

**Adolescent Leadership Development:**

**Redirecting Self Assessment to Enhance Leadership Development in Youth  
Organizations**

Franklin T. Kudo

Case Western Reserve University

Weatherhead School of Management

*“Teenagers learn to be leaders by watching the people around them act as leaders. Leadership is learned by watching, imitating, and practicing with people. It involves trial and error and learning from mistakes and successes alike”* [italics added] (Linden & Fertman, 1998, p. 48).

Adolescence is a very significant period in a young persons’ life. It is a time when youth are growing and establishing individual identities. It is also a critical time for learning essential life skills. However, we often don’t recognize the importance of teaching leadership to our children. We simply rely on someone else to teach these skills. Parents become preoccupied and concerned about how their children are doing in school or in a sports program, and developing leadership skills fades from our list of “things to do” for our children. Parents make the erroneous assumption that the educational system will fully prepare their children to accept leadership roles later in adult life. The fact of the matter is we often don’t fully understand the developmental process of adolescent leadership. Such as, what are the emotional and behavioral prerequisites required for an adolescent to learn leadership skills, how should leadership be cultivated, and what does the learning environment have to look like for leadership development to take place?

Adults have a significant role in cultivating leadership in their children. They not only provide the support system for this learning process, but need to build certain behavioral and emotional competencies to serve as a foundation for growth. Adults enrich and cultivate the adolescent’s self esteem; they provide challenges and build the confidence of the independent self, and act as a safety net providing love, guidance and

reflection. A critical part of transitioning from adolescent to adulthood is learning about leadership. How often is this fact overlooked?

My research will involve the study of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) organization. This organization has been in existence for over 93 years, and has graduated over 100 millions boys. Like most youth organizations, leadership training and development is one of the missions of the Boy Scout program. The purpose of my research is to discover how youth leadership development in the BSA is unfolded. What personal competencies does an adolescent need as a prerequisite for leadership to develop? How leadership skills are cultivated, and what is the optimal learning environment? My research will provide illustrations of how essential leadership skills are learned and developed. Furthermore, I want to discover the organizational and/or structural factors in the BSA that create this environment.

Leadership is taught at a very basic level in the Boy Scouts, the young boys, between the ages of ten through seventeen learn, responsibility, accountability, organizational skills, the ability to communicate, and how to give direction and delegate. Learning even the very basic skills is important at this age. Research has shown that, “leadership development starts early,” and that, “skills critical for effective leadership, including the capacity to understand and interact with others, develop strikingly in adolescence and especially in young adulthood” (Gardner, J.W., 1987). Yet even with these learned skills many adolescents never get the opportunity to ever use their leadership skills (Linden & Fertman, 1998).

My ethnographic research will focus on describing, analyzing, and interpreting the learning and development process of leadership. I want to gain an understanding of how this intriguing and complex process works. I will study the learning and developmental process, and will also make an assessment of the learned leadership skills. My ethnography will incorporate field observations, as well as group and individual interviews of scout leadership, adult volunteers and parents. This will be done primarily at the weekly scheduled scout troop meetings. Tape recorded interviews of scouting leaders, parents and adult volunteers, and data from field observations will be gathered, sorted, categorized, analyzed and interpreted. Participants in the research will include: Boy Scout members (ages 10 to 17), scouting leadership, adult unit leaders, adult committee members, adult volunteers, and parents.

The results of my research will help those involved in the Boy Scouts of America organization, other youth leadership organizations, teachers and counselors in schools, and those working with troubled youth. My research will identify the adolescent competencies needed as a precondition to develop leadership skills. Additionally, it will provide the necessary information about constructing the proper learning environment so that development can be optimized.

## **Literature Review**

### ***The Need for Leadership Development in Youth***

There is a significant lack of understanding about adolescent leadership education. First, parents are not aware of what leadership skills are taught, let alone how it is taught, and when this process occurs. Additionally, parents do not understand the developmental process of acquiring leadership skills. Today the majority of research and writings

focuses primarily on adult leadership in corporate organizations or other institutions. There does not appear to be much writing or research about youth leadership education and development. Yet it is in adolescence where leadership skills are introduced, tested and cultivated over time. It is where leadership starts. Without the proper learning environment adolescents are unable to develop these skills. Our youth need to learn the appropriate leadership skills, to be able to test them, and to be provided with the necessary support system.

Surprisingly, most youth do not realize that they have attained leadership competencies unless it is pointed out to them. Adolescents acquire skills through various means and test them out in activities and interactions with others. However, unless the adolescent is under a structured leadership program the cultivation of these skills will not materialize. Leadership competencies for youth are very basic and can include the following competencies: communicating, organizing, planning and coordination, being responsible and accountable for their own actions as well as others, anticipating problems, conflict resolution skills, decision-making, developing interpersonal skills and learning how to delegate responsibilities. A sound and structured leadership development program will ensure that the youth cultivates these competencies so that they can properly be used later in adulthood.

Parents play a vital role in the leadership developmental process of their children. Parents serve as a support group that encourages, challenges and reflects on the adolescent's experience with testing their new skills. Avolio (1999) describes teenagers who were extremely challenged, sometimes way beyond what they thought was their potential, but received support and constructive advice from their parents, these youth

grew up to be the best developers of people. They learned what could be learned from their successes and especially their failures. Failures would be analyzed, reflected on, and the process improved and tried again. However, even though parents play a significant role in the development process, they are often confused or misinformed about how and where leadership skills are taught to their child. Leadership for the most part is not taught in school, in a sports program or in social organizations, (Linden & Fertman, 1998, p.124). It is unfortunate that most of these organizations do not focus on nor are they properly prepared to teach leadership.

### ***Defining Leadership Terms***

There are many types of leadership styles and methods. Currently, the most popular are transactional, transformational and principled. There are also other types of leadership styles such as, forceful, enabling, adaptive, and inspirational (London, 2002). All of these leadership styles are useful, and are appropriate in different situations. Forceful leadership or a “command and control” style is useful in a crisis and predominately used in the military. However, if you’re leading a corporate organization through a major cultural change, an inspirational and adaptive leadership style combination might work well. If you are a CEO desiring to develop your employees within your company by changing their values, needs, beliefs etc., using a transformational leadership style would be appropriate. Therefore, it is important to match the right leadership style to a particular situation. Most of the writings on leadership focus on three of the most popular leadership styles that are described below.

First, there is transactional leadership which is a pragmatic and results oriented leadership style. The transactional leader “addresses the self-interests of those being influenced by them. Transactional leaders offer inducements to move in the direction desired by the leaders, which often is a direction that would also satisfy the self-interests of the followers” (Avolio, 1999, p. 35-36). In other words, an exchange of rewards is used to negotiate with the followers who in turn produce the desired behavior or compliance.

