadership is offered is an important finding of this study and it presents the opportunity to offer leadership to a larger group of young people.

Waiting to Lead

Leadership positions such as head girl, cultural captain and sports captain are all highly sought after positions in the school (McNae, 2011). However, there are numerous references from the students in the current study to the very small number of formal roles in each school, particularly the junior school, and the high levels of competition to get these roles. "There are not many official leadership roles apart from the form reps and sport reps" (5A). This was identified as being particularly true at the Year 9 and 10 levels, with more roles available for senior students. There was definitely a feeling of waiting until you were in the senior school before you started leadership. "I don't have any opportunities yet because I'm a junior and we don't really get a lot of opportunities to be a leader because they all go to seniors but I'm part of a Junior Leadership Programme right now" (5B). Students appeared frustrated by the lack of opportunity for them as Year 10's.

> I reckon the juniors don't get much of an opportunity to like step out and show you they are leaders. They kind of give it to the seniors because they're more mature but they don't know that some juniors are probably more mature than the seniors. (5A)

A role or positional approach to leadership can close down access for junior students who end up having to wait for leadership opportunities until the senior roles of prefect, house leader and so on become available. There did seem to be an attitude of being in the 'leadership waiting room' until students got to the senior school when they would get the opportunity to lead if they set themselves up well during Years 9 and 10. There were many comments in the interviews challenging the teachers to 'open it up more'. Linking the two themes of 'teachers choosing' and 'waiting to lead', some students provided specific examples of how teachers could open up more opportunities for students to lead throughout the school at every year level.

> In the classrooms, maybe the teachers could give the students opportunities to teach the class, but not for too long obviously because the students have to learn. But the teacher could give them a piece of paper saying teach the class this and they teach them that for like ten minutes. (5A)

These students were giving teachers the message that they did not feel it was appropriate to wait to lead until a formal leadership position was available in the senior school and that there are a myriad ways students can lead in the school. They offered stories of their primary school experiences as an example of distributed leadership amongst entire classes: "I think it's

important just as in primary school to give everyone the opportunity" (2A). When asked about when to start offering leadership opportunities at secondary school, students felt they would like early opportunities: "as soon as you get to Year 12 and 13 the studying becomes a lot tougher" (2B). They referred to the increased pressures for senior students as getting in the way of leadership. There is no doubt that as one student stated: "you get inspiration from the senior school to actually step up" (2B). They saw potential in the senior students inspiring the junior students, however, they saw no need to wait for leadership experiences until the senior school. The earlier experiences in leadership allow for young people to develop their leadership practice over an extended period of time with increasing autonomy. "Whereas the Year 10 student leaders tended to act in a role of dependence toward mentoring staff and fellow leaders, increasingly during Year 11 and 12, their roles developed into ones of more autonomous service to others and to the school" (Hine, 2014, p. 100).

There was a good general understanding in the data of the difference between an assigned, formal leadership role and the numerous informal opportunities which may present themselves throughout the school. However, there was also a feeling that often it is the formal positions that get students' attention as being real leadership. "I think there's lots of opportunities [in the junior school] but people don't notice" (2A). The students in the interviews were able to separate and identify the more informal and casual opportunities than those who answered the questionnaires. This came from the opportunity and encouragement to think more critically about opportunities other than formal roles. This approach would be very useful in the secondary school context to provide a platform for considering informal leadership as a method of allowing students to dip their toe into the leadership experience in their early secondary schooling. Students would appreciate this as they seemed frustrated at the lack of formal, role based opportunities in Year 9 and 10 and admitted that the informal opportunities in leadership needed highlighting so they did not have to wait to lead. One student referred to informal leadership as being more flexible: "there's more space where you can move around. You can help people in other ways other than just telling them what to do" (3B).

Curtis (2008) believes this more informal approach to leadership could be described as a triangle of opportunity for students, from service to influence, to shared leadership. There was certainly a strong theme in the data of this current study that students want leadership to be available to all throughout their secondary school life; of simplifying it and making it about the smaller things. This could address the risk to young people's futures if leadership is left to the

senior school where positions become available to a selected few only. Equally, it could address the additional risk to the wider group of young people of recycling the same students in leadership positions throughout their school life.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to investigate student perceptions of accessibility to leadership within the secondary school context. The study was guided by the three research sub-questions:

1. How do students perceive and understand leadership?
2. What do students say about access to leadership opportunities in the secondary school context?
3. How can leadership opportunities be more accessible for more students in secondary schools?

Lizzio et al. (2011) suggest that by 'peeling back the layers' we will better understand what youth believe about authentic leadership; the intention and focus of this research study has been to develop this understanding. In order to address the research intent, a qualitative study was conducted using a case study approach with two secondary schools in New Zealand. Data were gathered using a questionnaire and semi-structured group interviews, and supplementary documents were also used. Dial (2006) identifies the importance of student voice when discussing student leadership issues and solutions and this has been the focus of the data collection and analysis. Findings revealed consistent emergent themes from the student voice across the two case study schools, despite the different contexts of each of the school environments. These conclusions synthesise the emergent themes which are presented under key headings and sub-headings.

