LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION AMONG KINDERGARTEN
CHILDREN IN A STRUCTURED
PLAY ENVIRONMENT

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

By

Jeffrey B. Giraud
Denton, Texas
August, 1995

This study examines the enactment of leadership communication during videotaped play sessions of thirty kindergarten children. The videotaped segments were viewed individually by five trained coders for indications of leadership communication among the children.

The data analysis revealed that the children displayed a positive correlation with the indicators of leadership behavior listed on the coding device. Eighteen of the children demonstrated skills in a cluster of five specific leadership behaviors. All five coders agreed that these eighteen children were sometimes leaders of their individual triad. The coders further agreed that the leadership in the triads flowed from one child to another as the session progressed. The study concluded that leadership is a facilitative process that is fluid rather than statically centered in one or more participants.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction to the Problem

This study on leadership communication among children has a place with the long list of works on leadership among adults. Efforts to unlock the mysteries of leadership are found in historical, philosophical, and many social science writings. Five thousand year old Egyptian hieroglyphics contain the symbols seshemet - leadership, seshemu - leader, and shemsu - follower (Bass, 1981).

The Egyptians of 2300 B.C. determined that the three essential qualities for being Pharaoh were authority, perception, and justice (Lichtheim, 1973). Confucious stated that leaders should set a moral example and use rewards or punishments to teach the difference between right and wrong. Taoism teaches that the leader has a responsibility to develop followers by crediting them with the success of their individual efforts (Bass, 1981).

Homer described a list of essential elements of leadership as displayed by his heroes in the Iliad: Ajax stood for law and order; Agamemnon for justice and judgement; Nestor for wisdom and counsel; Odysseus for shrewdness and cunning; and Achilles for valor and activism (Sarachek, 1968). Aristotle
declared that the most important leadership attribute was virtue.

Much of the literature on leadership has concentrated primarily on examples of leadership in action, "How I Did It," or instructional manuals, "How You Should Do It" for future or potential leaders. In his 1830 work, Philosophy of the Mind, Hegel argued that the best way for a leader to understand followers was to have first been a follower. Hegel's philosophy of learning leadership by first being a follower is the basic building block of most U.S. Military training schools. The "How I Did It" (auto)biography is helpful for understanding personal applications of leadership methods. The "How You Should Do It" manual is usually the work of a successful leader who sincerely believes that leadership principles may be identified and taught to others.

One of the most prevalent forms of leadership study is the biography. The U.S. Army, for example, has a required reading list for all members of the officer corps. Among these works are biographies of Ulysses S. Grant, John J. Pershing, Chester Nimitz, Adolph Hitler, and Napoleon. In the business world a growing number of corporate presidents and entrepreneurs have put their thoughts into print. Lee Iacocca, Ross Perot, Donald Trump, and Merv Griffen are among those who decided or were convinced that their methods are worth sharing. According to a 1987 survey of college presidents, 117 reported that they believe the teachings of Machiavelli in The Prince are still highly relevant (Bass, 1981).

An historical review of past performances and resultant instructional manuals provides an invaluable cache of resources for students of leadership to study. Historical research, however, does not adequately address leadership communication
and leadership as a learned behavior. The present study found ample evidence that leadership, though considered an advanced social skill, is learned and practiced in the earliest stages of social development (Bell, 1989).

Philosophers, behavioral scientists, management experts, and communication scholars have conducted research on leadership. The recurrence of these studies suggests a strong desire to define, understand, and teach the concept of leadership. One benefit of these and future studies is an ever increasing understanding of the communication aspects of leadership. This study was intended to expand on previous research by examining the enactment of leadership communication behaviors by children in a structured play setting. The results of this study are intended to provide a better understanding of leadership and communication among children, as well as insights into how leadership develops. The literature review to follow reveals a noticeable shortage of material on both of these subjects.

Definition of Terms

The word "leader" first appeared in the English language as early as the year 1300 (Stogdill, 1957). "Leadership" did not appear as a word until the early nineteenth century. The evolution of leadership research has seen many phases, and definitions of leadership are as varied as the people writing them. Fortunately, there are enough common threads to elucidate the concept. This study presents a synthesis of the prevailing definitions of leadership to promote conceptual clarity.

Leadership may be considered a focusing instrument of group processes (Stogdill, 1957). "Focus," in this definition, is the direction and or concentration of
the group and is not intended to imply centrality. "Instrument" refers to a tool by which the focusing is accomplished. This definition suggests that the role of leadership is to guide a group toward completion of a given project or task. This type of definition sets leadership apart from concepts like command, authority, and headship (Bass, 1981). Whereas these concepts imply the use of a designated individual as the controlling element in the group process, the previous definition emphasizes group interaction and, thus, communication as the key component in the management of the group process.

Prior to the late 20th century, the leader often was portrayed as an individual with an extraordinary gift of persuasive power (Schweitzer, 1984). In recent decades, scholars in the field recognized that leadership is a process rather than singular actions by an individual (Barge, 1989; Gouran, 1970). Recent literature suggests that leadership communication involves elements of style, trait, situation, function, structure, and culture. The language style of a particular leader, for example, may or may not be effective in a given situation. Leaders also seem to share some common traits or behavior patterns. Previous research has clarified the concept of leader communication and has removed much of the mystery about the process.

Beebe and Masterson (1990) identified leadership behaviors that enable groups to perform task and maintenance functions. Cragan and White (1986) analyzed how leadership functions in effective small-group problem-solving. In general, communication scholars tend to place leadership in the small group literature.

In The Essence of Leadership, Edwin A. Locke, defines leadership as a process of relationships in which members of the relationship induce the other
members to perform a specified and agreed upon task (1994). Dwight D. Eisenhower defined leadership as, "The art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he [sic] wants to do it" (Anderson, 1989). Within this definition, Eisenhower suggested that leadership is a specialized skill involving persuasion and motivation. In his dissertation research, Michael Bell defined leadership behavior as, "a mixture of social competence, creativity, diplomacy, and the ability to exchange ideas with peers in an effective, reciprocal manner". The present study examined leadership as a communication process that is interactive, multi-faceted, and flexible.

Statement of the Problem

Much current material on leadership communication revolves around practical business applications (Blanchard, 1985; Crosbey, 1990; Geneen, 1984; Heller, 1982; Hunt, 1977). The behavioral scientists have focused primarily on small group discussion models and participant observation (Baker, 1990; Fisher, 1985; Krone, 1992) while management experts have labored to produce how-to books for would-be managers and business leaders (Burns, 1978; Carlin, 1964; Hunt, 1984; Iacocca, 1984). Some scholars have devoted a great deal of time trying to understand the intricacies of style (Barlow, 1982; Fairhurst, 1989; Hawkins, 1991). These efforts have provided valuable information. However, they seem to neglect leadership communication among children and the developmental aspects of leadership. The leadership literature also may be biased toward verbal communication.

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate leadership communication
among kindergarten-aged children in a structured play environment. Within this framework, the questions to be answered were:

1. What is an appropriate definition of leadership among children?
2. How is leadership exhibited or enacted in the children's communication behaviors (especially nonverbal communication)?
3. To what extent can principles of leadership in children be identified?
4. What do the findings of this study suggest about leadership development and peer leadership in children?

This study is another step in understanding leadership, leadership communication, and leadership development. An important by-product may be the further enhancement of communication theory in these areas.

Scope of the Study

The present study examines the enactment of leadership behaviors through the analysis of videotapes of children in a structured play environment. The children are from one school in north Texas and are similar in age. The focus of the study was on the display of specific leadership communication behaviors as the children played in triads. The study left open the issue of whether all behavior is communicative, but assumes that some behavior is communicative and that some communicative behaviors are more appropriately characterized as leadership behaviors than other communicative behaviors.

At the foundation of the study lies the assumption that child development is a powerful, yet fragile time of life. Adults should not assume that child development is
merely an opportunity for adult intervention. Adults have a responsibility to validate play activities by being positive role models and children are obligated to take responsibility for their behavior. Neither should adults assume that children must be directed to achieve some ideal. A richer view sees child development as based on a "web of developmentally appropriate experiences that uplift and respect individualism" (Bell, 1989).