A second type of leadership style is the transformational leader. However, unlike transactional leadership where one person negotiates with another to obtain desired behavior or compliance for a reward, transformational leadership causes a developmental shift in the follower’s beliefs, values, needs and capabilities (Bass & Avolio, 1994, p. 12). The transformational leader develops followers into leaders. As Burns, Bass and Sergiovanni, (Avolio, 1999, p.34), refer to transformational leaders as, “*moral agents*” [italics added] who focus on developing themselves and their followers to a higher-level mission and purpose.

Lastly, there is the principled leadership style. A principled leader integrates ethical business values, including honesty, fairness, mutual respect, kindness and doing what is right, into the practice of leading (London, 1999). Principled leaders use business diplomacy to negotiate deals, and yet, these leaders tackle the tough realities of business, making uncomfortable decisions, and resolving conflict, while maintaining high moral and ethical standards.

Each of us has different views of what leadership is, and the kinds of skills that are essential in order to be an effective leader. As stated before, there are many types of leaders and each one can be highly effective depending on the circumstances. Some leadership styles are appropriate on the military battlefield, coaching a soccer team, as a CEO leading a large corporation, or as a religious and community leader. We need to be more definitive about the kind of leadership that adolescent youth need to learn, and the proper learning environment that will effectively enrich these skills.

### ***Optimal Learning Environment and Stages of Development***

Youth learn leadership skills through various stages of development. At each stage the proper environmental setting needs to be in place to optimize what the adolescent has learned. For instance, the first stage in youth leadership development is becoming aware of themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, and the skills (Linden & Fertman, 1998, p. 65–80). Most children at this level do not realize that they possess certain leadership skills nor do they feel they have the potential to become a leader. In fact, most parents, teachers and institutional leaders are unaware of the importance of this developmental stage. Unfortunately, many adolescents will end up staying at this level and never progress further to the next higher stage of development.

Stage two is what Linden and Fertman (1998) call “interaction” or what the Center for Creative Leadership says is the “challenge” stage (McCauley, Moxley, & Velsor, 1998, p. 9-17). The youth has progressed from the “awareness” stage to the second level in which the youth gets to try out the leadership skills to reflect and to try again. The greater the personal challenge the more the youth progresses to become a good leader. They learn to handle stress and disappointing failures. Avolio (1998) provides research

of teenagers who did not have a formal position of authority, but challenged themselves by taking on a broad range of responsibilities for which they had to influence others; they appeared to develop their leadership skills more effectively in later life. They developed a more mature model of leadership mentally, and this helped them develop and influence others as adults.

The last stage of development is “mastery” (Linden & Fertman, 1998, p. 99-113), or “support” (McCauley, Moxley, & Velsor, 1998, p. 9-17). In this stage adolescents realize their potential; they have a healthy support group, and are able to channel their energies towards actually directing their own lives. They are now leaders.

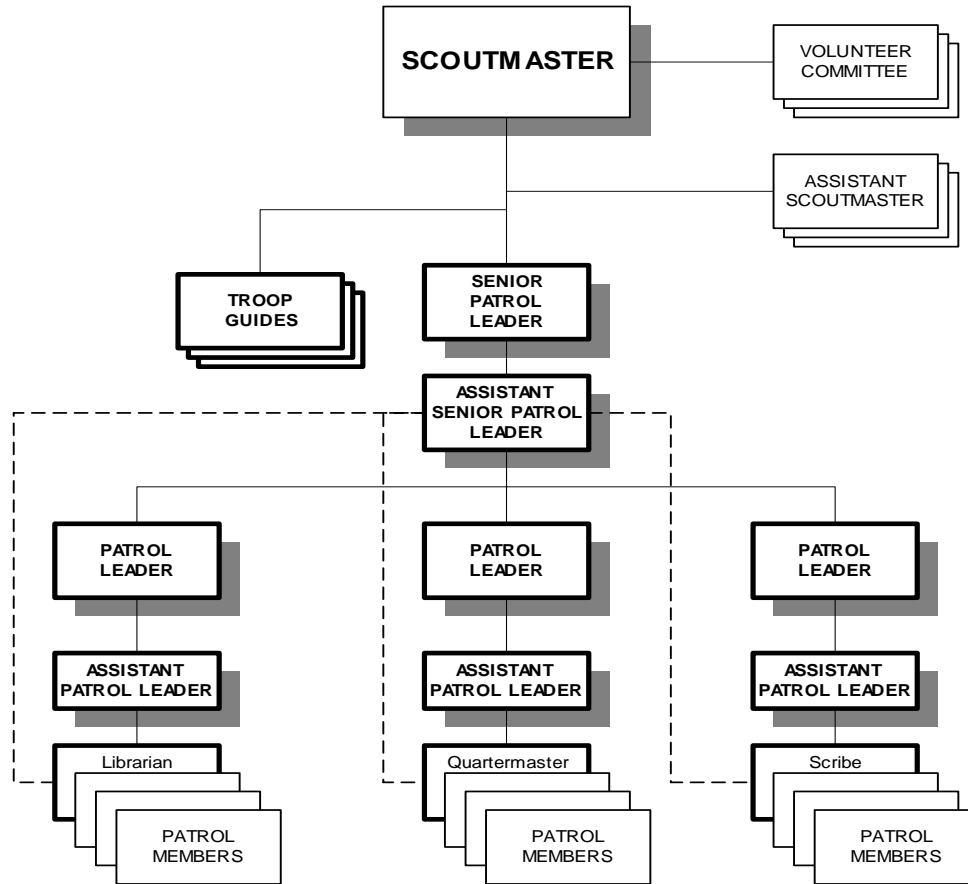
There is indeed a serious need to study youth leadership learning and development models, and to disseminate this epistemic knowledge to organizations and institutions that educate and develop our youth. Much attention is paid to adult leadership training, yet leadership skills need to be taught and developed first in our youth. It is essential that leadership skills be integrated with the development of an adolescent’s personality, behavior, intuitive ability, and interpersonal skills. Again, these need to be introduced when we are young. Parents assume the responsibility to make sure their children are properly loved and nurtured. Additionally, that their children have a healthy level of self esteem, and have attained the confidence to create an independent self identity that is separate from them. It is also important that the adolescent be exposed to sound ethical and moral standards as part of everyday life, and lastly, to be provided with a learning environment that is safe, supportive, and reflective.

## Methods

### *Research Setting*

Research was conducted on a troop located in the State of Hawaii under the auspices of the Aloha Council Boy Scouts of America. The selected troop was situated in a middle class neighborhood community on the main Island of Oahu. I had requested of the Aloha Council BSA to make the troop selection for my study. The criteria was based on selecting a troop unit they felt had developed sound leadership and performed well in team competition. The troop unit they selected had received the “distinguished unit commendation” for four years in a row. Additionally, in its first year of existence with only a handful of scouts won the “Outstanding Troop” commendation at the annual BSA district Camporee. The research troop unit is a relatively small unit with approximately twenty six scouts, five assistant Scoutmasters and a Scoutmaster. The troop is also assisted by the parents of the scouts who are required to volunteer time and effort on at least one event or activity during the year. As with all troops there is an adult voluntary committee comprised of parents who serve to assist the Scoutmaster, and act as the coordinating body to provide volunteers for various projects, to coordinate their activity, and make assessments of various programs.