McNae (2011) identifies leadership experiences for young people as broadly informal or formal as has been discussed within the findings of this study. This distinction is addressed in a number of ways throughout these conclusions. The conclusions chapter is divided into three sections based on the three research sub-questions**: Students' Perception of Leadership**; **Overcoming Constraints to Access**; and **Ways of Opening up Accessibility**. Each section has several sub-sections which also form the basis for recommendations for schools and educators. These recommendations focus on opening up accessibility in order to address what Fish (2011) identifies as a gap in the body of knowledge directly relating to practices which enhance accessibility to leadership opportunities for students.

Students' Perception of Leadership

This study has sought to draw on the multiple realities of participants' understanding and perception of their accessibility to leadership in secondary schools. Three themes have emerged from research question one: students do perceive there are leadership experiences beyond formal approaches; they see leadership as helping others; and they define themselves as a leader or non-leader.

Beyond a Formal Position

Harris (2008) points out that historically, leadership for students in the secondary school context has been seen as a duty to be served as they moved through to the senior school. The students in the current study, however, argued strongly for opportunities to be available at the beginning of secondary school; this provides a case for informal approaches to leadership which are more readily available than the limited number of formal roles in the junior school. With this in mind, there is much to suggest that contemporary leadership is more about inspiration than it is about coercion or extrinsic motivation (Bowman, 2013; Hine, 2014). The students suggested that leadership, either formally or informally, focuses on the confidence to step up or out of your comfort zone: "being a leader you have the confidence and you have the motivation to do something others wouldn't. Leadership to me is just a way of coming out of your shell. A way to put yourself out there, try new things and go for it" (1B).

The findings highlighted that the initial 'comfortable go to' for students was to view leadership as a formal role first and foremost, rather than considering any informal opportunities. They saw themselves as 'doing' leadership as a role or not doing it at all. This finding resonates with the work of Harris (2008) who noted that many students view leadership predominately or even solely as a role or position. In general, those with formal roles in the current study, such as a form representative or a sports team captain, saw themselves as leaders. Those who had not had any formal roles at secondary school or in the community did not see themselves as leaders. The findings indicate that this perception acts as a constraint for students, particularly for the self-defined non-leaders; restricting their perception and understanding of leadership which in turn restricts their accessibility. Interestingly, when the researcher probed deeper in order to explore the students' understanding beyond formal experiences, students began to discuss other more informal experiences they knew to be available. Once they were questioned about

leadership beyond a formal role, they readily spoke of it as informally stepping up and providing skills that you could not get elsewhere. "[Leadership] gives you a lot of skills that you can't get anywhere else…you're always out of your comfort zone. You learn to think on your feet, keep level headed and be open minded to other people" (1B).

The benefits of being involved in leadership have been highlighted throughout this study both within the literature and the data analysis. The fact that students are limiting their engagement in leadership through their lack of consideration of opportunities beyond a formal role, is of concern. In order for schools to be places of learning about leadership for a broader group of students, both junior and senior, informal leadership opportunities require consideration. The important message here is that leadership capacity is not fixed in style or approach but can be grown and developed amongst young people (Harris, 2008; Hine, 2014). How students are defining leadership and the effect this has on how they see themselves as leaders, is deeply relevant for educators; there is potential to grow leadership capacity and thinking amongst young people beyond the boundaries of formal roles.

Seeing Leadership As 'Helping Others'

When explaining leadership in this broader formal or informal space, students frequently described it as 'helping others'. They viewed the leader's role as being: "to like help people, to make sure they are actually getting what they deserve; the leader is someone who is selfless" (1A). While they did not use the terms servant or service, the students in this study did articulate 'helping others' which indicated, as is prevalent in the literature, a servant leadership approach. Students were able to describe a service approach to leadership: "leadership is including others and basically just listening to other people's opinions" (3B). This aligns with Sipe and Frick's (2009) work, from which they identify true leadership as emerging from those whose primary motivation is that deep desire to serve. Students made comments such as: "I'm always motivated and determined to do anything kind, helpful; treating others how I want to be treated…" (CSA). The notion of servant leadership is deeply embedded in the leader's first priority of serving others, to ensure other people's needs are being served before oneself (Greenleaf, 2002).

Although Hine's (2014) study found that the transformational and servant leadership views were more developed in senior students than in junior students, the current study found that once these junior students were able to use their own language of 'helping others' they had

well developed understandings. This concept of helping others demystifies and simplifies leadership; using the language the students have used removes the complexity and makes it more understandable. There are also numerous ways students can experience the concept of helping others either formally or informally. Hackett and Lavery (2011) suggest there is potential to broaden the concept of leadership through service and to offer these experiences to all young people rather than a selected few. This study suggests replacing the word 'service' with the notion of 'helping others' as a youth-centred approach to servant leadership. The students have named it, they recognise its importance, and they are looking to educators to provide the opportunities to increase accessibility for a wider group of students.

