

## Youth Leadership Development: A Synthesis of Literature

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### Abstract

Youth leadership development is one-way strong adult leaders are created by preparing the leaders of tomorrow. This study aims to assess the studies published in Journals of Leadership Education about youth leadership development from 2000 to 2021. A total of 33 articles were collected, assessed, and sorted into four themes and one emerging theme. The four themes included: impact of youth leadership programs, role of adults, youth leadership skill acquisition and community-based leadership. The emerging theme encompassed a growing interest in modeling youth leadership development. Studies collected highlight the importance of youth leadership development and in what settings it can occur. Understanding these studies provides insight into the current knowledge about youth leadership development. Recommendations for future research include further assessment of the youth perspective on their leadership development and adult leader interactions. Future research should also focus on modeling youth leadership with quantifiable data. Implications for future practice focuses on adult leaders understanding the impact they have on youth leadership development and should use the results from these studies to decide what are the best programs and activities to incorporate. This can aid in encouraging youth to be engaged with their community.

### Introduction

Youth leadership education is the foundation of resiliency and confidence in the youth that will become the leaders of tomorrow (Kress, 2006). The agricultural sector requires youth leader involvement to maintain pace with a constantly evolving global market economy (Som et al., 2018). Strong adult leaders were once young adults and children, taught by other adult leaders how to bring change and influence in positive, reinforcing ways. Leadership training during the formative years of youth education has been considered in many journals including *The Journal of Psychology* (Cassel & Shafer, 1961), *Journal of Applied Psychology* (Hynes et al., 1978), *Journal of Agricultural Education* (Seevers et al., 1995; Ricketts & Rudd, 2005), *Journal of Extension* (Boyd, 2001), *Journal of Career and Technical Education* (Ricketts & Rudd, 2002), *Institute for Educational Leadership* (Edelman et al., 2004), *Teaching Exceptional Children*

(Grenwelge et al., 2010), *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth* (Ngai et al., 2012), and *Journal of Community Psychology* (Mortensen et al., 2014).

To explore the state of youth leadership in agriculture today and draw insights about the future leaders of American and global agriculture, we investigate the literature on this topic in journals of leadership education from the year 2000 to present-day. Literature published in journals of leadership education is evidence-based and rooted in leadership theory. Various aspects of leadership education that correlate with youth involvement in the agriculture industry include the non-exhaustive list of youth leader self-efficacy, desirable characteristics of leaders and followers in agriculture, responsible youth leadership, and application of leadership skills to experiential learning (Rehm et al., 2019; Cavagnaro & van der Zande 2021; Cline 2021; Coleman et al., 2021). Youth education of applicable skills in general is integral to lesson plans and curricula, specifically with agricultural educators, one of the “primary goals is to foster student interest in agricultural content” (Wells et al., 2015, p. 175). Leadership theory at its core focuses on methods of integrating leaders and followers with common goals and missions to encourage and enact positive change. When we put all these concepts together, we are assessing the last 21 years of youth leadership literature in agriculture to determine common themes across a plethora of leadership theories and applications.

A great deal of research has investigated adult and young adult leadership development, unintentionally leaving leadership development of youth somewhat out of the conversation (Murphy & Johnson, 2011). While some research has taken a deeper dive into the enumeration of tasks and skills of youth leadership development and the mechanisms within, the overall amount of research into specifically youth leadership development does not match the amount of similar research into adult and young adult leadership development (Murphy & Johnson, 2011). Throughout this paper we aim to illustrate the current state of youth leadership research and identify areas of existing research that are lacking.

An important consideration from the research performed by Murphy and Johnson (2011) is their proposed model of leader development across one’s lifespan, where early development factors are listed, and their importance explained. Murphy and Johnson’s (2011) early development factors are broken down into three categories of: 1) early influences (genetics, temperament, and gender), 2) parenting styles (Authoritarian vs. Authoritative vs. Laissez Faire vs. Neglectful and Attachment Focus) and 3) early learning experiences (education, sports, practice). Considering factors from such an early age is bound to change the paradigm of leadership theories through further study and research, as was shown in this article. Their model then proceeds to consider adult-level and contextual-level factors that meld together with early developmental factors to affect adult leaders in their effectiveness and future development. This emphasizes the importance of all developmental levels of leadership learning and experience along with the leader’s context and expectations from their time as a youth.