**Figure 1. Organization Chart of the Selected BSA Troop Unit**



PATROL LEADERS CONFERENCE (PLC) MEMBERS - Indicated by dark bordered boxes

The backbone of the Boy Scouts of America organization is the troop unit. A troop is comprised of anywhere from 2 to 100 boys organized into small patrols. Each patrol is lead by a patrol leader and an assistant patrol leader. All of the patrol leaders come under the supervision of a Senior Patrol Leader, and the Senior Patrol Leader reports directly to the Scoutmaster. The patrol is the building block of a troop unit; it is made up of boys with similar ages and interests. The patrol membership is usually between eight to five boys in number, ages ten through seventeen (See figure 1).

### ***Methodology***

The research was conducted during the months of February, 2003 through April, 2003. Field work was conducted by attending weekly troop meetings and various break-out sessions. I also participated in a Court of Honor presentation ceremony, put on by the parents on behalf of the rank advancing scouts. The program recognized all of the scouts who had recently received awards and advancement badges. I observed and interviewed scouts who were in senior leadership positions on a group basis. These scouts were, the Senior Patrol Leader, Assistant Senior Patrol Leader and Troop Guides who represented the senior leadership of the troop. The Troop Guides purpose is to train and assist the leadership development of the Patrol Leader. Each Troop Guide is assigned a particular patrol to work with. It is required that the Troop Guide previously served as a Patrol Leader, and in some cases especially with this troop, have prior experience in the Senior Patrol Leader position. I also had individually taped interviews with the Scoutmaster, and selected parent/volunteers who had a scout leader in the troop.

As an investigator I was an observer in various troop meetings, achievement ceremonies, planning meetings and review panels. Generally, the normal troop meeting is where scouts learn new skills, plan and organize for future campouts or hikes, service community projects are formulated, and fundraising activities are staffed. Review panels and achievement ceremonies are part of the rank advancement process of scouting. The young scout must first be tested of his knowledge of various skills laid out in the *BSA Scouting Handbook*. A Testing Board is formed by senior scouts to test and evaluate the scout who is ready for advancement. After successfully completing the test requirements, he has a Scoutmasters Conference, where the scout can talk one on one with the

Scoutmaster about his experience and goals for the future. The next process is called the Board of Review; the Board is made up of adult members of the volunteer committee and two parent volunteers. The review panel interviews the prospective scouting candidate before he is granted his rank advancement. The scout then progresses to the Court of Honor for his formal presentation of his rank badge and certificate.

I also observed the teaching of various skills to younger scouts usually by the older scouts in leadership positions. During a typical troop meeting the older scouts teach the younger scouts various skills, such as first aid, rope skills, camping and hiking skills etc. Scouting utilizes a *scout to scout* [italics added] approach when teaching basic skills. The older more experienced scout teaches the younger scout. Observation of the scouts was very helpful in analyzing the actors roles and interchange between them to draw themes and interpretations of the leadership process.

*Research Design:* My overall research design was based on the “conceptual context” of my study. The conceptual framework was drawn from concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that I used to provide support for my research design. The conceptual framework provided an explanation of what I thought was *going on*, key factors, concepts or variables and the various interconnections, (Maxwell, 1996, p. 25). Maxwell goes on to say the “conceptual context” formed a tentative theory of explaining what is happening and why. It helps to define the research questions, understand the purpose of the research, and to ultimately develop the appropriate research methods. Developing my research question(s) served as a starting point of the design; however, the question did not really start to firm up until I had determined the context and purpose of the study. I avoided a research question that was too broad or general. Problems such as

determining the proper scope of the investigation, the approach on analysis, and making the connection of the purpose of the study to the existing knowledge were both relevant and essential to my research (Maxwell, 1996, p. 25).

*Research Methods:* Ethnographic qualitative research was used in this study. The basis for this is the inductive, interactive, and recursive process of qualitative research. This method is proven useful to construct theories which explain human behavior and beliefs (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p.15). Based on my preliminary research, I had developed hunches, guesses, and initial hypothesis about what I felt were the real issues and questions. Understanding that as I did my field work and analysis that things would change, I knew ultimately over retesting and continued study I would be able to see a pattern emerge. At that point a model would appear to be constructed as pointed out by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as “grounded theory.” Merriman (1988) refers to this as a recursive process and analysis. The recursive nature of going back and forth between inductive analyses, contributes to building on explanatory statements for the research basis (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 15). The result is what LeCompte (1990) states as a successive process of developing item, pattern, and constitutive or interpretive levels of analysis.

*Data Collection through Observations & Taped Interviews:* Observations and interviews were done on the scouts at a regular troop meeting. I wanted to obtain an overview of what a typical troop meeting was like, and to begin to see if I could then focus my study to some aspect specific to leadership learning and development. A decision was made to narrow the scope of my investigation to observing and interviewing the Scoutmaster, parents, and senior scout leadership to get a better idea of the

interrelationships among these actors, and to discover the process by which leadership skills and behavior were integrated into the scouting program. Hopefully, this would provide some needed research evidence to support how the learning and development process of leadership takes place. As the research progressed I utilized interviewing methods to confirm from the actors what I thought I was seeing. Taped interviews were done on the senior scout leadership as a group, and individual interviews were done with parents, and the Scoutmaster. Interviews were then transcribed and categorized by themes to help in the analysis and interpretation phases of the study.

*Data Analysis:* After all of the raw data was gathered through observations and taped interviews, the data was then categorized and sorted into common patterns and themes. This process required considerable background knowledge of the BSA organization, and an understanding of youth leadership development. I acquired this knowledge from past experience as a Boy Scout, a former Eagle Scout, BSA internal literature, such as scouting handbooks and training manuals, as well as, performing a literature review of leadership publications in the area of youth leadership development and general organizational leadership.

### **Ethnography**

#### ***“On My Honor I Will Do My Best ...”***

It was a week night; I hurriedly arrived at the church grounds located in the middle of a large residential neighborhood, hoping I wasn't going to be late. The Scoutmaster gave me directions to where this evening's troop meeting was going to be held. I drove into a large paved parking lot that surrounded a church. Off to the side was a one-story cement hollow tile building where the Boy Scout troop was able to rent two rooms at one

dollar per year from the church. It was the churches way of giving back to the community. It was just past 7 PM when I entered the parking lot, after a quick scan of the property I noticed lights and noise emanating from the auxiliary building.

Walking to the building I heard the voices of young adolescent boys playing, talking, and laughing, it was a level of noise that seemed to rise above the night's darkness. I saw boys darting back and forth in the shadows, their baggy uniforms loosely hanging on their gangly adolescent frames. As I approached the dark silhouetted building the light emitted from the rooms streaked out of the open doorways, providing light on the covered outside walkway of the building. My attention was immediately drawn to a room with noise projecting from the doorway; there I found the scouts and their parents gathered inside. If you've ever watched young adolescent boys in a room together there is a lot of seemingly chaotic energy and contagious enthusiasm. They laugh, run, and shout, all the while honing their social skills while engaging in play.