Self-Defined Approaches to Leadership

As discussed, this study has demonstrated that students who have experienced leadership roles generally see themselves as leaders (self-defined leaders). Students who have not experienced leadership see themselves as non-leaders (self-defined non-leaders). The students who described themselves as leaders generally felt that everyone could learn something from leadership: "no-one's going to be born an amazing leader, you're only going to become a better leader after experience and getting out of your comfort zone and doing things you never dreamed of doing but you do it anyway" (4A). The non-leaders were not so willing to engage in leadership; they demonstrated a lack of understanding of leadership outside of formal roles and therefore perceived themselves as not having leadership ability. The motivation to accept the challenge to lead can be described as an opportunity to enhance self-efficacy; how do we ensure students feel safe and encouraged to entertain the possibility that 'I could be a leader?' (Lizzio & Wilson, 2009).

Not surprisingly, confidence seemed to be an additional defining factor in whether or not students saw themselves as a leader and this has been discussed throughout this study. The leaders mostly had confidence and the non-leaders mostly did not. A student's sense of identification, and not the level of achievement motivation, predicts their willingness to engage in leadership in their school (Lizzio et al., 2011). There were many comments from the non-leaders relating to confidence such as: "I can't lead people clearly or with confidence" (CSA). However, Grothaus (2004) believes most teenagers do not possess an innate confidence in their leadership ability when just left to their own devices. This was particularly true for the majority of the self-defined non-leaders in the current study and sends a serious message to educators: confidence building is an essential key in unlocking accessibility to leadership.

Another important finding in this study was that a number of the students who described themselves as leaders said that some of their peers, who described themselves as non-leaders, actually had leadership potential if they were to be given the opportunity to experience it. Dempster and Lizzio (2007) explain that some of the traditional focus has been on student leaders as we would like them to be, rather than on who and what they are. Educators have opportunities within schools to find ways to mentor and listen to the self-defined student leaders who are keen to co-design leadership development for themselves and their peers.

By way of synthesis, two models have been developed to explain the two separate approaches of the leaders and non-leaders towards leadership which have come out of the findings of this study. These models illustrate the patterns of thinking that has been uncovered from the self-defined leaders and non-leaders and the underlying perceptions students have of themselves as a leader as a result. The Student Non-Leader Model in Figure 1 identifies students who see leadership as formal, challenging, not for them, and altogether too difficult; concluding that therefore 'I am not a leader'. The Student Leader Model in Figure 2 describes students who see leadership as available to them; viewing the challenges as surmountable with an attitude of "I will give it a go and try it out". The significance of these two models for educators lies in them developing a framework of interventions in response to each model to better inform and prepare students before young people make a final conclusion at the age of fourteen or fifteen years old that they are a leader or not. Great leaders are considered to be great learners, staying open to new ideas and the views of others (Kouzes & Posner, 2015). These two models present opportunities for those who work with young people to provide tailored learning and confidence building experiences as interventions.

Figure 1: The Student Non-Leader Model: A self-defined approach to student leadership
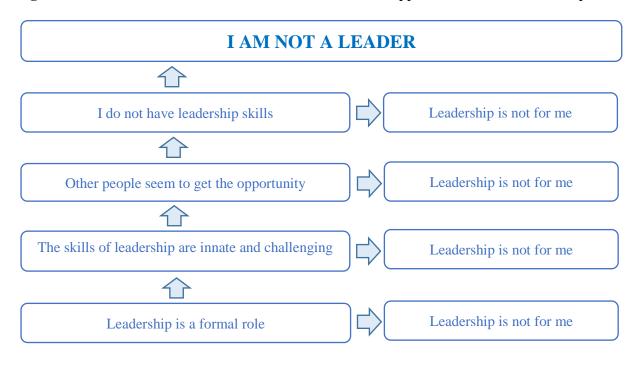
I AM NOT A LEADER

| I do not have leadership skills | ⇒ | Leadership is not for me |

| Other people seem to get the opportunity | ⇒ | Leadership is not for me |

| The skills of leadership are innate and challenging | ⇒ | Leadership is not for me |

| Leadership is a formal role | ⇒ | Leadership is not for me |

Figure 2: The Student Leader Model: A self-defined approach to student leadership

I AM A LEADER

| I have leadership skills and so do others | ⇒ | I will give leadership a try and encourage others to give it a try |

| Leadership is challenging and there are blocks but I will give it a go | ⇒ | I will give leadership a try |

| Leadership can be formal or informal opportunities | ⇒ | I will give leadership a try |

| The skills of leadership can be learned | ⇒ | I will give leadership a try |

| Leadership is mostly a formal role but there are other opportunities too | ⇒ | I will give leadership a try |

Overcoming Constraints to Access

Access to leadership, either formally or informally, is dependent on students overcoming a number of constraints. Three sub-themes around these constraints emerged from the findings and discussion: realising the value of leadership as self-development; acknowledging peer fear; and simplifying the complexity of leadership.

Realising the Value of Leadership

It is no surprise that education has been given the responsibility of preparing young people for their 'preferred futures' (Kelly, 2003). The underlying questions are: why are leadership experiences so important for our young people and do they know this? Leadership development for middle school students begins with a quest to discover who you are, what matters to you, and why you would bother to be involved in anything (Bowman, 2013; Hine, 2014; McNae, 2011). It was clear in the current study that all of the self-defined leaders, and most of the non-leaders, believed leadership experiences are valuable to their daily life, their future and, in particular, to their careers. Almost 99% of the students in this research study agreed that leadership experiences were important while at school.