Van Velsor and Wright (2012) point out that when leaders ask where future leaders will be sourced from, the typical method is to seek out individuals in high school and college who are naturally inclined to leadership roles or who have already sought out leadership positions in their educational experience. Current leaders have been inclined to ignore the potential benefits that focus on youth leadership could have on lifelong leadership development. Several identifying

research questions were put forth by Van Velsor and Wright (2012) such as “1) the age a young person should commence his or her leadership journey, 2) whether leadership development should be part of the regular educational curriculum, 3) how widely it should be offered, 4) leadership qualities that managers want to see in young people entering the workforce, and 5) what excited managers and what concerns them about the young people they employ today” (Van Velsor and Wright, 2012, p. 2). Their findings show that an overwhelming majority (95%) of their respondents believed that leadership education should begin by age 21, with a further breakdown showing 21% think leadership development should begin by five years of age, 29% think leadership development should begin between ages 6 and 10, and 40% of respondents think leadership development should begin between ages 11 and 17 (Van Velsor & Wright, 2012). Other important data from this same study includes 84% of respondents believing opportunities for leadership development should be offered and available to all youth and 90% believed leadership development should be part of the educational experience of every student.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The framework that guided this study stems from the National Leadership Education Research Agenda (NLERA) (Andenoro, 2013). The NLERA was designed to establish a foundation to guide Leadership Education research and development, and to form it as a discipline. The research priorities provide a framework for scholarship that will form future practices and developments of future leaders (Andenoro, 2013). The NLERA adopted seven priorities that defined the field of Leadership Education, broken into two defining areas (Andenoro, 2013). This study aligned with Priority 1 and Priority 2 in the first area: *Pedagogical Priorities*; dealing with leadership learning and usage of learning through innovative leadership education. Priority 1, *Teaching, Learning, & Curriculum Development* reflects the research and understanding of how to teach and learn leadership skills and attributes. Priority 2, *Program Assessment & Evaluation*, reflects that leadership educators understand the differences between leadership programs and the mechanisms of how these programs work in respect to leadership education (Andenoro, 2013). The application and usage of Priority 1 and Priority 2 from the NLERA as a framework for this study allows for the extensive assessment of current research regarding youth leadership development.

### **Purpose and Objectives**

Literature syntheses provide a means to sift through and analyze the immense volume of data on a given subject and are considered the strongest measure of evidence (Biondi-Zoccai, 2016; Hennessy et al., 2019). The purpose of this study is to create a synthesis of literature that focuses on the examination of youth leadership development research within journals of leadership education from 2000 to 2021. Conducting a synthesis of the existing literature will help create a framework for the general process of conducting and analyzing results of youth leadership development research, as well as provide insight into the future of youth leadership development. This study aligns with the National Research Agenda of the American Association for Agricultural Education Research Priority 5: *Efficient and Effective Agricultural Education Programs* (Roberts et al., 2016). This research priority emphasizes the need for efficient agricultural communication, extension education, leadership education, and agricultural awareness in order to create efficient professional development programs that aid in career competency. By providing a thorough overview of youth leadership development by means of a

literature synthesis, we can bolster support for the research needs established by the AAAE. The objectives of this study are to:

1. Determine the quantity of youth leadership development studies published in journals of leadership education from 2000 to present.
2. Identify major themes associated with youth leadership development research within in journals of leadership education
3. Summarize overarching trends throughout the results of youth leadership development research.