Needless to say, I felt out of place, everyone was going about their business, but at the same time quietly observing me in the room. I suspected the Scoutmaster had probably told everyone I was coming. Who is this guy? What kind of research? I drew upon my tacit instincts as a practioner, the first thing was to establish trust with the group of parents. They were the guardians of the scouts. It would allow me to open up the research to hopefully fruitful observations, and interviews, and of course, the truth. I understood that sufficient time had to pass by so that the parents and scouts would get used to me being in the room. I could then observe their natural and unrestricted behavior. I was still feeling a little self-conscious, and impatiently wished this wasn't my first observation.

The parents had congregated in the back of the room; they were in dialogue with each other, and patiently waited for the meeting to begin. I had previously learned that the Scoutmaster had required the parents to attend the first fifteen minutes of each weekly troop meeting. Most of the parents complied. The parents were then allowed to leave and come back to pickup their boy. The parents greeted me and were understandably deliberately cautious but friendly. Some of the parents hung around while others went out to have coffee with each other at a nearby Starbuck's. The Scoutmaster finally came into the meeting room and began introducing me to some of the parents. I felt bad that I couldn't remember all of their names. As I shook the last hand, I simultaneously reached for my note pad and pen to begin the ethnography.

The back wall of the troop room was covered with schedules, rosters, organizational charts, volunteer lists, flyers on upcoming events and a sheet of contact numbers and addresses. It made sense, as this is where the parents gathered. The front of the room was decorated with a large logo'd BSA clock, and pictures of each of the BSA badges. There was a twelve foot by twelve foot ten inch high wooden platform that served as a stage along with a skinny wooden podium. The scout leadership stood on this stage to administer the troop meeting. On one side of the room were the individual scout mailboxes, a copy machine and a medium sized thermal jug full of cold drinking water.

The weekly troop meetings began promptly at 7:00 PM every Friday evening. The Senior Patrol Leader (SPL) along with an Assistant Senior Patrol Leader (ASPL) called the troop of around twenty-six boys to order. The boys got into their formations in their respective patrol sections, which were marked by plastic tape on the floor of the room.

The scout sign is raised with the right hand, three fingers pointing upward, followed by an oral recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance and the Scout Oath. The room starts to get noisy, the SPL will quickly raises his right hand, displaying the scout sign, and says “*Troop*”! [italics added]. All of the scouts immediately raise their scout sign, and the room quickly quiets to a dead silence. Next the scoutmaster comes up to the platform and says a few words reminding the scouts about the appropriate way to answer a request from someone asking for help. He says to the scouts, “What do you say”? They reply in unison, “I’ll be more than glad to do that for you, is there anything else I can do for you”? He says, “*Good*”! [italics added]. Then makes a general announcement about an upcoming camping trip and adds that he will not be there the first day and that the Assistant Scoutmasters will cover for him. He goes on to say, “I gotta go golfing with some business people ... (pause)...hey, I really don’t like to golf”! The scouts quickly respond, “Sure ... yeah right,” and then everyone breaks out in laughter including the Scoutmaster. There is an implicit duality about how the scouts view the Scoutmaster, one as a trusted friend, and the other as an authority figure. They feel comfortable poking fun at him, yet at the same time respecting him as an adult and his position as a Scoutmaster.

The SPL then calls for the patrols to break into their corners to have their meetings. The patrol meeting is where the younger scouts are taught by the older scouts various skills to get them ready for rank advancement or to plan for the next upcoming camping or hiking trip. Additionally, the patrols also discuss problem areas involving sharing of work load, preparing themselves for a uniform inspection, getting ready for a Scouting competition or voting on who will be put in a vacant leadership position. The noise level in the room begins to reach an all time high, the boys form in their patrol groups,

laughing and running around. Oddly they accomplish their assigned tasks, amongst all the play and almost deafening noise ... it's simply amazing.

*“Experience teaches nothing... without knowledge & understanding.”*

### **Edwards Deming Ph.D**

Before each general troop meeting there is a brief fifteen minute Patrol Leaders Conference (PLC). (See figure 1) The PLC is made up of the scout leadership of the troop, that is, all scouts holding a position above Assistant Patrol Leader (APL). The purpose of the weekly PLC meeting is to set the troop meeting agenda for the night. Usually once a month, a longer version of the PLC is held to discuss important issues facing the troop, to plan for the next hiking or camping trip, and to get periodic status information from each of the Patrol Leaders (PL). The longer PLC lasts approximately forty-five minutes, and is held at the end of the general troop meeting. The PLC is a self-governing body of scouting leadership who play a major role in the planning and decision making for the troop.

It was observed that the Scoutmaster provided the PLC a lot of leeway and discretion in making decisions and especially in taking on responsibilities. The Scoutmaster would stay in the background and ask questions posing issues to the scouts in their decision-making process. In one PLC meeting a senior leader complained that a new recruit was not progressing well in attaining “tenderfoot” rank. The Scoutmaster asked, “... so what are you going to do about it”? The senior leader said, “I guess ... work with the boy.” The Scoutmaster retorted, “How are you going to work with him ... what measures are you going to take”? The scout responded, “Well ... I'm going to call him at home and carefully encourage him to study the BSA Handbook, so he can pass tenderfoot at the

next Testing Board.” Scoutmaster then says, “You think that is going to work”? The scout replies, “Yes.”

There is a large contingent of Troop Guides (TG) in this troop who are also members of the PLC. The TG’s are the older and more experienced scouts who have served usually in a number of leadership positions, and whose sole purpose is to provide support and guidance to the younger members in each patrol. The troop had an unusually large number of TG’s for its size. There were six TG’s assigned to the three patrols during the time I was conducting this research. The heavy number of senior leaders in this troop compared to its’ total scout membership appeared to be disproportionately high. Leadership which included the TG’s, the SPL, ASPL, Quartermaster, Librarian, Scribe, the PL’s and APL’s totaled sixteen scouts. Troop leadership accounted for sixty one percent of total troop membership. It was like “*having too many chiefs and not enough Indians*” [italics added]. My past experience with other troops including the one I was a member of forty years ago did not have anywhere near the amount of leadership positions. In fact, back then TG’s or the PLC did not exist. I wondered if this was a new national policy of the BSA, so I asked the Scoutmaster about why he had so many leaders. The Scoutmaster responded that this was his philosophy, to provide leadership opportunities to as many of the scouts who were ready to advance. I learned that every six months this troop would shuffle the scout leadership positions around. There would even be scouts who would be called back into duty to a lower position to provide stronger leadership where needed. One would think that this would cause a duplication of roles or a lack of continuity in leadership, but to the contrary, I did not observe any indications of inefficiency. Each leadership position had specifically assigned responsibilities. My

conversation with Richard, the Chairman of the Volunteer Committee put some light on the Scoutmasters' somewhat unorthodox method of leadership development. He said, "The Scoutmaster and I believe that scouting is a test environment where you can learn leadership skills and practice it." He further went on to say that the troop was unusual in a way that it had, "all leadership and few boys ... very unusual ... its Warren's (Scoutmaster) method." Richard commented that Warren had a unique ability to see through things, and make the boys reflect what was significant in what they had just experienced. He did this with everyone in the troop.