Significance of the Study

The leadership process arguably affects the lives of people in almost every known society of the animal kingdom. According to Bernard Bass, "Leadership is a universal phenomenon in humans and in many species of animals."(1981) The existence of pecking orders and social hierarchies in much of the animal world is widely accepted. Smith and Kruger concluded in a 1933 study that leadership occurs among all people, regardless of culture. Lewis in a 1974 anthropological review determined that there are no known societies that have existed without some form of leadership in their social lives.

In the Republic, Plato claimed that the leader was the most important element of a good government and must be educated to rule with order and reason. Politicians, religious leaders, supervisors, parents, and teachers are just a few examples of potential leaders in a society. The study of communication and leadership among children has potential value in the understanding of interpersonal communication, persuasion, rhetoric, parenting, and education.

First, the present study can add to the understanding of how children interact.
The study of communication behaviors enacted as children may help in understanding children in groups. Further, the behaviors enacted as children may help clarify communication among adults.

Second, this study expands on the limited body of material which has explored compliance-gaining (Clark & Delia, 1977; Cody, McLaughlin, & Jordan, 1980; Stroupe & Bruner, 1993) and peer leadership among children. The study of specific leadership communication behaviors, especially nonverbal communication, may clarify the interactions among children and between children and adults.

Third, insights from this research project may be applied in various spheres where people are trying to live together in harmony. The children may teach observers how to work together in community.

Fourth, this study acknowledges the value of high quality early childhood education. The study has potential to provide valuable information in efforts to improve educational processes.

Fifth, this study may serve as a starting point for future research. For example, the development of leadership behavior should be studied in a longitudinal manner. This study may aid in the development of theory and methods through which in-depth longitudinal analyses could be conducted.

Research in this field is not likely to produce the ultimate instructional book for leaders of the future. What should be expected is a greater understanding of how leadership is learned and enacted. This expanded body of knowledge may provide better theoretical models for studying the leadership process. That awareness also
may aid in the selection, development, and training of future leaders, and may also help parents, and teachers in mentoring children.

Methodology

The first step in the present study was to develop a model of the leadership communication of children, based on Bell, the U.S. Army Officer Evaluation Report (See Appendix B.), and other sources. The second step was to create a coding system (See Appendix A.) by which to analyze the videotaped communication behavior of children in a structured play setting.

The third step in the study was to use the coding scheme to evaluate videotapes of several groups (triads) of children at play in a school setting in north Texas. The final step was to use the results of the study to develop and modify possible models of leadership communication among children.

Plan of the Study

The chapters in this thesis are organized in the manner described in the section on methodology (above). Chapter two includes an inventory of relevant research material written over the last century. Chapter three clarifies the study's method. Chapter four is a detailed analysis and discussion of the data gathered in the study. The final portion of the thesis is dedicated to lessons learned from the present study as well as future research questions.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The study of leadership communication is an ongoing and evolving process. Researchers in the field have approached the topic from several different perspectives. In earlier works, the leader was treated as if he or she was born with remarkable and almost divine powers of persuasion (Weber, 1946). In more recent writings, scholars have begun to recognize the interactive nature of leadership communication (Carlin, 1964; Gouran, 1970; Jago, 1982; Stogdill, 1957).

This review will provide a brief look at examples of the literature on leadership which has accumulated over the last century. The literature is broken down into topical categories. In the first section, the author examines material that is focused on individual leadership traits and style. The second section covers those materials which explore situational and functional perspectives. The third section includes works which have explored structural and cultural dimensions of leadership. The fourth section reviews those works which deal specifically with children and leadership. The concluding section is a brief evaluation of the current state of research in the field.
Style and Trait Leadership

The literature reviewed in this section is primarily devoted to individual communication style and behavioral traits. These writings tend to view leadership communication as being directed by the leader's style of speaking and specific mannerisms. Many of these works promote the notion that leadership is speaking effectively, and that this skill is a genetically determined skill which may be very difficult, if not impossible, to learn.

Earlier works with this emphasis held that the leader was an extraordinary individual with supernatural powers of persuasion. In *The Age of Charisma*, (1984) Arthur Schweitzer describes at length the phenomenon known as charisma. He relied on the prominent German sociologist Max Weber for the definitions which were commonly accepted by scholars of the early nineteenth century. Weber described charisma as being a kind of mystical power that was genetically determined. Schweitzer contends that charisma and leadership share the same validation requirements. The leader and the charismatic must have both a balance of self-confidence and follower devotion that are mutually supportive of the other.

A leader's personality sometimes has been the focus of scholarly attention (Bales, 1970). Recent research (Goldberg, 1992) on the so-called "Big Five" in personality traits theory (1. extraversion, 2. agreeableness, 3. conscientiousness, 4. emotional stability, and 5. intellect/openness) suggests some connections between personality traits and group process. For example, extraversion and agreeableness, by definition, require a dyadic or small group setting.

Earlier work by Bales already suggested two phenomenon. First, groups tend
to have a task leader and a socioemotional leader. Second, the individual leader is set
in the group at the intersection of three dimensions:

(1) dominant versus submissive;

(2) friendly versus unfriendly; and,

(3) instrumental versus emotional and expressive.

Again, the theory postulates that leadership is a mixture of personality traits and
social circumstances.

In later works scholars began to explore the possibility that potential leaders
could learn by watching or reading about those already successful at the skill. The
biography is one method by which a would-be leaders might enlighten themselves.
The student of military leadership for example, has a multitude of writings from
which to draw. Omar Bradley, George Patton, and John J. Pershing have, in their
biographies, provided text-book examples of successful military leadership.

*Company Commander*, (1981) by Charles McDonald, is an examination of an
Infantry company commander during the Vietnam conflict. MacDonald’s work is on
the required reading list for all U.S. Army officers as they advance through training.

For each war throughout written history there have been many biographical
studies of the leaders who guided the conduct of battle. The senior military officers
hope that by studying the styles and traits of successful leaders, new officers will
learn to make use of the more effective methods of leadership used in the past.

Another group of scholars has examined leadership style from the observation
of actual and artificially created leader-subordinate interactions. In these studies the
researcher focused on the particular communication style of the established or
developing leaders. Many scholars have concentrated on leadership in the context of a small group. For example, Bales (1950) and Bales, Cohen, & Williamson (1979) developed scales for analyzing small group interaction. Beebe and Masterson's (1990) treatment of leadership continues this tradition of small group analysis.

B. Aubrey Fisher (1971) proposes an "Interact System Model," featuring the "interact," a basic unit composed of a communication act and response. Fred Fiedler (1967) proposes a "Contingency Model of Leadership Effectiveness," again in a group context. A typical taxonomy of leadership that can be found in a popular communication textbook (DeVito, 1994) describes leadership styles as: laissez-faire, democratic, authoritarian, and situational (313-314).

In Christi Smith and Larry Powell's 1984 study on the use of disparaging humor, it was discovered that the leader who constantly joked about his or her personal inadequacies negatively impacted the perception of his or her competence by subordinates. In Paul Reynold's study on leaders' use of silence, it was determined that leaders use silence in specific and intentional ways during interactions with subordinates (1984).

Other writings propose possibilities for explaining how a particular leader communicates. Some suggest that leadership skills are hereditary, while others propose that leadership can be learned. In 1964, Gabriel Carlin wrote How to Motivate and Influence People, a practical guide to becoming a successful leader. Carlin's thesis was primarily concerned with learning how to read reactions and then adjusting the response. In The One Minute Manager, (1985) Ken Blanchard proposed that the management of people can be effectively accomplished in short interactions
that are specific, goal oriented, and positive in content.

In *The Essence of Leadership*, (1991) Locke proposed that the leadership process is made up of four key elements: (1) The leader’s motives and traits; (2) The leader’s knowledge, skills, and abilities; (3) The leader’s vision of the task to be completed; and (4) The leader’s capacity to implement that vision (11). While this approach appears to be novel, Locke has in essence created a hybrid of Style/Trait and Situational theories.

The main thrust of Locke’s thesis is closely related to Bell’s definition of leadership. Bell, Locke, and this writer concur that leadership is a flexible, diplomatic, social process that results from the interactions of leaders and subordinates to accomplish agreed upon objectives.