## **Methods**

The design used for this study intends to quantify and interpret the existing research related to youth leadership development published in journals of leadership education (JOLE). The journals were selected for investigation due to their high regard as journals that engages scholars and teachers while advancing leadership education and development in numerous fields. Though there exists research regarding the topic our study aims to include publications from the year 2000 to 2021 as to identify any shifts in research styles and findings over the period. Our study design was partially developed from Kovar and Ball (2013), who established an efficient method for collecting and classifying literature. Three fundamental strategies for our precise, comprehensive research synthesis include: 1) search strategies, 2) inclusion criteria, and 3) source analysis and categorization.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

Strategies for collection involved an exhaustive search through journals of leadership education database for articles including key phrases. Inclusion criteria were key words and phrases such as: “youth leadership development”, “youth leadership”, “youth development”, and “leadership development”. Articles containing our criteria for youth leadership development were flagged and saved for further analysis by the researchers. Coding of the articles involved identification of article titles, research populations, study purposes, objectives, and overall research findings. Coding the articles allowed for further clarification and identification of themes across sources, as well as common research conclusions. One author was assigned the role of lead coder, responsible for categorizing all youth leadership development research. As suggested by Kovar and Ball (2013), peer debriefings served to externally review our research process. The purpose of this was to ensure reliable coding a logical order of organization in creating this synthesis of literature. Each the four researchers read and evaluated the literature, posed their suggestion for a theme that represented the main focuses and findings of the literature. Researchers then justified their reasoning for assigning each suggested theme. Following peer debriefings, researchers decided which of the various suggested themes best represented the existing literature. The themes were narrowed down to four main themes, with one emerging theme. Considering most literature touches on multiple themes, researchers conducted additional peer debriefings to determine, for each research article, which theme was Primarily associated, and if there are additional themes associated, they identified secondarily associated, and in one article’s case, tertiarily associated themes. From the results of existing literature, researchers created conclusions regarding youth leadership development. Implications and recommendations for future youth leadership development practice and research are likewise provided.

**Results**

Literature findings for this study resulted in a total of 33 articles collected from the JOLE. Four main themes were identified by researchers to accurately represent existing literature regarding youth leadership development. Those four themes are: 1) Youth leadership development programs, 2) Role of adults in youth leadership, 3) Youth leadership skill acquisition, and 4) Community-based leadership. One theme was broken into two sub-themes to enhance literature analysis and discussion. In this study, an emerging theme was identified by researchers. Due to the lack of peer-reviewed information on research modeling youth leadership development, there exists an immense gap in the research area. However, research published within the past few years has begun conceptualizing models of youth leadership development. The identified emerging theme, intended to represent cutting-edge research that addresses shortcomings in existing JOLE literature, is Modeling youth leadership development. Below, Table 1 displays the five themes and two sub-themes, corresponding example articles, article justification, and the number of articles associated with that theme specifically. This table intends to give a better understanding of how researchers coded and categorized the content of existing JOLE literature.

**Table 1**

*Example Articles and Corresponding Theme Justifications*

Theme	Sub-theme	Example article	Justification	Article #
#1. Impact of youth leadership development programs	N/A	Youth Leadership Development: A National Analysis of FFA Member Role and Activity Context (Horstmeier & Nall, 2007)	Found that FFA (a youth leadership program) helped youth gain life skills, such as leadership skills, and youth can recognize the skills they have gained	8
#2. Role of adults in youth leadership development	#2A. Adult Leader Viewpoint in Youth Leadership	The Perceived Importance of Youth Educator’s Confidence in Delivering Leadership Development Programming (Brumbaugh & Cater, 2016)	The “results of this study indicate that perceived importance of youth leadership development training is predictive of youth educator’s confidence level in teaching youth leadership.”	8
	#2B. Youth Leader Viewpoint in Youth Leadership	Out-of-School Programming: Assessing Impact on Asset Development in Young People (Walahoski & Lodl, 2004)	Found that "4-H offers opportunities for [youth] having meaningful contact with adults that may not be as prevalent in other out-of-school offerings".	4
#3. Youth leadership skill acquisition	N/A	Assessing the Possibility of Leadership Education as Psychosocial-Based Problem Behavior Prevention for Adolescents: A Review of the Literature (Theodore L. Caputi, 2017)	Examined how engaging youth in leadership behaviors is related to preventing problem behavior. Additional results show leadership skill acquisition in youth.	7

#4. Community based leadership	N/A	Influences of Youth Leadership within a Community-Based Context (Jones, 2008)	Found that a leadership development program, that included civic engagement, exposed youth to practical skills and provided a sense of community connectedness.	5
#5. Modeling youth leadership development	N/A	Modeling Youth Leadership: An Integration of Personality Development Theories and Ethics (Sherif, 2019)	Found that by creating a model of youth leadership using existing youth leadership research and theories, which can help plan and implement effective leadership education, curriculum, and interventions.	5

\*Some articles were included in multiple themes, see Appendix A for clarification.