The students referred to leadership as being a platform upon which to promote their abilities and skills to others. Students also saw leadership as developing specific personal assets such as confidence, communication, organisational skills and responsibility. A standout comment made by a number of students was: "[leadership] teaches you things you really won't be able to be taught from anything else" (2B). This comment makes a salient point that there is a uniqueness in the learning gained from leadership experiences that cannot be gained from other experiences. Furthermore, many of the students viewed the skills gained from leadership as transferrable to other contexts and to their lives in general. As one student stated: "I think it really does help you in your future" (3B). As indicated in the personal development discussion, mastering leadership goes hand in hand with mastering yourself. So much of developing leadership is developing the self (Bowman, 2013). There is an opportunity here for schools to market leadership learning and experiences as self-development rather than leadership. Fish (2011) contends that as soon as we understand that leadership is made up of common, human skills, not some high bar of expectation or of 'superhumaness', then we turn the traditional approach to leadership on its head. Encouraging students and educators to realise the part

leadership experiences play in the development of valuable human skills, requires new broadened leadership education programmes. Helping students to understand how valuable leadership is for their own futures may encourage them to seek leadership opportunities more often.

Acknowledging Peer Fear

There was considerable feedback from the students relating to how difficult it can be for young people to ignore the negative feedback from peers and how this can erode their confidence to try leadership. Students describe a 'not so good leader' as one who actually makes you do something, who uses power over you and seeks compliance (Daft & Pirola-Merlo, 2009). However, McNae (2011) also identifies the pressure put on student leaders by others. The students in the present research study referred to how difficult it made it for the leader when their power was challenged or when the group used power upon the leader to 'put them in their place'. One of the challenges students identified was the manner in which the followers responded to the leader. "I've missed lots of opportunities, probably because of what people think" (5A). Bowman (2013) suggests that many students find the thought of power over their peers frightening and this disengages them from leadership.

It was clear in the current study that students often felt discouraged with how their peers responded to other peers who were in a leadership role. This was particularly true for the adolescent girls and the way they felt they were treated by other girls and how difficult it was to put yourself out there and risk the negative responses from your peers. Bowman (2013) suggests that middle school students do not realise they have power and that they need help to understand and access it. Indeed, many of the students feared others would not listen to them: "if you're not leading properly they won't cooperate with you" (3A). The students acknowledged that an assigned position did give people a mandate to be a leader, whereas, it was more difficult in informal situations. This requires leadership learning for students so they can discover new ways of leading using informal and distributed leadership approaches outside of a formal role.

When presenting the concept of power the students often used the term 'bossy', fearing that if they were the leader their peers may see them as bossy. The students did not like being seen as bossy or as making others do things or being made to do things by others; they feared being ostracised by the group or isolated from their peers. "I think it's important to have a good

leader…they should definitely be appreciated instead of just being insulted for being so bossy…" (1A). Being seen as bossy or making mistakes stopped some students from wanting to be involved in leadership. Again, the language young people use becomes vital in understanding how to better provide leadership for this group. Strom (2014) describes it as learning wisdom, suggesting that we do not minimise the risks and hardship of leadership but rather highlight the learning from adversity as a positive. Leadership requires bravery and young people require mentoring and guidance from adults. "To stand in front of those girls and point out your opinions that this is right and that's wrong takes a lot of courage and a lot of leadership" (3A). Students need a culture of leadership created within the school which sheds a positive light on leadership experiences and gives them permission to be involved.

Just Simplify It

One of the most significant hurdles for young people accessing leadership appears to be their perception of what it involves and in it appearing more complex than it perhaps is. This certainly was evident throughout the findings. As discussed throughout the literature and within this study, leadership is difficult to define, understand and describe due to the situational and seemingly complex nature of the phenomenon (Jackson & Parry, 2011; Rosch & Kusel, 2010; Yukl, 2002). Students say: "I think the experience of leadership in secondary school is a big, big step up to taking control of situations that need your control" (2A). Seeing leadership as a 'big step up' was common, particularly amongst the self-defined non-leaders in this study and seemed to fill the students with doubts as to whether leadership was for them. There was evidence throughout the findings that, for many students, their belief that leadership is big, difficult and unobtainable constrains them from getting involved.

Furthermore, the development of students as leaders in school is commonly achieved through strategies around formal leadership roles in an often criticised exclusive approach with limited consideration for the whole student body (Lizzio et al., 2011; Mitra, 2005; Whitehead, 2009). Seeing real possibilities in the small, informal and daily opportunities for leadership simplified the concept for students. They made comments such as: "you can always help friends make the right choices, keeping them accountable to follow the right path" (3B). One student said: "it [leadership] means to have courage and simply to be kind" (5A). Connecting leadership to human traits and behaviours suggested by the students themselves simplifies and demystifies leadership and provides a framework so that they may dip a toe in the leadership water. The important message here is that leadership capacity is not fixed in style or approach but can be

grown and developed (Harris, 2008; Hine, 2014). This is exciting for educators, schools and those interested in youth leadership as it is not difficult to simplify the notions of leadership in this way.