**Situational Leadership**

The majority of the following studies focus on adaptations made by a leader and were conducted in a laboratory type setting. In some of the studies, a group of participants was given a task, a designated leader, and limited direction. The observer would then make note of the communication behavior of the designated leader. In this type of study, the research objective was to understand the emergence of leadership behavior in a given situation. In Kathleen Krone’s 1992 study on organizational structure she discovered that upward influence choices were positively or negatively affected according to relationship structures established within the organization. Gail Fairhurst and Teresa Chandler’s 1989 effort, supported Krone’s findings and also concluded that status within an organization had an impact on all
leader-member interactions.

Another collection of works in this genre demonstrate a practical approach to learning leadership skills. Unfortunately these works are often regarded with the scholarly indifference most often reserved for the dime-store romance novel. These authors have taken the technical jargon of learned scholars and turned it into a useful guide for the layperson. The One Minute Manager, is one such work (Blanchard & Johnson, 1985). A collection of books by Tom Peters describe the methods employed by successful leaders in many different types of organizations. The objective of these works is to teach prospective leaders how to employ leadership skills in any given situation.

The studies on situational leadership have resulted in a better understanding of both leadership adaptations and the effect of situation on leadership communication adaptations. The research, nevertheless, may suffer from its limited focus. Leaders may adapt to situations. The preceding works provide a helpful data base on this model of leadership. However, the question remains if other models may apply to leadership.

Functional Leadership

The functionalists view leadership as an interaction between leaders and subordinates. These researchers propose that the group as a whole leads itself to the successful completion of tasks. Of course this view does not explain the success of some groups that do not fit the model.

The functionalist perspective is not necessarily a new approach. Between 1940
and 1970, Ralph M. Stogdill produced many articles on leadership. His 1948 article, "Personal Factors Associated with Leadership," is considered a seminal publication in the field. In 1960 he compiled his writings into one volume called, Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership. This work, which was updated and revised in 1974 and 1981 by Bernard M. Bass, may be among the most valuable resources for leadership scholars. Stogdill examined many aspects of leadership and developed several programs of instruction that are widely used today. While he tended to favor situational research, he readily accepted the role of leader-follower interaction (241).

Structural Leadership

Some scholars take a structural perspective on groups, interaction, and organizations (DeGeorge, 1972; Dosse, 1986; Katz, 1976). Network analysis (Burt, 1992; Burt & Ronchi, 1994; Eisenberg, Farace, Monge, Reese, Roberts & O'Reilly, 1979) is a particular variety of the structural perspective on communication. From this point of view, in which the focus is on interaction in a system rather than on the individual, leadership in an organization may be studied in terms of the number, type, frequency, and intensity of interactions. A study of these social networks may reveal who is functioning as a leader through communication interactions as innovator, gatekeeper, or opinion leader. Other technical network concepts, such as power and prominence, provide insight into structural leadership (Burt, 1992).

Culture and Leadership

Still other scholars see organizational behavior from a cultural perspective
Are some dimensions of leadership universal while others are culture-specific. According to Bass, cultural dimensions of leadership include aspects of tradition, particularism, collectivism, and idealism. It may be that generalized leadership tenets are extremely limited from one society to another.

From a cultural point of view, leadership communication may be defined by tradition and may be, in part, ceremonial. According to Tompkins (1984) and Cheney & Tompkins (1983) control within an organization varies with the culture. In some organizations, bureaucratic culture may lead to control through the use of memoranda. In other organizational cultures, "concertive control" relies on shared values. Work teams may be a current example of concertive control and "horizontal" leadership.

In recent years, models of communication competence (See, for example, Spitzberg or Wiemann.) have been modified to reflect cultural factors. Kantor and colleagues (1993) approach social competence from a cultural perspective. Their conclusions go in two directions. First, competence must be set in a form of life. Second, ethnography may be a valuable methodological asset in the study of culture and leadership.

Gender and Leadership

Another intriguing line of research explores the role of sex and gender on communication (Canary & Hause, 1993; Pearson, 1991). In these studies, "sex" is defined in terms of biological, chemical, genetic, hormonal, and other physiological
factors. "Gender" is defined in terms of psychological and sociological factors.

The last two decades have seen a steady change in the ratio of men and women in business leadership roles. The political arena remains somewhat male dominant, although this situation is changing. Women are developing an increasing presence in each election from local to national positions of influence. Bass suggests that the limited representation and slower acceptance of women into politics may be the result of women being allowed to work long before they were granted the right to vote (1981).

A culture may define the roles of men and women in such a way that gender is a key variable in leadership communication. Hyman concluded in a 1980 study, that women are better communicators than men. Case (1985) determined that the female style of leadership communication was more personal and facilitative. Older studies suggested were based on the premise that the leadership style of men and women is expected to be different (Deaux, 1976; Bender, Denmark & Diggory, Rosenfeld & Fowler). These studies tended to report that women were expected to be democratic and interpersonal in their relationships with subordinates while men were expected to be autocratic and analytical. On the other hand, a 1994 study of upper elementary aged Girl Scout troops determined that leaders were chosen on the basis of factors other than thoughtfulness and sensitivity (Edwards). One recent study on trust in the workplace reports that the women participants trusted male supervisors more than female supervisors (Jeanquart-Barone, & Sekaran, 1994).

In 1961, Bronfenbrenner concluded that maternal authority was very important to the success of Franklin Roosevelt, Douglas MacArthur, Winston Churchill, and
many others. In a 1987 study by Piotrowski and Anderson, thirty highly successful CEOs were interviewed to determine the importance of role models in their leadership development. In most of the interviews, the executives reported that their mother was the strongest and most influential role model. Future studies may continue to elucidate the role that gender takes by examining the developmental influences encountered by male and female role models.

Some research on gender and communication has concentrated on the differences between men and women or the "sex difference stereotype" (Cupach & Canary, in press). In a 1976 study, Deaux determined that females were more inclined to seek interpersonal success in a group while their male counterparts were more task oriented. Similar studies have supported this finding by reporting that females appear to focus more on positive group affect, maintaining harmony and avoiding conflict than the males in the studies (Bass, 1981). On the other hand, Cupach and Canary (in press) report that in a study on conflict women and men used similar conflict strategies. Unfortunately the number of these studies is so limited that any generalizations are tentative. Research on leadership, however, may benefit from examining similarities in leadership communication between women and men, as well as differences. In fact, research on leadership communication among children may shed light on how communication behaviors are related to sex and gender.

Children and Leadership

The developmental processes involved in leadership behavior are difficult to research. Developmental processes are best assessed in longitudinal studies. By
observing the subjects over a period of days, weeks, or even years, a researcher can draw more accurate conclusions than may be possible from more limited observation. Jean Piaget, in an effort to understand how children learn, took detailed notes on the mental growth of his children over many years (1962). Unfortunately, the Piagetian approach is unavailable to most researchers.

Another problem associated with studying children and leadership involves the contexts in which children operate. Teenagers and adults are regularly involved in activities that are commonly associated with leadership behaviors. Team sports, committees, and the day-to-day operations of the business world provide the researcher with a multitude of study environments. Kindergarten-age children do not normally operate in these settings, thus research on children and leadership has a limited number of context on which to draw.

One of the primary contexts for young children is play. Vygotsky and others have noted the vital role of play in early childhood development. Play may be a pathway to cognitive and social development. In his 1989 dissertation on peer leadership, Bell determined that the following topics were relevant to the study of leadership in children: (1) Play activities of young children, (2) Social organization and group behavior of young children, and (3) peer leadership (10). For the purposes of this study, Bell's findings on social organization, group behavior and peer leadership will serve as defining elements in the research analysis.

Play Activities of Young Children - Hutt, in a 1971 study, defined play as an interactive, symbolic, and cooperative activity conducted by children to create a shared context (Bell). Piaget, in 1962, determined that play activities of children
roughly correspond to their level of cognitive development. Thus, in the preoperational stage (two to seven) the children are capable of make-believe activities and spend most of their time in this type of play. As the children age and their awareness of social rules increases, the operational stage of their play becomes more structured and rule oriented.

In a 1955 study, Bateson suggested that children operate on both a fantasy and reality level during play activities. In this way they are able to participate in their role in the play activity while maintaining some level of contact with their real identity. In 1988, Yawkey expanded Bateson's interpretation by stating that children were not only aware of their own reality, but also engaged in an active assessment of peer viewpoint. These studies suggest that children may be acutely aware of and actively maintain their social role during real and fantasy play (Bell). All of which is relevant to leadership studies, considering that leaders function in a complex social network and sometimes must take the perspective of others.