Upon a comprehensive evaluation of the current literature regarding youth leadership development, researchers determined key findings and conclusions of those research studies. Each of the four main themes and one emerging theme are discussed independently to provide a thorough understanding of the current literature.

### Impact of Youth Leadership Development Programs

In our review, we found that several studies researched the impact of youth leadership programs on youth development. Eight articles were primarily associated with this theme, and four articles were secondarily associated. Youth leadership development programs that were studied included: FFA (Future Farmers of America), 4-H, Boys & Girls Club, and leadership programs created by high schools and the community. The studies assessed the short- or long-term impacts they had on youth leadership skills and development. The short-term impacts were observed with students currently involved in leadership-based programs, finding that students gained confidence and the skills needed to be strong leaders (Horstmeier & Nall, 2007a; Horstmeier & Nall, 2007b; Rosser et al., 2009; Bush et al., 2019). Walahoski and Lodl (2004), comparing leadership skill differences between students in 4-H and students not in 4-H, found that 4-H students had stronger leadership skills. The long-term impacts were assessed through interviews with alumni, finding that the leadership skills gained were still utilized and the alumni believed these types of programs were beneficial to youth (Bruce et al., 2005; Hoover & Bruce, 2006; Anderson et al., 2010; Swigert & Boyd, 2010; Buschlen et al., 2018; Rosch & Nelson, 2018). Nestor et al. (2006) assessed the skills and current knowledge of 4-H adult leaders, concluding that the adult leaders directly impact the youth development in 4-H. These studies have continuously appeared in the past two decades, showing that research on the impacts of youth leadership development programs continues to be a research interest in youth development.

### Role of Adults in Youth Leadership

Youth leadership development generally has some level of adult aspect in the form of program leaders, community leaders, teachers, and parents, to name a few. In our review, we found research which directly quantifies the role of adults in youth leadership focuses on one of two viewpoints: 1) from the view of the adult, and 2) from the view of the youth leader. Therefore, we developed these two viewpoints into the two sub-themes for this theme.

### *Adult Leader Viewpoint in Youth Leadership*

Youth leadership from the viewpoint of adult leaders was examined in eight of our 11 sources directly relating to the role of adults in youth leadership. Nearly all of the articles in this sub-theme focused on 4-H or FFA leaders with Voelker et al. (2019) specifically focusing on coaches in high school environments. Transformational leadership was used as a conceptual framework or as part of the research questionnaires in multiple sources (Bruce et al., 2006; Greiman & Addington, 2008; Nowak et al., 2019) where adult leaders generally self-reported transformational leadership behaviors and skills more often than transactional or laissez-faire leadership. They did, however, note that contingent reward behavior was adopted more frequently than the other least-utilized behaviors of transactional leadership. Comparing demographics to self-reported leadership outcomes found that gender and age did not affect leadership outcomes generally while leader training and education were found to have significant effects on perceived youth outcomes (Nestor et al., 2006; Greiman & Addington, 2008; Nowak et al., 2019). An overarching theme of the research in this subtheme was well stated by Brumbaugh and Cater (2016, p.1): the “perceived importance of youth leadership development training is predictive of youth educators' confidence level in teaching youth leadership.”