***Current Developmental Model: Self assessment, Challenge & Support***

The Senior Patrol Leaders Handbook for scout leaders lists the following leadership skills that scouts need to acquire. These are, having a good attitude, acting with maturity, being organized and looking the part, ("Senior Patrol Leaders Handbook," 2002, p. 83-85). Definitely, this troop's method of producing many senior leaders helped reinforce the Scouting values and beliefs throughout the troop membership. Additionally, the "Senior Patrol Leaders Handbook," (2002) goes on to say that providing leadership is:

1. Relying on the Scout Oath and Law in making ethical choices.
2. Recognizing the importance of shared values in a team situation.
3. Communicating a vision of success to others, providing assistance to those scouts requiring a little more help.
4. Offering advanced scouts added responsibilities and leadership positions.
5. Modeling the kind of behavior and achievement you expect from everyone in the troop.
6. Having high expectations for yourself and expecting the best in others,

7. Acknowledging differences.
8. Developing trust by keeping the interests of troop members in mind.
9. Being active and making meetings count.
10. Respecting and valuing others by making sure every scout has something important to contribute.

Leadership development is the expansion of a person's capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes. A person's development process includes increasing their capacity of self-awareness, systemic thinking and creativity (McCauley, Moxley & Velsor, 1998, p. 25). The Center for Creative Leadership's model of leadership development focuses on three main elements of the development process in attaining leadership skills. These key drivers are assessment, challenge, and support. According to McCauley, Moxley & Velsor, (1998, p. 8) "any type of developmental experience – from training programs to job assignments – we find that they are most effective when all three elements are present." They go on to say that these three elements serve to provide the motivation for people to focus their attention and effort towards learning and changing, and also provide the raw material and resources for leadership development. The application of this model of leadership development is widely accepted and used throughout the corporate, military and institutional arenas.

The model begins with self assessment. At West Point for instance, plebe cadets are broken down to understand their limits, weaknesses and all that they "don't know", or as they call it, "starting from zero," before the rebuilding and learning begins (Donnithorne, 1993, p.17 – 23).

Organizational leadership training usually starts with self assessment testing, such as a 360 degree survey measuring personality competencies, tests for learning styles, or profiles of achievement, power and affiliation needs. Additionally, other tests and profiles are obtained to ascertain a persons “ideal self” and “real self”, and to analyze the gap that exists between them. Another set of tests look at a person’s needs or orientation. All of these tests are used to gather empirical information of a person’s traits, his needs, his strengths and weaknesses, and to provide the person with an understanding of how they approach life and why. Development plans are then formulated for individuals so they can build the necessary competencies of a successful leader.

Leadership skills are taught through various teaching methods which allows the participant to experiment in a learning and supportive environment. It is also important to note that according to most scholars and leadership writers, leadership development is a continual self-development experience that goes on throughout our lives

**Figure 2. Elements of a Developmental Experience**

<b>Element</b>	<b>Role in Motivation</b>	<b>Role as a Resource</b>
Assessment	Desire to close gap between current self and ideal self.	Clarity about needed changes; clues about how gap can be closed.
Challenge	Need to master the challenge	Opportunity for experimentation and practice; exposure to different perspectives.
Support	Confidence in ability to learn and grow; positive value placed on change.	Confirmation and clarification of lessons learned.

McCauley, Moxley & Velsor, The Center for Creative Leadership: Handbook of Leadership Development, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998.

After the self assessment portion is done the potential leader is exposed to an experiential challenge, a challenge that pushes his limits (McCall, 1998). The emphasis here is to master this experience to build confidence and knowledge. The model of leadership development must also have a support system that creates a safe and supportive environment for a person to try out his new skills. If he fails the system will not punish but encourage him to try again. The support system is also reflective in nature; it teaches the person what he did right, what he did wrong and the implications and meanings derived from this situated experience.

The McCauley, Moxley & Velsor (1998) model of leadership development is also used in teaching leadership to adolescents. Linden and Fertman (1998, p. 17) advocate a similar leadership development model for adolescents that creates, “individuals who think for themselves, communicate their thoughts and feelings to others, and help others understand and act on their own beliefs; they influence others in an ethical and socially responsible way.” They (1998, p. 65-113) prescribe three stages of development for adolescents 1.) Stage one: awareness, 2.) Stage two: interaction, and 3.) Stage three: mastery. But can the same process of leadership development used for adults be equally effective when used with adolescents?

***“I did it on my own”... the Aspirant Adolescent***

At one of the troop meetings I was asked by the troop Scoutmaster to go to another side room in the building to see the Board of Review (BOR) evaluate five scouts who were making rank advancements. The Board of Review, I learned were a panel of adult volunteer parents who served to review scouts who had passed the Testing Board, had gone through a Scoutmaster’s conference, and finally, needed to go through the BOR in

order to be awarded the rank at the Court of Honor. As I was hurriedly rushed to the other room I was introduced to the Scoutmaster's wife and two other parents who were part of this BOR panel. I quickly asked the wife of the Scoutmaster, what is it that you are trying to accomplish with the BOR? She replied, "The BOR panel is to build the confidence in the scout ... they will be questioned in front of adults." I soon learned as the first scout was marched in along side the Assistant Senior Patrol Leader (ASPL) to a seat directly in front of a long table that sat three BOR adults. He was introduced by the ASPL to the panel as Michael, a sixth grader who is up for the rank of "tenderfoot," the ASPL then marched out of the room. Tenderfoot is the first advancement a scout makes after entering a troop. Needless to say, the little boy who was eleven years old was scared and timidly looked down at the ground, his Nike basketball shoes fidgeting on the white linoleum floor. The panel of parents tried to comfort the boy by asking him open-ended questions that he could answer. For instance, "what do you enjoy about scouting"? "How do you help out at home"? Every time Michael answered the questions he would look up and blankly stare at the adults. He was trying to reduce the nervousness he was feeling. I felt sorry for this little boy, but I soon began to understand the purpose of this somewhat painful review process. At first Michael's answers were very quiet and soft, you could hardly hear what he was saying, but as further questions were raised he began to speak louder and with more confidence. When the panel was finished asking questions, they dismissed Michael and he left the room.