Doyle and colleagues (1992) suggest that the transitions into and out of pretend play merit attention. Leadership, logically, might be an important factor at these transition points. For example, Doyle’s research team found that negotiation before enactment was common. Further, the complexity of social interaction increased sooner after pretend play than after non-pretend play.

Social Organization and Group Behavior of Children - In 1972, Smith and Connolly employed a methodology, previously used to study social activities of primates, on nursery school aged children. The study concluded that children’s social activities are situationally influenced by social maturity and specific play activities. In
later studies, conducted by Rubin (1980) and Mueller and Brenner (1977), factors such as size of the play group, age differences in the play group, and the adults in the environment were added as potential influences (Bell).

These studies have led researchers to conclude that children operate within social organizations which are similar to adult organizations. The children exhibit a metacommunication capacity that helps them to differentiate between fantasy play and the reality of their practiced social roles. This social structure may influence the emergence of leader-subordinate roles which may be chosen or assigned according to the social maturity of the play group.

In 1976, Uberg and Docherty asserted that children are capable of differentiating between their own viewpoint and that of others. Their research further suggests that young children are able to develop an individual perspective on a given topic as long as the topic is within their level of understanding. Berndt and Berndt (1977) suggested that children have an understanding of morals and motives. They indicated that children's reasoning when responding to prosocial dilemmas, is empathetic and exhibits patterns of moral reasoning. The moral development of children may be quite relevant to leadership research, inasmuch as a leader often must consider the welfare of others (Kohlberg, 1983).

Peer Leadership - Considerable literature is available on the subject of peer influence, but much of this research is limited to adolescents. Two topics capture significant attention: (a) peer influence on patterns of substance abuse and (b) peer influence on performance in school. Studies in these areas typically identify peer models and peer clusters as significant variables (Dielman, 1994; Hallinan &
Williams, 1990; Maruyama, 1986).

However, a few studies are available on peer influence among children. In a study of male first through third graders, Schwartz (1993) reports that chronic victimization by peers may be linked to a high rate of nonassertive behaviors and pervasive submissiveness. Natural peer groups among children are critical in fostering motivation in school, according to a 1993 study (Kindermann). A study by Greer, Dorow, and Williams (1991) indicates that peers influence something as basic as food acceptance in young children. Research on the competence of peer models by Thomas, Due, and Wigger (1987) indicates that children are impressed with competent performance of play and other activities.

Edwards (1994) conducted a nine month study of formal and informal leadership in fourth through sixth grade Girl Scout troops. This study determined that the leaders had been selected on perceived levels of competence in skills such as goal setting, organization, and original thinking.

Trawick-Smith suggested in a 1988 study that children demonstrate intentional manipulation of activities which appear to drive them toward completion of specific group objectives. An earlier study by Hartup suggested that leaders emerge in group activities of children and those leaders are often successful in guiding the group toward the completion of objectives (Bell). These studies may imply that children’s play activities are not as random as they might at first appear.

Other Relevant Research

Compliance-gaining research has some connections to the leadership process,
considering the persuasive aspects of some leadership situations. Research by Clark and Delia (1976) indicates that compliance-gaining techniques develop in complexity and variety as children age. They also found that younger children are less able to adapt their techniques than older children. These findings suggest that younger children are using compliance-gaining techniques but are not yet able to employ strategic assessment skills to adapt and maximize effect.

In later studies, Delia and Clark (1977) determined that, in addition to perception, children must be able to (1) analyze issues to predict consequences, and (2) use a variety of communicative behaviors to adapt messages as needed. Finally, their research has demonstrated that persuasive skills increase with age and that children use more complex strategies on strangers than on family members.

Stroupe and Bruner (1994) explore the impact of culture on children’s compliance-gaining strategies. A study of Mexican-American and Anglo-fourth graders, suggests some differences between the two groups of children. For example, the Mexican-American children gave shorter responses and provided fewer rationales for their strategies. However, the two groups of children were similar in politeness and avoiding deceit. This preliminary research may be useful in beginning to understand the influence of culture on leadership development. The study also indicated that language skills, English and Spanish in this case, are an important part of the social interaction process for children.

Evaluation and Summary

An analysis of the literature on leadership indicates that research has come a
long way since the days when leaders were determined by birthright. Current efforts continue to probe the intricate framework of human communication and its links to leadership. The past research has provided valuable data and greater understanding of many of the relevant variables and issues. A reading of concluding remarks in recent literature reveals that the scholars in the field are unanimous in their request for additional research.

Some researchers have called for a bold approach to the study of leadership. These writers suggest that leadership style, trait, and situation are elements in a flexible, two-way, goal-oriented process of interaction (Gouran, 1970; Jago, 1982). Recent research in organizational communication promises to shed light on leadership in businesses and institutions. Reports from consultants and others in the field also may help clarify leadership issues, as corporations fund management studies and hire communication consultants to analyze and repair leadership difficulties in their operations. The understanding of organizational leadership is a critical element in the study of leadership communication. The present study acknowledges these issues and contributions.

One area where advances are being made is in research on work teams. Leadership in teams apparently is different than traditional forms of leadership in hierarchical structures. Furthermore, knowledge work teams (for example, engineers, scientists, computer and information systems personnel, professors, researchers, and medical professionals) seem to have different characteristics than production work teams (factory workers, etc.). Michael Beyerlein, the Director of the Center for the Study of Work Teams at the University of North Texas, suggests that "knowledge
workers,' who primarily address ideas, require greater freedom, intrinsic rewards, and resources to function effectively. These workers enjoy working on problems perceived as "puzzles" to be solved. They also seem to collaborate more with others than was predicted by observers.

The study of leadership communication has achieved some status as a legitimate sub-field in communication research. Scholars have laid the groundwork for further study. It is incumbent upon scholars past and present, who have tended to discuss leadership within the framework of small group communication, to continue to explore other models of leadership communication. The goal of education is to improve the human condition, and the goal of the scholar is to be the instrument of education. Research on leadership communication and children holds the prospect of being valuable in its own right and of shedding light on other aspects of leadership communication.
CHAPTER 3

METHOD OF THE STUDY

Introduction

This study used videotaped observations of kindergarten-aged children, playing with various sized building blocks and boards, in order to investigate leadership communication characteristics and behaviors. The sessions were conducted as part of a research project for a toy manufacturer. The object of the sessions was to determine the potential appeal and utility of the building blocks and boards. The video camera was set to record physical evidence of creativity. Unfortunately this imposed some limitations on the quality and quantity of data that was available for use in the present study. On the other hand, the sessions may be considered somewhat non-intrusive. The children had no instructions on specific behaviors other than to play safely and to maintain a noise level that would not distract other classrooms.

A pilot study based on three hours of video-taped play sessions involving three groups of three kindergarten aged children was used in addressing methodological issues, in training coders, and validating the coding instrument. First, the coders observed the tapes to familiarize themselves with the children and their general play activities. Secondly, the participants were more specifically identified by their voices and nonverbal behaviors. Thirdly, the content of the play sessions was coded and analyzed to determine the presence or emergence of leadership behaviors. This study
concentrated on communication aspects of the play activity and more specifically on those communication behaviors relevant to emerging definitions of leadership.

Within this framework, the questions to be answered were:

(1) What is an appropriate definition of leadership among children?
(2) How is leadership exhibited or enacted in the children's communication behaviors (especially nonverbal communication)?
(3) To what extent can principles of leadership in children be identified?
(4) What do the findings of this study suggest about leadership development and peer leadership in children?

Description of the Sample

The convenience sample was drawn from one public, elementary school in a small town in north Texas, from which staff and parent permissions could be and were obtained. All children in the school's four kindergarten classes participated in the structured play sessions. In order to limit intrusion into the school day the children were grouped into triads within their respective classes. The triads were then chosen randomly by Bell for participation in the study. From this pool of children, a set of ten triads were chosen, for a total of thirty children. Some triads were eliminated due to poor video quality or intrusions by the videographer. The final ten triads consisted of two from two classes and three from the other two classes.