### *Youth Leader View of Adults in Youth Leadership*

Four articles in this literature synthesis focused on the youth view of the adult leaders in their leadership journey. Walahoski and Lodl (2004) surveyed fifth, seventh, and ninth graders for character-building aspects of various levels and types of out-of-school leadership opportunities and involvement with adult leadership educators. The authors found that the asset-index relationship to level of out-of-school involvement was highest at the intersection of “contact with adults” and “4-H only” or “no activities” involvement levels. Walahoski and Lodl (2004, p.23) stated that “4-H offers opportunities for having meaningful contact with adults that may not be as prevalent in other out-of-school offerings” where adults are spectators and teachers instead of partners in learning. Horstmeier & Nall (2007a, p. 135) concluded that youth understood the directive roll of adults in their leadership education and “students seemed to see this as a positive, in that, without this form of encouragement they might not have participated.” The study assessing the influence of community-based leadership curricula on youth found that youth who completed a *Step Up to Leadership* program “had developed more positive perceptions of their relationships with adults” – from 3.41 pre-survey to 3.68 post-survey (Jones, 2009, p. 257). A study based on high school students in Kentucky “found that males and females who perceived their adult support more positively had more positive perceptions of their [own] leadership skills” (Hancock et al., 2012, p. 84). All four youth-centered studies displayed a positive correlation between quality interactions with adult leaders and perception of their own leadership skills at young people.

### **Youth Leadership Skill Acquisition**

In our study, 11 of the 33 articles displayed research that related to our identified Youth leadership skill acquisition theme. Seven articles were categorized as Primarily associated, and four articles were Secondarily associated to the theme. The articles that aligned with this theme were collected from a wide range of years, and discuss youth leadership skill acquisition, as well as provide outlines for desirable youth leader skills. Although it remains unclear as to which exact leadership traits are most valuable for youth leaders, existing literature in the JOLE exemplify significant frameworks that aid in youth leadership skill acquisition (Bruce et al.,

2006; Real & Harlin, 2006; Rehm et al., 2021; Ricketts et al., 2007). Key leadership skills identified by related articles included personal leadership beliefs, leadership self-efficacy, collaboration, direction-oriented action, independence, and service qualities, among many more (Caputi, 2017; Rehm et al., 2021; Ricketts et al., 2007). Various methods for guiding and enhancing youth leadership skill acquisition were discussed in the articles, with a heavy emphasis on involvement in developmental programs, extracurricular activities, and mentor-mentee relationships (Hoover & Bruce, 2006; Horstmeier & Nall, 2007a; Horstmeier & Nall, 2007b). No clear formula for teaching leadership skills or ensuring skill acquisition is determined, however, existing research attempts to outline successful models.

### **Community-Based Leadership**

In our review of youth leadership literature, we noticed a heavy emphasis on community-based leadership. Five articles (Webster et al., 2006; Jones, 2009; Rosser et al., 2009; Horstmeier & Ricketts, 2009; Harris & Beckert, 2019) were identified to fit within the theme of community-based leadership, which includes studies that involved service learning, civic engagement, training programs, or took place in other community-based contexts. Having community-based experiences provides youth with the opportunity to develop a sense of community connectedness and learn from their peers. Involvement in civic engagement can encourage youth leadership development via community involvement (Horstmeier & Ricketts, 2009; Jones, 2009; Rosser et al., 2009) which can aid in instilling greater confidence in youth and providing a life of continued engagement (Harris & Beckert, 2019). Similarly, service learning has been found to aid in the development of youth leadership skills (Webster et al., 2006).

### **Emerging Theme: Modeling Youth Leadership Development**

While examining the existing literature on youth leadership, we noticed an emergence of studies focused on various ways to model youth leadership. These studies were deemed an emerging theme based on the recency of the existing published literature as well as the novelty of this area of study. Five articles (Ahrens et al., 2015; Seemiller, 2018; Sherif, 2019; Rehm & Selznick, 2019; Hastings & McElravy, 2020) were identified to fall under this emerging theme. Modeling youth leadership is important to the field of leadership education as it provides a more conceptual and thorough understanding of the distinct components within youth leadership development. Seemiller (2018) identified a lack of existing youth leadership development models. Youth leadership development models are an effective tool to assess the effectiveness of youth leadership programs, such as FFA (Ahrens et al., 2015), and can be a resource for measuring youth leader self-efficacy (Rehm & Selznick, 2019). Additionally, by creating models that can predict youth leadership skills based on existing youth development theories and ethics (Sherif, 2019), youth program leaders can alter project outcomes and learning objectives to better support youth leadership development (Hastings & McElravy, 2020). By developing models such as these, we can achieve a better understanding of the needs and demands of youth leadership.