Ways of Opening up Accessibility

Throughout the study, students gave a strong message that they felt leadership should be more accessible to a greater number of students. They presented ideas and concepts for opening up accessibility throughout the findings. Two emergent themes to open up accessibility to leadership for students in secondary schools are: start leadership earlier; and one first step for every student.

Start Leadership Earlier

"By the time the students reached Year 12, many had become stand out leaders characterised by a quality of humility as students who were 'quietly getting on with it'" (Hackett & Lavery, 2011, p. 59). Leadership positions such as head girl, cultural captain and sports captain are all highly sought after positions in the school (McNae, 2011). However, waiting to lead until in the senior school, when more formal positions are available, does not serve students well. There were numerous references from the students to the very small number of formal roles in each of the schools, particularly in the junior school, the high levels of competition to get these roles and the need for broadening the concept of leadership as discussed. Furthermore, there was a feeling amongst the students that starting leadership in the senior school meant that students are learning to lead, mostly through formal positions, when they are close to leaving school: "I don't have any opportunities yet because I'm a junior and we don't really get a lot of opportunities to be a leader because they all go to seniors…" (5B). Students appeared frustrated by the lack of opportunities for them as Year 10's:

> I reckon the juniors don't get much of an opportunity to like step out and show you they are leaders. They kind of give it to the seniors because they're more mature but they don't know that some juniors are probably more mature than the seniors. (5A)

Students offered stories of their primary school experiences as excellent examples of distributed leadership amongst entire classes. "I think it's important just as in primary school to give everyone the opportunity" (2A). Many students referred to having excellent leadership learning and experiences at primary school and being somewhat perplexed that there was an

approach of beginning the journey again at secondary school. Just as they did in primary school, students were prepared to explore the myriad ways they could lead in the junior school if given the chance. As highlighted, Curtis (2008) believes a more informal approach to leadership throughout the secondary school years could be described as a triangle of opportunity for students, from service to influence, to shared leadership.

When asked when secondary schools should start offering leadership opportunities, students in the current study felt they would like early opportunities from Year 9. There was an awareness of the increased pressures for senior students getting in the way of leadership and that students would be better at leadership as seniors if they started earlier. "Whereas the Year 10 student leaders tended to act in a role of dependence toward mentoring staff and fellow leaders, increasingly during Years 11 and 12, their roles developed into ones of more autonomous service to others and to the school" (Hine, 2014, p.100). Whilst this is true, students felt that if they started leadership earlier they would be more autonomous by the time they got to the senior school. This could address the current situation in many secondary schools where leadership becomes about positions in Years 12 and 13 which are available only to a selected few.

Confidence from One First Step

An emphasis on 'unbadged' leadership reinforces with students that everybody is in some way called to leadership (Bowman, 2013; Hine, 2014). Once the research conversation deepened, it was clear that many students were aware of the informal, unbadged opportunities that were available and that: "leadership is basically everywhere. You always have the opportunity" (2B). This study has brought the spotlight on the need for deeper probing to encourage student thinking and understanding beyond the traditional formal roles. It is clear that students need someone in the school context, often a teacher, to point out the broader possibilities and to open up their thinking. Curtis (2008) says leadership is a place of learning confidence and gaining a sense of purpose. Students felt that it was important for them and their peers to find a first step to gain confidence and purpose through leadership which was often available outside of formal roles. "Once they get that first step that's when they're going to find the courage to go ahead and find more opportunities" (1A). This first step relates to the confidence to begin to engage in leadership and was discussed numerous times by the students throughout this research study. "You need to have a bit of courage like 'I can do it' sort of thing" (3A).

Interestingly, the students who described themselves as leaders said that some of their peers who described themselves as non-leaders actually had significant leadership potential if they were just given the opportunity; this would increase their confidence to be involved. These students said that having one experience in leadership can give young people enough confidence to attempt a second experience and this can make an incredible difference to getting someone started in leadership. If a first experience in leadership is indeed enough to boost confidence for the young person to attempt leadership a second time then at least one leadership opportunity should be offered to every student in a secondary school. "Once they get that first step that's when they are going to find the courage to go ahead and find more opportunities [in leadership]" (1A). Bowman (2013) comments that it is time middle school students stopped waiting for someone else to step up. Students were very aware of how inhibiting a lack of confidence is for young people and that learning and support to encourage them to think differently and to give them the tools to attempt leadership is vital. If schools can provide one simple, easily accessible experience in leadership then the face of leadership in secondary schools may change considerably and the rewards of being involved may be reaped by a much larger group of students.