The children were all enrolled in kindergarten, but their chronological ages ranged from five to six years of age at the time of the videotaping. The thirty
children included twelve girls and eighteen boys. The race and/or ethnic heritage of participants was not confirmed. However, coders classified two children as African-American and the rest as Anglo or Hispanic.

Limitations

The data for this study was drawn from previously recorded video tapes which imposed a number of limitations which may or may not have affected the outcome. The most significant limitation was not knowing the pre-session relationship of the children in each triad. It was unknown if the children had previously determined leadership roles. Also it was unknown if the teachers had somehow manipulated the groupings so as to maximize cooperation. Another important limitation involved the video-taping process itself. Due to the camera angle and generally poor quality sound recording, it was often difficult to determine which child was speaking. The equipment set-up also made it nearly impossible to distinguish non-verbal communication behaviors. Lastly there may have been undocumented outside influences, such as physical or emotional disorders which affected the behavior of the children. In this particular study little was known about the children and how they were grouped for participation. This study recognized these limitations and determined that replication in a much more controlled setting will be necessary in order to validate the findings.

Procedures

The children played in triads for about twenty minutes in a room in the school.
The play sessions were part of a research study conducted by Bell for a toy manufacturer of large plastic blocks. The children were grouped into triads, given the large building blocks and boards and then allowed to play with minimal instructions. The most intrusive instructions were to "play safe." The play activity was videotaped by Bell, who was in the room as a relatively unobtrusive observer. He intervened mainly when safety concerns arose or when he was addressed by one of the children. He also took some still photographs at intervals during the play sessions.

Children were identified by a code number, their first names, and some item of clothing or physical characteristics (such as hair color). The videotapes were coded by a team of trained coders. A pilot study from a non-selected groups was coded by each coder independently and then the results were compared for inter-rater reliability. This subsequent review revealed an acceptably narrow range of variation in the coders’ observations for the remainder of the study.

Due to the pioneering nature of this study, a coding instrument was developed (Giraud & Bruner, 1995). The first step in developing the coding system involved a thorough search of relevant literature. From this search a pattern of specific leadership behaviors was found and recorded. The list of behaviors was then modified to eliminate those which could not be determined from the available data. The refined list initially contained over thirty five identifiers which was determine to be much to cumbersome. A further refinement narrowed the system down to twenty very specific behaviors that were easily recognizable and widely reported in the literature reviewed. The coding instrument (See Appendix A) is intended to identify
specific leadership attributes that have been previously identified in children's play activity in addition to leadership behaviors that have been identified in research on adults. The coding scheme has not been validated on a national level.

The coding instrument is subdivided into six broad categories including:

- Physical Characteristics
- Voice Characteristics
- Physical Behaviors
- Status Considerations
- Play Characteristics
- Social Behaviors.

**Physical Characteristics.** For this study physical characteristics are limited to: sex and size in relation to the other children. The study will examine the possible effect of a child's size on the reaction of the other children in the triad. The scope of the research project prevented intensive study of possible links between sex and specific communication behaviors. Sex is identified primarily as a demographic characteristic. But some preliminary data on sex differences and similarities are reported.

**Voice Characteristics.** This category involves rough assessments of the volume of the children's voices and the quantity of verbal activity engaged in by the child. Changes in volume are common attention gaining techniques employed by children and adults. Paul Reynolds determined that leaders have specific uses for speaking and for silence in group interaction. The present study examines the volume, amount of speaking time, and silence in the triads.
Physical Behaviors. This category includes the specific use of hand gestures and the relative aggressiveness displayed by each child. The coding schema should help identify those behaviors which employ coercion rather than social influence.

Status. This category specifically asks whether the child was sought out by his or her peers or not. From this perspective, as in network analysis (see Burt), status is defined in terms of the number of contacts. The observers also coded whether a child was the center of the group’s attention. Combining these observations with the other data may identify aspects of low and high status, as well as so-called "charismatic" individuals and "outsiders."

Play Characteristics. In Bell’s field work on the playground, he identified several behaviors that children employed to gain the attention and cooperation of other children. Associative play involves negotiation, discussion, questions, and statements. According to Bell, in associative play the children learn by the exchange of ideas while playing. Cooperative play involves the exchange of ideas in the realm of fantasy or make-believe situations. Parten described this form of play as the most developmentally sophisticated form of social play in which children engage. These dimensions of play are heavily dependent on communication and interaction management; therefore, they are of great interest to communication scholars.

Social Behaviors. This section was at the center of the study. Within this category are eight behaviors which are commonly referred to in leadership research (eg. Bell, 1989; Blanchard, 1985; Locke, 1994):

- Directing
- Organizing
• Conceptualizing
• Responsiveness
• Initiative
• Verbalizing Knowledge
• Clarity

In addition to these eight behaviors is the use of metacommunication. Bateson asserts that children communicate on two levels simultaneously during play activity (1955). On one level, they operate within the established fantasy parameters. On the other level, they communicate within their real world environment. Metacommunication is the ability of the child to interact on both levels at the same time without confusing one with the other, to move back and forth, and to comment on communication behaviors.
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Method of Analysis

In order to evaluate the data collected from the video tapes, two different leadership evaluation tools were consulted. The object of using two different sources was to derive some common elements by which leadership behaviors are assessed. The first document is the U.S. Army Officer Evaluation Report (OER), included as Appendix B. This is a standardized report form used to determine the leadership effectiveness and promote-ability of commissioned officers. The OER is common in one form or another to all branches of the armed forces and at all levels of rank.

The second document was from a study of leadership assessment centers by Dunnette in 1971. Hauk (1973) and Klimoski & Strickland (1977) concluded that assessment centers were valid predictors of leadership potential. Hunter and Hunter determined that assessment centers had a corrected correlation of up to .61 for predicting management potential (1984). Gaugler, Rosenthal, Thornton, and Bentson (1987) conducted a study of 47 assessment centers and determined that the reliability of predictors in previous studies may have been inflated and was probably closer to .40. The military OER and the leadership assessment center process appear to be widely accepted and provide some national parameters. A future study of past evaluations compared to current success may provide interesting research and either
confirm or dispel the validity of these instruments.

The common elements of these two documents were utilized in evaluating and revising the coding instrument developed for this study. This procedure adds validity to the Bruner/Giraud coding instrument. The following six items were determined to be common to both documents and relevant to the present study:

- Oral Communication Competence
- Planning and Organizing Competence
- Interpersonal Competence
- Directing Competence
- Initiative
- Adaptability.

Analysis and Results

The data base consists of videotapes of ten triads. A team of trained coders independently coded the behaviors of each of the thirty children using the Bruner/Giraud Coding System (See Appendix A). The results are reported below, moving from a macro-level to a micro-level of analysis.

Table one represents the specific categories in which two or more coders agreed on the observed behavior. Code numbers for the children range from 21 to 59 and are listed in the far left column.
Table 1  Coder responses

<p>|   | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N | O | P | Q | R | S | T |   |
| 21| X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 7 |
| 22| X |   | X |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 4 |
| 23| X | X | X |   | X | X | X | X | X |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 10|
| 24| X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 9 |
| 25| X | X | X | X |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 5 |
| 26| X | X | X | X | X | X |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 7 |
| 27| X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 8 |
| 28| X | X | X |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 4 |
| 29| X | X | X | X | X | X | X |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 7 |
| 30| X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 8 |
| 31| X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 8 |
| 32| X | X | X | X | X |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 6 |
| 33| X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 8 |
| 34| X | X | X | X |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 4 |
| 35| X | X | X |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 4 |
| 36| X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 8 |
| 37| X | X | X |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 4 |
| 38| X | X | X | X | X | X | X |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 6 |
| 39| X | X | X | X | X |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 5 |
| 40| X | X | X | X |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 5 |</p>
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X = Two or more coders agreed on this observation.

- **A** - Not Sought Out
- **B** - Sought Out
- **C** - Aggressive
- **D** - Did Not Speak
- **E** - Spoke Very Little
- **F** - Spoke Often
- **G** - Loudest Voice
- **H** - Solitary Play
- **I** - Associative Play
- **K** - Displayed Fantasy Play
- **L** - Conceptualized
- **M** - Initiated Interaction
- **N** - Center of Attention
- **O** - Vivid Detail
- **P** - Metacommunicated
- **Q** - Sensitive to Others Needs
- **R** - Clearly the Leader
- **S** - Sometimes the Leader
Identification of the Leaders - Specific data from table one was extracted to depict clearly those children who were identified as leaders in their respective groups. Children could be described as "clearly the leader," "sometimes the leader," or "never the leader." The coders reached a high level of agreement on which children were the leader and which children never were the leader. In twenty-six of the thirty cases, two or more coders agreed on these ratings.