The BOR panel privately discussed Michael's review; they quietly laughed about how innocent he seemed, then after a few minutes, the Scoutmaster's wife got up and called Michael back into the room. The Scoutmaster's wife, with a serious look on her

face told Michael that he passed the panel's review, and congratulated him on attaining the rank of "tenderfoot." The tension broke. Michael's face just beamed with delight and I felt what he was thinking, "Yes ... I did it ... I did it on my own." Michael quickly rose from his seat, smiled, and left the room with more confidence than he came in with. As other scouts were called in they were much older than Michael, probably fourteen and sixteen years old, and had been through this process many times before. Some of these scouts were on their way to making Eagle, and they exhibited their maturity and confidence in front of the panel.

I was intrigued by yet another young twelve year old scout named Casey who was just about the same age as Michael. Casey, unlike Michael had been in the troop for two years. At the beginning of one meeting, the troop was going through its' normal introductions to everyone in the room, including the parents who had gathered in the back of the troop meeting room. Each scout stood up faced the parents, and shyly gave their name, rank and promptly sat down. However, when it came to Casey's turn, he stood up and assertively shouted his name, rank and proudly sat down. All of the parents chuckled and smiled at Casey. Later I found out that Casey was a Troop Guide and a First Class scout, working on his Star Scout requirements. This meant he had already served in the position of Patrol Leader, and was subsequently promoted to a senior leadership level of TG to help teach the younger scouts various skills for rank advancement. Because of his relatively young age he was playful like a twelve year old, but I noticed he was unusually confident of himself, and appeared to take his responsibility to teach the younger scouts seriously.

In a breakout session during the Beaver patrol meeting, I noticed Casey was teaching Michael something out of the “BSA Scouting Handbook.” I quietly listened and observed from a distance. Casey’s eyes intent as he spoke to Michael, even amongst the overwhelming chatter and boyish laughter of the other scouts in the room, and waited patiently for Michael to respond. They would laugh together; Michael would look at Casey as he spoke with careful deliberation. The patrol meeting ended and all of the scouts were called back into formation. I observed Casey helping the younger scouts’ get into line formation, even though it wasn’t his direct responsibility. Later I had a chance to talk to Casey about what scouting meant to him.

Interviewer – “If you were teaching a young scout the Scout Oath and the Scout Law for the first time, how would you describe what it is and how do you think its’ important”?  
“Why do you think it’s important”?

Casey – “The Scout Oath shows how you should present yourself to other people, and its’ important because when someone asks you what have you learned in scouting. You can say the Scout Oath over, and they might understand.”

The Scout Oath provided Casey with a description of what he did as a scout and more interestingly seemed to contribute to Casey’s self image of himself to others around him. Erikson (1980) found that youngsters between the ages of ten to twelve years old define themselves by what they can accomplish and by the skills they have competency in. Adolescence is a period of change and movement from one state of mind to another. It includes children between the ages of ten thru nineteen. Children in this age group

exhibit not only change in their physical development but also in their maturity and behavior levels. They begin to understand the world around them and their own actions. Often researchers break this ten-year period into two sections. Young adolescents between the ages of ten through fifteen, and older adolescents ages fifteen to nineteen. During the young adolescent stage of life a young boy is on a quest for independence and autonomy (Linden & Fertman, 1998, p. 11–16). The youngster begins to differentiate themselves from their parents and teachers, and instead start to compare themselves with their peers. Juhasz (1982) observed adolescents during this stage began to seek identities separate from their parents and try to make a difference in a broader social perspective. Additionally, young adolescents move to obtain greater control over their lives and freedom from authority, while at the same time holding on to the benefits and security of being a child (Thornburg, 1983). This is also a time for the young adolescent to find their identity. “Who they are, and how they fit into the world is defining issues for ten-to-fourteen year olds” (Linden & Fertman, 1998, p.15). You start to see the establishment of a social conscience and they learn and try out socially acceptable behaviors. As these youngsters get between twelve to fifteen years old, they define their role in the world (in school or community) and establish their individuality. By the mid teens (fifteen to seventeen) adolescents have a sense of who they have been and who they hope to become. Their definition of themselves becomes future oriented and one of intentions and what they would like to do (Linden & Fertman, 1998, p.15).

### ***Self Assessment...a need for redirection***

Bennis and Thomas (2002, p. 91) argue, “...that traits and other individual factors are given far too much prominence in studies of leadership. Such factors rarely

determine an individual's ultimate success." To my knowledge both Michael and Casey never had a self assessment test done on them; the BSA certainly did not provide it. Even when the scouts met with the Scoutmaster during the Scoutmaster's Conference, they were asked questions such as, what is happening in their lives, especially at home and in school. Additionally, what interests them, and if they have any problems or concerns. Neither did I observe the BOR giving any assessment feedback as to the young adolescent's personal competencies or strengths and weaknesses. The BOR were concerned about the scouts' goals, his enjoyment of the scouting experience, and making sure he behaved like a good scout. So where are the self-inventory testing of self, the realization of how others think of you, and the understanding of personal potentials and limitations?

For most young adolescent between the ages of ten and fifteen, self assessments are not done. Can you ever recall your parents or school giving you a thorough self assessment of yourself? If you misbehaved, they probably pointed out your bad behavior, maybe a weakness or two, and gave you an example of what good behavior should look like. I would therefore argue that the majority of young adolescents are not comprehensively self assessed. I would also say that even if they were, the assessment would not be measuring the proper competencies, and therefore, be of little benefit in the developmental process.

Currently, self assessment is still one of the first steps you perform when embarking on most leadership training and development programs (McCauley, Moxley & Velsor, 1998). The *Myers-Briggs Type Indication* [italics added] personality inventory is "one of the most popular self-report instruments in leadership and management development

programs .... it is designed to provide information about respondents' Jungian psychological type preferences" (Fitzgerald & Kirby, 1997, p. 3). According to Fitzgerald & Kirby (1997, p. 4), Isabel B. Myers and Katharine Briggs's goal "was construction of an instrument that would assist people in developing self-understanding and increasing their understanding and appreciation of others." For years this type of assessment has been extensively used throughout the consulting industry. Self assessments testing, such as the Myer-Briggs, are recommended for most leadership development programs. It is perhaps because self assessments are also utilized in many behavioral modification programs. However, the development of the adolescent's sense of an independent self is neither emphasized nor tested for, as a behavioral and emotional precondition for adolescent leadership. Current practitioners' of leadership development believe that the attainment of an independent self is an outcome produced from the confidence one gathers after mastering an experiential challenge, rather than a prerequisite.

Leadership programs today use self assessment to discover an individual's potential and limitations, which subsequently facilitates a person's development into a successful leader. I posit that these assumptions are flawed, that current self assessment testing needs to be redirected. Self assessment testing is focused on personality competencies, learning styles, psychological needs orientations, and so on. Assessments as it is currently used do not determine a person's level of self-independence. That's not to say that self assessments may be very useful in other kinds of adult behavioral modification programs. However, self assessments used in leadership development programs needs to be redirected to ascertain a person's establishment of a healthy independent self.

Parents play a major role in developing independent self identity in adolescents. Rarely can it completely be achieved through organizational experiences or institutional training programs. Adolescent organizations that are aware of this prerequisite can tailor their programs to work with parents to cultivate this competency in their child at an early age. Optimal results will be enhanced and a greater return to society realized. We need to understand that even a solid leadership and character-building program like the Boy Scouts cannot substitute for a set of good parents.