In Summary

Fish (2011) questions where a child is going to learn leadership skills in today's society. Students very strongly believe that the place for learning leadership is in the schools and their message is to open it up; give more students a chance to see what they can do. Formal leadership roles undoubtedly produce benefits, but they fail to provide youth leadership experiences to the whole student body (Lizzio et al., 2011; Mitra, 2005; Whitehead, 2009). Increasing accessibility requires a shift in thinking, driven by the students themselves, to believing that everyone is capable of some form of leadership and that it can be offered either formally or informally. The concept that leadership is available to everybody, coupled with the idea that it is about helping people, provides an accessible way of thinking about leadership. With this in mind, there is a challenge for educators to find ways to help students to redefine leadership away from a formal badged approach available only to a selected few. "Everyone should be a leader more than just one person. We all have different opinions to share. If we have the same person all the time it's the same opinions all the time" (4A). Students suggest

educators look to a broader group of students and offer both formal and informal leadership experiences based on the concept of helping others.

Involving young people in the planning of their leadership will result in them being more engaged and connected in leadership (Hine, 2014; McNae, 2011). Leadership experiences, according to the students, are a unique way to develop young people for the future, providing learning that is only available through leadership. As one student summarised: "only after giving everyone the opportunity will you see who has the potential to be an amazing leader" (6A). In order to realise the value of leadership for all young people, educators need to: simplify it; provide a single first step; broaden its availability to a wider group; develop understanding about the fear of peers; set a platform for helping others; and listen intently to the student voice. Leadership learning in secondary schools that is co-designed with the young people themselves has the potential to provide the ideal intervention to offer some answers to the critical themes that have arisen in this research study.

Research Limitations

All research has its limitations and because of this the outcomes of this study were limited by several factors. First, the two case study schools are in the same city which is New Zealand's largest city, Auckland. This limits the data in terms of the urban influences on the participants and does not provide a broader national perspective. Additionally, the size of the questionnaire sample was somewhat limiting with 50 participants in each school; although the classes have been selected randomly and include all of the students in each of the two classes. This does provide as broad as possible cross section of views. The respondents were Year 10 only which means there was no senior student perspective, however, this was a fresh approach as many previous studies had focused on senior students.

Gaining the deeper analysis through the interviews was limited by the small group of 12 student interviewees all of whom had volunteered to be interviewed. This self-selection may have limited the data gathered from the interviews as it was likely that those who volunteered had an interest in leadership or were leaders themselves. This was counteracted by ensuring that the data analysis was constantly cross checked from interviews to questionnaires, from one

case study school to the other and that the findings, discussion, and conclusions were drawn from the broader data and not from single comments.

The researcher's experience as a teacher with an understanding of leadership would have had an effect on how the key themes and concepts were understood, perceived and summarised. The researcher's influence needs to be considered despite every effort to ensure the accuracy of the interview transcripts and questionnaire data. As student voice was a strong focus of this research, students' voices have been offered first hand to facilitate transparency (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Originally, the intent was to use some in-case thematic analysis and cross-case comparisons. As the themes that evolved were very much the same and very strong across both case study schools the researcher decided to use the strong themes that had emerged across both contexts only with no cross-case differences highlighted. Interestingly, the researcher thought initially that there would be considerable cross-case differences due to the differences in cultural mix in the two schools. This was not the case; in fact there were no differences that were worthy of analysis. There is, however, potential for further research into student leadership in secondary schools focused on cultural implications, needs and contributions.

There was a diverse cultural mix in the participants across the two case study schools. Rather than drawing out bi-cultural and multi-cultural differences, the principles of Kaupapa Māori approaches to research, rangatiratanga, wakaritenga, kaitiakitanga, nohotahi and ngākau māhaki were acknowledged and worked into the research process.

Implications of the Research

The outcomes of this research address a gap in the body of knowledge around accessibility to leadership for students in secondary schools, particularly from the perspective of the students themselves. More specifically, this study makes a contribution to the theoretical and conceptual conversations about student leadership in order to better inform educators in their work around student leadership in secondary schools. Fish (2011) believes that developing the competencies of students is about teachers using the right pedagogy with them. Of course, to do this educators need to extend their understanding of this from the students' perspective. Students say: "what I'm learning now in the leadership course is that the leader can be anyone, anywhere at any time" (5B). The findings of this study affirm the need to broaden the thinking about how

leadership is defined and delivered in schools from a 'position only' approach available to a selected few towards one where all students experience leadership.

It is clear from this study that how students view and define leadership can affect their access to it and, equally, how teachers view leadership can affect how they provide opportunities. This presents a message to educators to develop programmes of learning about leadership in order to clarify and broaden student thinking. Limiting leadership to being confined to a role or position means, as Jones (2004) identifies, that only a small minority of students will ever be engaged in leadership. This study presents the notion of providing all students with leadership learning and a simple first step to experience leadership. The following recommendations provide a summary of the potential implications of this research.

Key Implications and Recommendations
- Broadening leadership to include both positional and non-positional experiences may increase accessibility.
- Simplifying leadership and removing some of the complexity may make it more easily understood and therefore more accessible.
- Some students can list informal opportunities but they may not know how to access them. Educators need to communicate the opportunities.
- Finding one quick and easy 'run on the board' to provide entry to leadership could open up the opportunities significantly.
- Educators need to avoid recycling the same leaders. They need to identify and make available more formal and informal leadership experiences for young people.
- Educators can initiate and catalyse leadership earlier in the secondary school experience at Years 9 and 10 to avoid students waiting or putting a hold on seeking to lead until they are in the senior school.
- Students have the desire and the capacity to mentor and encourage each other to step up. This peer learning approach could be encouraged more in the context of leadership.
- Leaders believe there are many non-leaders who have a great deal of potential.
- Increased confidence seems to come from having just one chance to try leadership even in a small way. Stepping up once means more likely to step up twice.
- Acknowledge the pressure and perceived pressure of leadership and provide support mechanisms.