On the one hand, children who were not the leaders were relatively obvious. Five of the ten triads (fully 50%) contained one child who was classified as "never the leader." This child typically was one who remained on the edge of the group, was less active, or who was less verbal than the other two children.

On the other hand, the coders often identified the other two children in a triad as "sometimes the leader." In eight triads more than two coders identified two or more leaders. I shall call this phenomenon "fluid leadership," to indicate that two children shared leadership of the triad.

Finally, the coders classified two of the thirty children (only 7%) as "clearly the leader." This finding lends support to the fluid leadership concept mentioned above. This finding also leaves unanswered the question: What constitutes leadership communication?

Identification of Leadership Communication Behaviors - Table three identifies a kind of "cluster" of leadership characteristics. The five items in the cluster were observed in at least seven of the eighteen children who were coded as "sometimes the leader."
All eighteen of the children coded by two or more coders as "sometimes the leader" engaged in cooperative/associative play of the socio-dramatic variety. All but one of the eighteen leaders conceptualized, organized, or directed activities. Children 27, 30, 31, and 33 were observed as reflecting all five of the characteristics in the leadership cluster. An interesting finding is that some leaders did not have to speak often (9 out of 18) nor initiate interactions (9 out of 18). Of the two children identified as "clearly the leader" (23 and 51), child 23 displayed all five while 51 did not demonstrate any observable conceptualization behavior.

Discussion

By way of contrast, all six children who were coded as "never the leader" spoke little. Five of the six did not initiate interaction. Two of the six did not engage in socio-dramatic play.

Other Factors - In the present study it was determined that some characteristics could not be determined from the videotapes. For example, the angle of the camera sometimes created the illusion that all the children were the same size. The angle of the camera also prevented viewing some of the nonverbal communicative acts. The microphone employed was not sensitive enough or placed properly to determine specific changes in volume. These limitations forced further refinement in the coding device.

The original coding instrument was designed to record twenty-eight characteristics. Unfortunately, as previously stated, there were limitations imposed by the camera that eliminated several categories. Further examination of the coding
device revealed redundant information that needed to be narrowed into a general
description for scoring simplicity. The final tabulation twenty categories.

Table 2  Triads and Leaders

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<td>22</td>
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SL = sometimes the leader

The present study does not imply that the codings and ratings from this study
can or should be used to determine the success, failure, or any degree of leadership
competency. This coding system is purely intended to establish the incidence of
leadership communication behaviors that have been identified in this study.
Sex - The total population consisted of twelve girls and eighteen boys. Of the eighteen children classified as "sometimes the leader," eight (67%) were female and ten (56%) were male. In six triads consisting of both girls and boys, a female was coded as "sometimes the leader" in all six cases. This is scant information from which to draw any generalizations. However, the data support the contention that the females were coded as "sometimes the leader" at a slightly higher rate than were the males.

Table 3  Leadership Characteristics of 18 Children*

Identified as "Sometimes the Leader"

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<th>code #</th>
<th>spoke often</th>
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<th>socio-drama</th>
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* Characteristics reflected by 18 or more of the 30 children.
Size - Was the largest child in the triad the leader? The observations do not support that conclusion. In some triads (such as A1 and N1), the largest child never was the leader. On the other hand, in triads N2 and S1 the largest child sometimes was the leader.

Was the smallest child never the leader? In triads A2, R1, and S1, the smallest child never was the leader. However, in triads S2 and S4 the smallest child sometimes was the leader.

In this sample population of thirty children, the correlation between the size of the child and leadership is not clear-cut. Furthermore, the notion of "size" may lack concept validity. Size may be defined as height, weight, both height and weight, and/or body shape. Sometimes the coders had a difficult time classifying the children according to size.

Status - In an effort to operationalize the concept of status, the children were classified either as "sought out" or "not sought out." The observations indicated that eight out of the thirty children (approximately 27%) were sought out by the other children in the triad. The analysis suggested a strong correlation between being sought out and perceived leadership in the triad.

Another way to define status is to classify children as serving as the focus of the group's attention. The coders identified six children who were the focus of the attention in the triad. In all but one case, this child also was classified as sometimes the leader.

Aggression - A timely issue is whether the kindergarten-age children, in general, were aggressive. A significant issue for this study is whether the leaders
were aggressive. The presence of an adult in the room may have limited the expression of aggression. Nevertheless, the coders rated five children as aggressive in verbal or physical behaviors.

**Voice** - One child did not speak at all during the entire play session. This child’s behavior probably was related to external conditions. Nine children spoke often. In seven of these cases, the child sometimes was the leader. This finding indicates a rather strong correlation between the amount of talk and leadership.

Only two children were classified as speaking in a loud voice. Volume was constrained by the adult in the room, who sometimes instructed the children to: "Speak quietly, because there is a class next door." In one case, the loudest child in the triad was classified as sometimes the leader.

**Play Characteristics** - All but one of the children displayed some aspect of associative or cooperative play characteristics. The one child who has previously been identified as having never spoken, played mostly alone. With the exception of that child, the others cooperated to some degree or another, regardless of whether the play activity was socio-dramatic or fantasy play. Socio-dramatic play is the type in which the children act the part of real life roles, eg. mother, father, or construct simulations of actual structures, eg. houses, bridges, were the most common. Fantasy play activities, drawn from outside of everyday experiences (castles, queens, space ships, etc.) were less common than had been reported in other observational studies (Bell, 1989).

Nine of the children verbalized some sort of specific knowledge about the construction taking place. Only six of the children employed vivid details to illustrate
their point. However, one child demonstrated strong narrative skills.

Twenty-nine of the children spoke during the sessions to some degree. One girl did not speak at all. Her silence was interpreted as a sign of significant external factors (The play activities, therefore, may be useful as a diagnostic technique.). Unfortunately, the method of videotaping that was employed did not capture subtle verbal and or non-verbal communicative acts which may have had some impact on the play activities.

**Conceptualized, organized, or directed** - All but one of the children who were identified as "sometimes the leader" demonstrated some level of conceptualization and directing skill. In most of the triads, one child or two children would suggest a structure to build and then the same child or children would direct the placement of the blocks and boards by specific individuals in the group. Socio-dramatic play that was conceptualized for the other children was evident to some degree in twenty-four of thirty children. Six of the children did not verbalize conceptualization to a degree that was recognized by the coders. Often one of the children would give a construction idea and this idea would be followed by a barrage of ideas from the others in the group.

Example:

**Group A-2**

#24:  "Hey! I know, let's make a boat!"

#26:  "I'm making a bed."

#24:  "Wow! ... You're making a bridge!"

#25:  "No, that's a bunk bed."
Twenty of the thirty children displayed some form of directing or organizing behavior. Statements like, "Bring that block over here" or "Put one of those wood things on top and we will make a bridge," were common. There were a few examples of deductive reasoning displayed when one child would point out to another that one event may lead to another. These deductions normally occurred in response to a practical problem or a safety issue that had been recognized by one of the children.

The ability to direct activities effectively was observed in twelve of the eighteen leaders. Occasionally the directing behavior was a team effort which was directed to the third member of the group.

Example:

#27: "Come on guys!"

#29: "Let's make a Ninja Turtle boat."

#27: "Yeah, let's put all the blue blocks on the ends and the yellow blocks in the middle."

#29: "I got the seat here. We have to have guns."

#27: "I control the guns too. Turtle boats have blades too. Come on guys!"

In this scenario, child 27 and 29 struggled for control verbally while cooperating towards the goal of building a Ninja Turtle boat. At one point child 27 began singing the "Turtle Power" song and both of the others joined in while working on the boat. This scenario required outside knowledge (of the Ninja Turtles) and is evidence of the influence of popular culture.