*Parenting ... knowing when to “stay out of it”*

In an interview with the father of a senior leader and TG, named Tyler, and younger scout Dale, I asked the father what he thought his role as a parent was.

Interviewer –“What do you think your role as a parent is, with a boy in the scouting program”?

Parent –“I think my role is pretty much to stay out of it. Stay out of it meaning let him take on the responsibilities, let him build and develop, and go at his own pace.”

This parent went on to talk about a situation with his youngest son, named Dale. Dale is three years younger than his older brother Tyler. Dale at the age of eleven was given the responsibility of being a Patrol Leader. Dale’s father commented that he and his wife didn’t think the boy could handle the responsibilities, and they were concerned. But the Scoutmaster encouraged them to give Dale a chance, and so they did. The younger brother did just fine and it proved to be a great learning experience for him to accept the position of Patrol Leader. During the young adolescent stage of development it is

important that the adolescent develops an independent self by building the confidence that he can accomplish things on his own. That's not to say that a parent not be involved with their child, but they need to give them the space and encouragement to grow. Parents face a critical task of being able to recognize the "cues" from the child at this stage of development (Furman, 2001). Developing a boy's independent self will create a solid foundation for leadership development.

I discussed with the Scoutmaster about the role of parents and asked him whether there was a correlation in how much a parent participated with their son in the troop and their son's development. This is how the conversation went.

Interviewer – "... a parent that is not that participative versus a parent who is more participative...do you see any difference in the boy's development"? "Is there a correlation"?

Scoutmaster - "No"

Scoutmaster – "I know one scout in particular whose parent basically drops off and will do an activity, you know, once a year, but does not intermingle with the parents or hang around a whole lot, but he's (scout) skilled as a leader, and as a – this is a young man—he's good. There's no direct correlation."

Parents need to be careful of not unintentionally hindering an adolescent's establishment of his independent self identity. A mother, who served on the volunteer committee and a parent of a former scout, told me that her older son was previously in the troop about two years ago, and that she had a younger son currently enrolled in the troop.

She said that her older son was one merit badge short of becoming an Eagle Scout, and he suddenly decided to quit the troop. She admitted she was really disappointed in her son at the time. She had continually pushed him throughout his scouting experience to make Eagle. Listening to her, I had asked her if she thought that her oldest son regretted the fact that he never made Eagle when he was so close. She responded by saying, “well, I think he is, but he won’t admit it.” She also said she learned something from that experience with her oldest son, and that was, “not to push so hard and let them do their own thing.” It’s difficult for parents sometimes to trust and let go, we all want our children to succeed and make it in this world. Again, I want to stress that I am not advocating, not being involved in your adolescent’s life. It is a fine balance, and parents need to be attuned to the adolescent “cues.” We need to allow the adolescent the freedom, and yet provided sufficient parental support to establish an independent self.

***You can’t develop something that isn’t there!***

This outstanding troop had graduated many good scouting leaders so it was surprising to me when I discovered that a few scouts failed in the program. I was curious to find out why. One case in particular caught my interest and caused me to investigate further. During my interview with Richard, Chairman of the Volunteer Committee, he told me a story of a boy named Allan. Allan was five years old when he moved to Hawaii from the mainland. His parents had recently gotten divorced on the mainland, and Allan was sent to live with his grandmother in Hawaii. The grandmother was a very nice and responsible person and tried to provide the love and nurturing in the absence of both of his parents. Allan’s natural mother did finally move to Hawaii a couple of years later, but had since remarried and had another set of children to take care

of. So Allan continued to be raised by his grandmother. Allan joined the BSA troop when he was ten; however, immediately the troop began to experience problems with his conduct, what Richard recalls as, “*dangerous behavior*” [italics added]. Normally, the troop handles inappropriate behavior through the PLC leadership group; however, if this is not effective in correcting the behavior, the scouts will involve the Scoutmaster. If the inappropriate behavior continues, the Chairman of the Volunteer Committee is called on to intervene with the parents of the scout. In this particular case the scout’s bad behavior was such that Richard was called in to help. The Chairman had known the boy when he was in the Cub Scouts and really liked the boy, however, Allan had changed. Richard and the Scoutmaster had many counseling sessions with Allan’s grandmother and sometimes Allan’s mother. They were even asked to accompany Allan on camping trips, which they did. However, Allan did not change his behavior, and in the end he was asked to leave the troop. Richard toiled with this problem and had many tearful sessions with the grandmother. But she continued to try to help her grandson. As Richard put it, “she couldn’t control him ... he needed attention, love and support from his mother ... that he wasn’t receiving.” It goes without saying that parents are essential in providing love and nurturing to their children. Two years after Allan had left the troop, Richard sadly learned that Allan was getting into further trouble at the local high school he was attending.

The BSA troop that was so successful in consistently developing other young boys was unable to fulfill the emotional needs from the missing parent(s). When the troop received Allan he was a child that was not sufficiently loved by his natural parents. Allan

was not able to develop an independent self identity or a sufficient level of self esteem, and thus, could not be helped by the scouting program.

### ***Hermeneutical Framework of the Independent Self***

The role of parents in the development of their children is such a critical part of creating an independent and emotionally well-balanced child. That is, a child who has good self esteem and an identity of self. Additionally, it goes without saying that parental love and nurturing is required for the healthy emotional growth of a young child. A child that has high self esteem and an independent self identity especially by age ten is one who will be ready to be developed into a successful leader.

Erna Furman's work with toddlers found that mothers play a significant role in the development of their children. She found that when a very young child has accomplished mastery in self care the child develops an identity. In other words, "who owns the child's body, who gauges its needs, and who meets them are, for the toddler, the most crucial area of differentiating himself, of investing himself, and achieving bodily and mental self esteem" (Furman, 2001, p. 54). Furman (2001) goes further to say that a child is able to achieve this by internalizing his mother's care of him, and by progressing step by step to learn to mother himself. This desire of the child to prefer doing for himself as opposed to being done for creates his independence. This long process may be filled with frustration, but the child perseveres, holding back his anger toward his mother, and finally he masters the activity. In the majority of cases, the more positive the relationship between mother and child, and the more consistent and enjoyable the mother's care has been, the quicker and more insistently the child will want to identify with her and do for him (Furman, 2001, p. 54).