### **Discussion**

The literature regarding the impact of youth leadership programs on youth leadership development shows to be an area of interest in the JOLE. With eight articles having this as the primary theme and four articles having it as the secondary theme, understanding these programs provides an insight into their importance in youth leadership. Earlier studies primarily focused on



4-H and FFA programs by assessing the leadership skills youth gain from these programs. The Walahoski and Lodl (2004) study highlights this with a comparison survey that concludes FFA members have stronger leadership skills than those who were not involved in a FFA program. It also becomes apparent how these specific programs give youth leadership skills that will translate into their adult life and will still be utilized (Hoover & Bruce, 2006). Recent studies continue to assess how 4-H and FFA impact youth leadership development but have started to assess other programs such as the Boys & Girls Clubs and programs created by high schools or the community. Similar conclusions were made about the Boys & Girls Club (Swigert & Boyd, 2010) where alumni were interviewed about their experiences, and it was concluded that this program gave members the chance to grow leadership skills and seek leadership opportunities as adults. Community leadership programs similarly have positive impacts on youth leadership development by giving opportunities for youth to learn and expand their skills (Buschlen et al., 2018). Overall, these studies show that youth leadership programs have a positive, lasting impact on youth by giving them the opportunity to expand their life skills to grow as leaders.

Adult roles in youth leadership development are inherent as teachers, coaches, counselors, parents, and organization leaders are part of the youth leadership process. The majority of literature in this theme showed a preference for adult self-reported leadership skills and impacts on the youth they work with. The most common conclusions drawn from adult-view of leadership studies included continuous leadership training and education of adults relating to positive outcomes in the youth they teach (Nestor et al., 2006; Brumbaugh & Cater, 2016; Nowak et al., 2019; Voelker et al., 2019) and use of transformational leadership techniques and skills in youth leadership education (Bruce et al., 2006; Greiman & Addington, 2008; Nowak et al., 2019; Windon et al., 2021). These commonalities among the research focused on adult roles in youth leadership leads us to conclude that continuing leadership education for adult leaders along with employment of transformational leadership skills may have the most positive influence on the youth leadership educational process, regardless of type of program. Youth voices in this area were largely in the minority with only four of the twelve articles in this theme utilizing methods which directly gleaned youth impressions of adults' roles in their leadership education. Each of the four youth-centered studies found a positive correlation between adult leader interactions and youth leadership development as well as leadership skill acquisition. Horstmeier and Nall (2007) concluded similarly that students acknowledged the adult's role was as directive, guidance that many youths require during developmental periods. Involvement in community-based leadership activities was also noted as an important part of the youth leadership process where adult involvement was crucial to youth perception of their own skills and abilities (Jones, 2009; Hancock et al., 2012). These conclusions lead us to reiterate the importance of high-quality interactions between youth and adult leaders as well as utilizing continuous leadership education and training for the adult leaders in this process.

As we have discussed much in this review, there exist many ways to promote the acquisition and development of youth leadership skills. However, it is still unclear how to measure our youth's actual level of leadership skill acquisition most effectively. Related literature we collected displayed various ways to measure and model youth leadership skill acquisition such as Leadership Skills Inventory, Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, and more recently, Leader Self-Efficacy (Bruce et al., 2006; Real & Harlin, 2006; Rehm, 2021). As we continue to provide ways for youth to develop their leadership skills, we must also find ways to measure their

development and ensure skill acquisition. Transformational and transactional leadership frameworks were highlighted as effective among youth by Bruce et al. (2006), but more recent research by Bush et al. (2019), with the Teen Excellence in Leadership Institute, showed that blending the Chickering Model of Identity Development and the 4-H Citizenship framework were impactful and successful at providing youth the leadership skill development opportunities and measuring their status. In the literature reviewed, there are mixed opinions when it comes to modeling and measuring skill acquisition. It seems, though, that leadership development programs and educators are adapting to how the youth learn and how they interact. Research shows that youth's skill development is highly affected by the youth's environment and characteristics of those they interact with (Anderson et al., 2010). Inversely, leadership skill development is not only affected by the environment, but the level of leadership skill development can also affect the leader's environment. Research by Caputi (2017) displayed how a youth's leadership skill acquisition can affect so much including management of bad behavior, academic success, and community involvement. General findings within this theme show that as youth leadership skill acquisition increases, in both quantity and quality, many other aspects benefit.