- There is a clear need for education and learning around leadership for young people so that they may all have the maximum opportunity for success.

Future Research Opportunities

Leadership capacity building and continuous improvement are key outcomes in schools (Lizzio et al., 2011) and therefore researchers should consider opportunities to add to the body of knowledge around student leadership. An identified gap in the current body of knowledge, which has been discussed throughout this study, is the place of the student voice in leadership provision within schools, particularly around accessibility to leadership. With the principles of Kaupapa Māori research in mind, there appears to be further research possibilities which focus on student voice with a cultural lens; considering issues of representation, legitimisation, power, relations, benefits, and accountability for students in secondary schools (Bishop, 2005). The two case study schools had diverse cultural mixes in their student population with School A: Pacifica 50%, Māori 25%, European 5%, Other 3%, and School B: NZ European 35%, Chinese 16%, Māori 10%, Other Asian 10%, European 9%, Indian 8%, Pacifica 6%, and Other 6%. There is also potential for research into new immigrant groups of young people and their opportunities for accessibility to leadership.

Additionally, there is potential for further research into student leadership focused on gender. McNae (2011) has focused on 'girls only' student leadership research in New Zealand with the focus on defining leadership and understanding leadership, rather than on accessibility. There is potential to further explore girls' place in leadership in secondary schools and to explore the access boys have to leadership opportunities. There could also be some interest in examining the school context itself and the effect a school culture has on engaging students in leadership. Curtis (2008) says youth want people to sit down with them and listen to what they have to say; they want to be understood. By listening to students, this present study has highlighted that leadership experiences are a unique way to develop young people for the future. These experiences have the potential to provide learning that is only available through leadership; the opportunity should therefore be provided for all students.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Consent for Ethics Approval

A U T E C
S E C R E T A R I A T

A.1.

5 January 2015

Gaye Bryham
Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences

Dear Gaye
Re Ethics Application: **14/387 Access to informal leadership opportunities for secondary school students.**
Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 22 December 2017.
As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 22 December 2017;

- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 22 December 2017 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at ethics@aut.ac.nz.
All the very best with your research,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Secretary
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee
Cc: Sue Emerson semerson@unitec.ac.nz; Lesley Ferkins

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

Consent Form

Project title: **Access to informal leadership opportunities for secondary school students**

Project Supervisor: **Gaye Bryham**

Researcher: **Sue Emerson**

○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated …………………..

○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

○ I understand that identity of my fellow participants and our discussions in the interview in pairs is confidential to the group and I agree to keep this information confidential.

○ I understand that notes will be taken during the interview in pairs and that it will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

○ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

○ If I withdraw, I understand that while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the interview in pairs discussion of which I was part, the relevant information about myself including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will not be used.

○ I agree to take part in this research.

○ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes○   No○

Participant's signature: ....……………………………………………………

Participant's name : ....……………………………………………………

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate): …………………………………………………………….

……

Date:

***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on** type the date on which the final approval was granted* AUTEC Reference number **type the AUTEC reference number**

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form

APPENDIX C

Questionnaire

Questionnaire

Perceptions of access to leadership opportunities in your school

Welcome to this questionnaire in support of a research project exploring access to student leadership opportunities in secondary schools. The focus of the study is:

- Understanding the formal and informal leadership opportunities available to students in secondary schools.
- Exploring student understanding of formal and informal leadership opportunities that are available in the secondary school environment.
- Finding out how informal leadership opportunities might increase access to leadership for students in secondary schools.

This project is being undertaken by Sue Emerson as part of her Masters of Philosophy at AUT University.

Questionnaire Consent

The information you provide through this questionnaire will be summarised, in anonymous format, in the body of a final report and via published papers and conference presentations. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual.

All documentation will be kept strictly confidential. You do not have to participate in this questionnaire. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.

The questionnaire below has 10 questions and may take approximately 10 minutes of your time to complete. Please answer each of the questions below by **circling the number** which best represents what you think about the question being asked.

Do you consent to participate in this questionnaire?

○ Yes
○ No

Your participation is much appreciated.

1. I would consider myself to be a leader:

1	2	3	4
Strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree

   Why would you call yourself a leader or not call yourself a leader?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

2. Have you had any **formal** leadership roles while at secondary school? (E.g. sports captain, leader of a group, whanau leader, etc.)

   Yes   /   No   (Circle the answer that applies)

   If yes, name these **formal** roles in the space below:

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

3. Have you had leadership experiences of an **informal** nature, where the role is not a formal position but you are still leading others in the school environment?