In Allan's situation the mother was separated from her son for a couple of years. His grandmother from the age of five raised Allan. Allan's father also did not communicate very much with his son, and remained on the mainland. Even when the mother did join her son she had already started another family, had remarried, and didn't spend a lot of time with Allan. Allan subsequently, never established a healthy independent self-image. An independent self is established through mastery of one's own body at an early age. Parents play a critical part in developing that competency within a child. Furman (2001) discusses the four steps toward developing a child's independence and mastery of self. The first is what she calls the "*doing for*" [italics added] stage, in which the mother in caring for the child does everything for the child. The second stage of development is the "*doing with*" [italics added] phase where mother and child in varying proportions share the doing. The third stage is "*standing by to admire*" [italics added] where the mother watches as the child self cares for himself. Lastly, the fourth stage "*doing for oneself*" [italics added] is where the child has "internalized both the mothering of himself and the satisfaction it brings to such an extent that mother's bodily presence and emotional investment are no longer necessary." The child must be motivated to mastery by the love of his mother, and the action must be internalized by the mother's investment. When the child successfully completes these stages it will provide him with a healthy sense of well being and self esteem (Furman, 2001, p. 55–56).

Being independent and having a healthy parental upbringing provides the young adolescent with a belief of being in control of their lives. Adolescents who operate with this belief are more apt to become successful leaders and adults. Rotter's concept of *locus of control* (1954) [italics added] gives useful insight into how adolescents can

develop their leadership abilities. Locus of control is the term used to describe how people feel about the control they have in their lives. Some people feel they are in control of their own destiny while others feel their lives are determined by external factors. Research has shown that an “internal locus of control is correlated with many socially desirable variables, such as taking responsibility for one’s own actions, being independent, exhibiting greater self control, and staying in school” (Lefcote, 1966). Additionally, other studies have shown that an individual’s locus of control is directly correlated to an individual’s sense of belonging to a family. A boy’s internal locus of control is strengthened when he perceives his family as warm and inclusive. The opposite happens when a boy feels his family is cold and detached, he will be prone to being influenced by an external locus of control (Chubb & Fertman, 1992). By the time Allan entered the BSA troop at age ten he had not developed the mastery of being able to do things, let alone function as a normal member of the troop. He could not take responsibility for his own actions nor exhibit self-control. Allan’s lack of parental love and nurturing, especially from his mother, was a significant factor contributing to his failure to establish self esteem and an independent self. Subsequently, Allan’s locus of control was externally driven, having no belief that he could take charge of his life. Something leaders clearly understand. Leaders take charge of their lives, they adapt, they assume responsibility for their actions as well as others, they have the confidence to be independent, and exercise a greater degree of self-control.

### ***A New Adolescent Leadership Development Model***

So does the Boy Scout organization play an effective role in the leadership development of adolescent boys? The answer is yes it does. The BSA organization

provides a significant number of important elements in developing leadership skills in young boys. First of all, it provides a safe and supportive environment. An environment in which young boys can try out leadership skills, and yet have the support of an organization that provides a setting where the youngsters will not feel ashamed if they fail. The organization also is supportive in that it provides a chance for the boys to reflect about what went wrong, why, and what it all means (McCauley, Moxley & van Velsor, 1998). This is important in building their adaptive capacity to overcome challenges and crisis (Heifetz, 1994). Secondly, the BSA troop has a solid formal leadership training program, the Junior Leadership Training (JLT), in which all boys who are promoted to a leadership position must enroll and complete. This troop JLT training is every six months because the rotation of leadership position schedule calls for that. Many other troops do not have this kind of leadership rotation that was evident at this troop. I believe frequent leadership rotation provides everyone with multiple opportunities to change leadership positions and experience a new set of challenges each time. This way many of the troop members will have an opportunity of being a leader. Thirdly, the BSA troop provides guidelines of acceptable behavior and a value system tied into the Scout Oath and Scout Law. The Oath and Law are everywhere, and were constantly discussed and reflected on during my observations. Principled values based on good ethical and moral codes are the foundation of the Boy Scouts. Remember leaders can end up doing positive things or negative things. The BSA ensures that the value system and behavioral standards are in line with good leadership character. Lastly, the BSA organization provides a testing ground for scouts to challenge and experience their leadership skills in real life situations, to push their limits, to realize something about their potential as a new

leader, and to reflect on what they have done. In providing the four elements of a support system, leadership skills training, value and behavioral standards, and challenging experiences, it lays out a rich structural framework in which young adolescent boys can properly develop.

However, leadership development organizations, such as the BSA need to institute a program to ascertain the degree to which a young adolescent has developed an independent self image. This should also be carefully monitored throughout the scout's participation in the scouting program. Albeit, a lot more work and research needs to be done in this area, however, young adolescents will have a better chance at developing leadership skills if they have already established a healthy independent self image of themselves. If the determined level is low, the organization needs to work with the parents to help heighten this competency. Not everyone can be a leader, nor does everyone want to be one. But for those who do, we must understand that the making of a leader starts early in childhood. The greater a child's independent self image is of himself the greater the chance of developing into a successful leader in later adult years.

### **Conclusion**

Adolescent leadership development is important. Yet the amount of literature on the subject pales in comparison to the amount of leadership development materials for adults. Corporations and institutions spend large amounts of money each year in leadership developmental training programs for their employees. Books, tapes, training sessions, self assessment testing, are used on millions of people every year to tap into their hidden leadership potential. Could long term success in these programs be enhanced if more attention were paid to developing leadership skills in adolescent children?

Self assessment testing and analysis is used frequently in adult leadership training and development programs. It is what many in the field advocate as the first step towards modifying behavior and cultivating leadership skills. Measuring and discovering emotional and behavioral styles, traits, patterns, and “ideal” and “real” self appear to be what customers want in their organizations (Boyatzis, 2003). However, current application of self assessment testing needs to be redirected towards measuring the independent self in adolescents. Unfortunately, we are presently measuring and evaluating factors that do not appear to be relevant to adolescent leadership development.

The Boy Scout organization is doing an excellent job cultivating the future leaders of tomorrow. Unfortunately, there are only a few organizations like the BSA which concentrate their efforts on developing leadership capabilities and skills for adolescents. The BSA organization’s program and organization has been in existence for many years, and the people who run the organization are dedicated and competent. The troop I observed was known to have developed sound leadership, and distinguished itself in BSA competition. The Scoutmaster created a safe, supportive and reflective environment, he continually challenged the scouts by frequently making them change leadership positions, he let them experience the decision-making process both as a group and individually, and he reflected back to them what they learned from their experiences. Much of the troop’s success can be attributed to the leadership of the Scoutmaster, and his somewhat “unorthodox” development practices. He exhibited his own brand of management philosophies, and with the support of some dedicated parent volunteers, he made it work.

Self assessment efforts need to be redirected towards determining the independent self identity of adolescents. Additionally, we need to work closely with parents to teach

them to become aware of their child's emotional "cues." To teach parents how and why they need to facilitate the cultivation of the independent self. The result will be a higher output of competent young leaders that can in subsequent years be developed further as they become adults. There needs to be continual research into learning how parents can better cultivate the independent self in their child. Also the integration of parent/child involvement with the BSA needs to be discussed. Ultimately, by clearly redefining the role of the BSA, in terms of providing the needed training and guidance to parents, the young scout entering the BSA will be mentally and emotionally more receptive to leadership development. As a result, the BSA organization will become much more comprehensive in its approach to leadership development.

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