Community based leadership has been identified as an opportunity for youth to develop skills necessary to be a leader and to foster a sense of connectedness through a common goal, thus its selection as a major theme within this review. Understanding how service learning and community-based endeavors can function in youth populations to foster leadership development can be useful in creating youth leadership program curriculums. Existing literature emphasizes the importance of youth playing a role in decision making in community-based contexts. Webster et al. (2006) found that by allowing youth to take part in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of service-learning projects, a sense of involvement and connectedness within the organization or community can be fostered. Furthermore, adults should encourage youth participation to ensure a reciprocal process (Webster et al., 2006). It is important to provide youth with adequate time and accountability for their leadership experience for community development to be effective (Rosser et al., 2008). A similar study conducted by Jones (2008) concluded that when youth are directly engaged in leadership development opportunities, they have more positive perceptions towards decision making in their communities. A study by Horstmeier and Ricketts (2009) identified that through school-based civic engagement activities, the link between leadership skill acquisition and leadership skill application is created. Harris and Beckert (2019) expand upon this idea by emphasizing that youth can not only emerge as leaders through volunteerism, but also positively impact society by fostering social change. The literature within the theme of community-based leadership demonstrates that providing youth with strong leadership experiences can result in the development of strong communities.

Recent research has identified the need for models of youth leadership to quantify existing research, establishing a common baseline for future researchers. This is an important area as recent literature has indicated a lack of quantifiable results in the realm of youth leadership development. There have been five studies published in this area of interest since 2015. Modeling youth leadership can be very helpful in interpreting research results. For example, Ahrens et al. (2015) used a three-part instrument, which included the Youth Leadership Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS), to evaluate the effectiveness of youth leadership development at the 2012 Arkansas Leadership Conference. Seemiller (2018) created a theoretically grounded

framework for youth leadership competency that was developed by using a meta-analysis of leadership competencies included in a professional preparation framework. Creating frameworks such as these can be helpful in developing youth leadership programs. Similarly, Sherif (2019) created a theoretically grounded conceptual model of youth leadership that involved five major youth leadership domains: cognitive, motivational, affective, behavioral, and ethical. This model can be applied to youth leadership programs targeted at encouraging the learning and practice of leadership. Measuring youth leader self-efficacy is also an important component to youth leadership development. Rehm and Selznick (2019) used an original survey instrument to measure youth leader self-efficacy to create a common youth leadership language and positive leadership experiences for all. Hastings and McElravy (2020) conducted a comparable study to Rehm and Selznick that examined youth leadership skills predictors which can help to make youth leadership development programs more effective. Modeling youth leadership development can help to make consistent methodologies within the field of youth leadership as well as aim to create a common language that ensures continuity amongst all youth leadership research.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

It is critical for future research to investigate how youth can be supported through effective leadership education via youth leadership programs, as well as guidance from adults in their communities, to acquire skills necessary to become competent leaders. This literature review included 33 articles on youth leadership development in journals of leadership education from 2000 to 2021 and found four major themes along with one emerging theme. Articles within these themes emphasized the role of adults in youth leadership, the impact of youth leadership development programs, the acquisition of youth leadership skills, the value of community-based endeavors in developing leaders, and the need for developing succinct youth leadership models. With these themes in mind, youth program developers can provide youth with the necessary opportunities to acquire leadership skills as well as the autonomy to initiate leadership engagement within their community and one another. Additionally, the emerging theme, Modeling youth leadership, can provide an opportunity for researchers to recognize the gap in existing models to quantify youth leadership development and strive to fill this lack of knowledge.