   Ye   /   No   (Circle the answer that applies)
   s

   If yes, name these **informal** experiences in the space below:

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

4.   It is easy to be involved in leadership in this school:

1	2	3	4
Strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree

5.   I can get access to leadership opportunities in this school:

1	2	3	4
Strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree

6.   Leadership experiences are important in your secondary school education:

1	2	3	4
Strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree

7.   Leadership experiences are important to develop skills for a career:

1	2	3	4
Strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree

8.   Whose role is it to encourage students to access leadership opportunities?
(Circle all the answers that apply)

Parents	Teachers	Friends	Their own	Other (please name)

9.   I am interested in having more leadership opportunities:

1	2	3	4
Strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree

10.   I feel I am well educated in leadership:

1	2	3	4
Strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire. Your time and effort is much appreciated.

APPENDIX D

Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Project Title: Access to informal leadership opportunities for secondary school students

Principal Investigator: Sue Emerson

INDICATIVE SEMI-STRUCTURED GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (Topics & Sample Questions)

Background Questions:
1. Would you describe yourself as a leader? Why/why not?

2. Have you had any formal leadership roles in any context? E.g. School, clubs, church, youth groups.

    What was the type of role and organisation you were involved in?

    Do you/did you enjoy the leadership role?

3. How would you describe leadership? Can you use words that relate to leadership or the leader?

4. Do you enjoy the leadership role?

5. Would you like more opportunities to lead?

6. Are there opportunities to lead at school which you have not looked into yet?

7. Are there opportunities to lead outside of captains, house leaders and formal roles?

8. How else could you lead?

9. Are you able to access leadership opportunities at school?

10. Are leadership experiences important to your education? Why do you think this?

11. Has anyone encouraged you to look at leadership?

12. Whose job do you think it is to encourage you to look at leadership?

13. Do you think you are well educated in leadership? Why do you think this?

APPENDIX E

Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

6 November 2014

Introduction
Welcome and thank you for agreeing to be part of this study that seeks to investigate the concept of informal leadership opportunities as a method of increasing accessibility to leadership for students in secondary schools.

Project Title

Access to informal leadership opportunities for secondary school students

An Invitation

You are invited to participate in a research project exploring access to student leadership opportunities in secondary schools. The focus of the study is:

- Understanding the formal and informal leadership opportunities available to students in secondary schools.
- Exploring student understanding of formal and informal leadership opportunities that are available in the secondary school environment.
- Finding out how informal leadership opportunities might increase access to leadership for students in secondary schools.

This project is being undertaken by Sue Emerson as part of her Masters of Philosophy.

What does the research involve?

Participation in the project will involve a 30 minute interview with Sue Emerson. *Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the research at any time including during the interview, and until the end of data collection.*

What is the purpose of this research?

Sue Emerson is undertaking this research for her Masters of Philosophy at AUT University and hopes to publish the findings at conferences and in academic journals.

The research will assist secondary schools and those interested in leadership to better understand access to leadership for students from the students' perspective. The focus is to explore informal leadership opportunities as an opportunity to increase access to leadership.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

Your form teacher has asked for volunteers for the research interviews. Your class has been invited to volunteer if they would like to. The research is focused on Year 10 students hence why your Year 10 class was asked if any students would be interested in taking part in the interviews.

What will happen in this research?

If you volunteer to take part, your form teacher will offer you an interview time. You will be asked to sign a participant consent form and as you are under 16 years of age your parent/guardian will be asked to sign the form as well.

The interviews will be held at school in a public space with students interviewed in pairs. The questions will focus on topics described above and as per the attached interview guide.

The interviews will be recorded to allow the researcher to accurately record what was said. This will be analysed by common themes. Nothing can be linked to you; your identity will remain anonymous.

What are the discomforts and risks?

The researcher has worked for a number of years with young people and is aware of creating a welcoming and relaxing environment. You do not need to take part in any discussion you do not wish to or answer any questions you do not wish to. You will have the opportunity to review the transcripts of the conversation so that you can check for accuracy and amend where necessary.

What are the benefits?

This research will add to the body of knowledge relating to access to leadership for students in secondary schools. There is potential the research could provide insight into the opportunity that informal leadership provides for increasing access to leadership within your school.

How will my privacy be protected?

Student names will not be used. Pseudonyms will be used for all interview participants. All interview transcripts will be stored in the researcher's office in a locked cabinet. Data will be stored electronically protected by password.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There are no monetary costs. Time required is 30 minutes.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You are requested to respond within one week.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Please return the attached consent form with your signature and your parent/guardian signature.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

The intent is to provide a summary of the findings made available within 12 months of completion of the project and copies of this made available if requested.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding this research project should be communicated with the form teacher who will get in contact with the Project Supervisor Gaye Bryham on gaye.bryham@aut.ac.nz.

Any concerns regarding the conduct of the researcher please contact the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, *ethics@aut.ac.nz* or phone 921 9999 ext 6038.

Researcher Contact Details:
Sue Emerson semerson@unitec.ac.nz ph: 021803364

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Gaye Bryham gaye.bryham@aut.ac.nz ph: 021 575957

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date final ethics approval was granted*, **AUTEC Reference number** *type the reference number*.