This group actively engaged in fantasy play and yet none took on a specific character role. Throughout the fantasy they continued to call each other by their
actual names, evidence of the ability of children to move into and out of fantasy. In Bell’s dissertation, he determined this type of metacommunication to be a significant social skill the origins of which are not quite understood. In the realm of theater and motion pictures, writers manipulate the audience under the guise of "willful suspension of disbelief." The audience knows that what it is seeing is not real and yet it puts reality aside for the duration and accepts the fantasy as a temporary reality. This same ability in children may deserve a much deeper investigation.

One child spent the entire time on the perimeter telling stories, relating ideas about what could be built and then directing the others in construction. This child spent approximately half of this story telling time communicating with the observer. This use of narrative was a fascinating oral competence, as well as a vehicle for planning and organizing.

Play Themes - The most common socio-dramatic theme was for the children to use the blocks and boards to construct a series of walkways, ramps, bridges, or walls (without attaching any more drama to the scenario). The height and precariousness of these structures were limited by the videographer’s expressed safety concerns.

Other examples of play scenarios are listed below. Often the scenarios were associated with a home or playground equipment.

**Play Theme 1:** "Let’s play house."

**Play Theme 2:** "Let’s make a bunch of cracks."

**Play Theme 3:** "This can be the door." "Here’s my roof."

**Play Theme 4:** "You need to go to bed."

**Play Theme 5:** "I’m in jail."
Play Theme 6: "This is my room."

Play Theme 7: "I'm going to make a chimney."

Play Theme 8: "This is a hiding place."

Play Theme 9: seesaw

Play Theme 10: chair/couch

Play Theme 11: picture frame

Play Theme 12: sliding board

Play Theme 13: tower

Initiated interaction - Fifty per cent of the children initiated interaction with another child in the triad. The analysis suggests a strong correlation between initiating interaction and perceived leadership. Initiative in interpersonal acts was displayed by ten of the eighteen leaders. However, the children played predominantly as individuals. There was only one group in which there was a determined effort to work together as a group. In this instance, two of the children spent about half of the session struggling for control. At one point in that session, the observer intervened and directed the children to work together and share. Joint efforts, apparently, were mainly a function of being in the same place and wanting the same block or board at the same time. This finding may not address questions of leadership competence so much as it acknowledges more practical issues.

Metacommunicated - The coders reported little verbal metacommunication. However, the children sometimes seemed to engage in activities or nonverbal behaviors that may have functioned as kind of metacommunication. For example, grabbing a block and beginning a new scenario was a transition to and almost an
"instruction" to begin a new activity.

**Demonstrated sensitivity to the needs of others** - Six of the children displayed some degree of sensitivity to the needs of the other children or to some safety concern. Ten of the children interacted on a regular basis with other children, sometimes in response to a voiced or perceived need. The coders identified child #23 as "clearly the leader" of his or her group. The table shows that this child spoke often, employed associative play, conceptualized and directed activities, and was the focus of the groups attention for much of the play time. However, the coders did not characterize him as sensitive to the needs of others.

Eleven of the children willingly went along with another child's ideas (followership), although in most cases this occurred late in the session. Many of the children would begin the play time playing by themselves. They gradually would come together in a joint venture that took all the materials and much of the space in the room. Only six children were clearly the center of attention and only one of these enjoyed the role through group consensus. The other three dominated the activity through aggressive behavior and ignoring the directions given by others. In one session two girls teamed up against the boy and verbally agreed that they would not do what he wanted. Two or more coders reported observing four children responding to the requests and needs of another child. In three of the four cases, the child who demonstrated sensitivity to the needs of others also was classified as sometimes the leader of the triad.

**Adaptability** - Adaptability was determined by examining the children's sensitivity to the needs of others, the individual level of aggression, and
responsiveness to directions. If one combines the data from these categories, adaptability was reported in approximately one-half of the children. A closer analysis of the activities reveals that adaptability was most often a response to space and equipment limitations as well as safety concerns expressed by the videographer. The safety communication of the children is a potential area for closer scrutiny.

Child-to-adult communication - Several children addressed the videographer. These child-adult interactions merit further scrutiny in another study. Laupa (1994), in a study of sixty-seven preschoolers, reported that the children accepted both peer and adult authority. However, the children gave priority to peer authority over adult non-authority.

Resources analysis - The play scenario often was influenced by the possession or control of the blocks and boards. In one triad, a girl hoarded almost all the blocks and boards. In another extreme case, the videographer intervened, because one child had no blocks or boards with which to play. In many triads, two children controlled most of the blocks and boards.

An economist might look at the play in terms of resources. The children seemed to be committed to using all the available blocks and boards, if possible, in a play scenario. A Marxist analysis might concentrate on which children seemed to "own" the resources or "manage" the use of resources, as well as which children seemed to "work" for the other children.

Biological or physiological analysis - One coder suggested that the children's energy level might be correlated to nutrition or physical condition. The present study did not include any physiological tests. However, biological and physiological
factors may be a significant part of the group process. These factors merit further consideration and investigation.

Summary

This study set out to determine the incidence of leadership communication behavior among kindergarten aged children. The preceding pages in this chapter support Bell’s findings in that kindergarten aged children enact some leadership communication competence. The next chapter is devoted to the authors conclusions and suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Introduction

This study of leadership communication among kindergarten children in a structured play environment addressed four questions:

(1) What is an appropriate definition of leadership among children?

(2) How is leadership exhibited or enacted in the children’s communication behaviors (especially nonverbal communication)?

(3) To what extent can principles of leadership in children be identified?

(4) What do the findings of this study suggest about leadership development and peer leadership in children?

In the course of addressing these questions, several other significant issues became apparent. The conclusions are organized around the four research questions, followed by suggestions for future research.
Conclusions

(1) What is an appropriate definition of leadership among children?

"Fluid Leadership" and Facilitation - The phrase "situational leadership" usually refers to the adaptations a leader makes to a situation. However, the present study suggests that two or all three of the children in a triad might enact leadership communication behaviors in the course of twenty minutes of play. Therefore, the phrase "fluid leadership" is proposed to indicate that leadership is shared among several individuals rather than concentrated in one individual, even an individual who changes leadership styles. This finding potentially is one of the most significant findings of the study.

Leadership sometimes has been viewed as the catalyst by which a group process moves forward. An historic view of leadership is that it is centered in the individual and enacted for the benefit of the group (Weber, Carlin, Locke). This study determined that, in addition to being a fluid activity, leadership is facilitation. This idea removes the role of leader from an individual and places leadership in the arena of the group process. The triads in this study that created the most exciting scenario, or had more construction ideas were those in which leadership flowed from one child to the next. In some of these cases a particular child may have had a more dominant influence. However, the interaction of the whole triad resulted in the completion of tasks, more so than the directives of any individual.

Physical considerations - The study did not reveal any marked correlations between size and leadership. Neither the largest child nor the smallest child always was the leader of a triad. However, the data suggest a slightly positive correlation
between sex and leadership. While the total population consisted of twelve girls and eighteen boys, of the eighteen children classified as "sometimes the leader," eight (67%) were female and ten (56%) were male. In six triads consisting of both girls and boys, a female was coded as "sometimes the leader" in all six cases. These preliminary data support the contention that the females were coded as "sometimes the leader" at a slightly higher rate than were the males.

(2) How is leadership exhibited or enacted in the children's communication behaviors (especially nonverbal communication)?

Coding instrument - The coding instrument was designed to identify behaviors that have previously been associated with leadership communication and to apply these to ten triads of kindergarten children at play. Post-research assessment of the Bruner/Giraud coding instrument is that the instrument may be adequate for rough observations but requires further refinement. As previously stated, the raw data suggested a correlation between five specific characteristics and the eighteen children that two or more coders had determined were "sometimes the leader" (Tables 2 and 3).

"Cluster" of leadership characteristics - The observations indicated that these five characteristics were the most prevalent among the leaders:

1. spoke often
2. cooperative play
3. socio-dramatic play
4. conceptualized, organized, and directed
5. initiated interaction
Leadership and communication - By definition, four of these five characteristics are communicative:

1. spoke often
2. cooperative play
4. [conceptualized], organized, and directed
5. initiated interaction

Therefore, the leadership process requires communication, or leaders are active communicators. But the communication of the children at play could be nonverbal as well as verbal.

Nonverbal communication constituted a significant portion of the leaders’ communication. For example, the act of beginning a new play scenario, apparently, was as important as talking about the scenario.

(3) To what extent can principles of leadership in children be identified?