These themes achieve the goals of Priority 1 and 2 of the NLERA by providing recommendations on how leadership development can be presented to youth and providing suggestions on how to create effective youth leadership programs. Specifically, the theme of Youth leadership skill acquisition meets the needs of Priority 1 by providing an understanding of the skills and attributes youth need in order to be effective leaders. The themes Role of adults in youth leadership, Impact of youth leadership development programs, and Community based leadership achieved the goals of Priority 2 by highlighting how youth leadership programs can be effective in providing leadership education to youth as well guiding adults in their role as a youth educator. With these themes and areas of interest in mind, implications were presented for future research and practice within the realm of youth leadership development.

Through this literature review, we determined that future research in this topic may benefit from a more thorough investigation of longevity of leadership skills in alumni of youth leadership programs, as well as an increased focus on the youth perspective of their own leadership development and their perceptions of adult leader interactions. Six of the eight articles in the

theme Impact of youth leadership development programs covered long-term impacts of youth leadership development programs by interviewing alumni of these programs as adults (Bruce et al., 2005; Hoover & Bruce, 2006; Anderson et al., 2010; Swigert & Boyd, 2010; Buschlen et al., 2018; Rosch & Nelson, 2018). While these long-term studies included most of the articles in the theme, the quantification of long-term effects of leadership development of youth as they become adults have yet to be standardized. Further research may be necessary to identify the best fit for the quantification of youth leadership skills translating to adult leadership abilities, as three of the studies utilized semi-structured interviews (Bruce et al., 2005; Hoover & Bruce, 2006; Anderson et al., 2010), one conducted structured interviews (Swigert & Boyd, 2010), one employed transcendental phenomenology and a corresponding interview (Buschlen et al., 2018), and one using a quantitative questionnaire (Rosch & Nelson, 2018). Five of these studies had a sample size of 25 participants or less (Bruce et al., 2005; Hoover & Bruce, 2006; Anderson et al., 2010; Swigert & Boyd, 2010; Buschlen et al., 2018) while the other study had a sample size of 757 (Rosch & Nelson, 2018). The trend among these articles seems to be interview-based inquiry amongst a small number of participants, though questions used in each study were not included in the methodologies and may vary. Further research can help standardize interviews for these long-term studies on leadership skills or may show that the more quantitative approach conducted by Rosch and Nelson (2018) provided clearer conclusions.

Of the twelve articles in the role of adults in youth leadership theme, eight articles (Bruce et al., 2006; Nestor et al., 2006; Greiman & Addington, 2008; Rehm, 2014; Brumbaugh & Cater, 2016; Voelker et al., 2019; Nowak et al., 2019; Windon et al., 2021) utilized the adult view of youth leadership while only four articles (Walchoski & Lodl, 2004; Horstmeier & Nall, 2007; Jones, 2009; Hancock et al., 2012) considered the youth view of their own leadership development. This uneven view of youth leadership which currently focuses on the adult's view of their own abilities to develop youth in their leadership skills may not provide a complete picture of the effectiveness of the programs examined. Future research should include data from both viewpoints, aiming to find correlations between the adult and youth perspective. Our emerging theme of modeling youth leadership development also highlights an area of potential research as identifying quantifiable data with regards to conceptual models of youth leadership is not well covered in existing research.

Moving forward in the practice of developing youth leaders, ample amounts of research discuss the importance and value of youth leadership development programs. These resources should be utilized when deciding which programs and activities are best suited for the targeted youth. Furthermore, research has shown that adults play a vital role in youth leadership development, thus mentors and teachers incorporating leadership development lessons should be aware of their severe impact (Voelker et al., 2019). Leadership mentors should also implore youths to acquire leadership skills at younger ages as it is proven to provide benefits in aspects of success and behavior management (Caputi, 2017). Lastly, much research has shown that involvement in community and extracurricular activities is a great tool in developing leadership skills among youths (Hancock et al., 2012; Harris & Beckert, 2019). Youth should be encouraged to engage in their community via volunteerism, programs, workshops, or other pathways, to fully immerse themselves into situations that help them to develop leadership skills and abilities.

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