As reported previously, eighteen of the thirty children were classified as “sometimes the leader.” Leadership, therefore, can be identified and in some cases is quite obvious.

In addition, leadership was not limited to a small portion of this population. Eighteen of the thirty children (60%) functioned as leaders. This finding dispels the notion that leadership is limited to some minute percentage of the population.

(4) What do the findings of this study suggest about leadership development and peer leadership in children?

The present study could not adequately examine leadership development in a significant manner. Longitudinal studies are required to address the issue of
development. For example, one might want to contact these children, again, in ten or twenty years to determine the extent to which they enact leadership at that point in their lives.

Peer leadership among adolescents has been studied more often than peer leadership among children. This study is part of the process of adding to the literature on leadership among children.

The present study suggests that peer leadership is enacted among children through the processes (described above) of fluid leadership and facilitation. While the adult in the room at times exercised authority, the videotapes clearly reveal that some children were able to ignore the adult. The videotapes also suggest that peer leadership may be strongly related to conceptualizing and organizing behaviors, as much as to directing behaviors. This finding supports previous findings by Bell.

Suggestions for Future Research

Developmental studies - The study of developmental processes is very difficult. Often the researcher must rely on analysis of self-report instruments which may lack the necessary objectivity for accuracy. In this instance, the research was conducted at a particular level of development to determine the existence or absence of leadership communication behaviors in children. Unfortunately, this method of research can not explain why or how the children learned the behaviors that were displayed. Further research, therefore, is required on so-called causal factors, as well as on what happens to these eighteen leaders in the future.

Research into the development of leadership communication behavior may
necessitate a Piagetian method. Several groups of children could be selected from varying demographic groups and observed over a period of five to twenty years. The research team might want to interview parents, teachers, and peers in order to understand the possible influence processes.

**Sex/Gender studies** - An interesting question is whether females continue to stand out as leaders among older populations. In the present study, of the eighteen children classified as "sometimes the leader," eight (67%) were female and ten (56%) were male. In six triads consisting of both girls and boys, a female was coded as "sometimes the leader" in all six cases. Will these statistics remain constant across time and contexts?

Another intriguing question is whether the sex of group members and the sex of the leader are correlated. This question also raises the issue of to what extent gender (learned sex roles) is a major factor among kindergarten children and to what extent gender is a major factor in leadership at later ages.

Future research may also address the issue of socialization of leaders. The review of literature revealed that there is a significant difference between perceived leadership competence in females from childhood to adulthood. On the one hand Edwards determined that the Girl Scouts in her [sic] study displayed skills that in other studies are attributed to males (1994). On the other hand current studies of leadership competence among females is largely based on Warner’s "deficiency model". The deficiency model asserts that females in leadership roles are less successful than males because they lack some necessary skill. For example, assertiveness in males is considered a positive trait while in females it is perceived as
antagonistic and aggressive. This author is concerned that females are socialized away from leadership behavior at some point in their lives and while this may be perceived as a deficiency, it is more likely a form of suppression.

Context research - This study was based on leadership in a structured play situation. Will leadership vary in other contexts? and, What affect did the presence of an adult observer with video equipment have on the children’s behavior? A possible limitation of this study was that triads were utilized. Will leadership vary as the size of the group varies?

The research project also did not address the question to what extent leadership is correlated to the composition of the group. For example, to what extent are three males different than two females and a male? Or, to what extent are three quiet children different than three outspoken children? Or, how will children who do not know each other prior to the play sessions interact?

Finally, future research must address the roles of gender and culture. To what extent is leadership competence, either real or perceived, affected by gender socialization or cultural background?
Epilogue

Many scholars, such as Vygotsky, have noted the central role of play in the development of children. The present study opens a window on the role of play in the enactment and development of leadership among children.

Given the "fluid model" of leadership noted in this population of children and other findings, one must wonder if children may teach adult observers something important about the leadership process. At the same time it is incumbent upon the adults that they exercise some restraint when educating children. Adults have a responsibility to promote quality play activities of children by setting positive role models. This should not be interpreted as behavior modification but rather behavior validation. The mind of the child is not a "thing" to be manipulated and shaped into some image that has been created by the adult community. Instead the child must be nurtured and allowed to grow as an individual.
APPENDIX A

OBSERVATIONAL CODING DEVICE
CODING SCHEME for LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION
AMONG CHILDREN
Bruner and Giraud, 1995

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<td>Code Numbers of other members of the triad ____ and ____</td>
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PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS  VOICE CHARACTERISTICS

- Child was LARGEST in group.
- Child was SMALLEST in group.
- Child was AVERAGE in size.
- LOUDEST voice
- Used VOLUME to gain groups attention.

PHYSIOLOGICAL BEHAVIORS

- Uses hand gestures
- Does not use Hand Gestures
- AGGRESSIVE  A S N
- DOMINANT  A S N
- PASSIVE  A S N
- Spoke very LITTLE.
- Did not SPEAK.
- SOUGHT OUT
- NOT SOUGHT OUT

PLAY CHARACTERISTICS

- DRAMATIC and FANTASY play
- ASSOCIATIVE play
- COOPERATIVE
- Manipulates objects
- Sensitive to other playchildrens’ desires

SOCIAL BEHAVIORS

- DIRECTS activities
- ORGANIZES
- CONCEPTUALIZES
- VERBALIZES KNOWLEDGE
- Communicates in VIVID DETAIL
- CENTER OF ATTENTION
- Responds to others directions
- Initiates interaction
- Metacommunicates
- Self imposed
- Conferred by group

(A S N = ALWAYS  SOMETIMES  NEVER)
PART I - DUTY DESCRIPTION

Responsibility for the training development of the enlisted personnel of the TOPO section; assist the TOPO Engineer in coordination of operational activities for TOPO elements under the Brigade and Corps area of control; assist the TOPO Engineer in the coordination between active and reserve TOPO elements under Corps control. For AT 86, has the additional duty as Engineer Representative in echelons above Corps at the III Corps Simulation Center for Golden Saber exercise.

PART IV - PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

a.1.2.11: Exhibits a high level of intelligence with sound military bearing allowing for natural leadership. His ability to diagnose various situations and develop proper courses of action have been a significant attribute to the success of the topographic element of the Corps Staff Engineer Section within the Brigade.

b.1.2.4: Exhibits all the characteristics, but is especially strong in dedication, responsibility, and discipline.
exceeded in developing a working knowledge in the technical field of military topography which allowed him to assist in the management of the enlisted personnel of the Topographic Element. He conducted staff visits to the organic topographic elements of this command as well as the units assigned in the CAPSTONE program. The experience gained in these activities have further assisted in developing the technical capabilities which will be essential in accomplishing the missions of the topographic element within the coming years.

ATTENDED 44 OF 44 SCHEDULED DRILLS.

* Comment on Potential

"...as the potential to command an Engineer Company or similar type unit.

PART VI - INTERMEDIATE RATER

* Comments

"...has been in a learning mode during this rating period. His observation of a topo company in action has given him a general knowledge of the unit's capabilities and he is now capable of effective liaison activities. As an additional duty, he has served as an engineer representative in the simulation center during a III Corps exercise. His coordination activities between subordinate units and echelons above Corps added to the effective use of engineers as a combat multiplier. His interface with the Allies provided valuable contacts for future exercises. He is a "can do" officer and exhibits management potential."
OFFICER EVALUATION REPORT SUPPORT FORM

PART I - RATED OFFICER IDENTIFICATION

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<td>SRN</td>
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PART II - RATING CHAIN - YOUR RATING CHAIN FOR THE EVALUATION PERIOD (B)

PART III - VERIFICATION OF INITIAL FACE-TO-FACE DISCUSSION

AN INITIAL FACE-TO-FACE DISCUSSION OF DUTIES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES FOR THE CURRENT RATER PERIOD TOOK PLACE ON [Date]

PART IV - RATED OFFICER (Complete a, b, and c below for this rating period)

1. STATE YOUR SIGNIFICANT DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

DUTY TITLE: Assistant Topographic Engineer

The assistant Topographic Engineer for the Corps Staff Engineer Section, Engineer Bde., is responsible for the training development of the enlisted personnel of the TOPO section. He must also assist the TOPO Engineer in coordination of operational activities for TOPO elements under the Brigade and Corps area of control. It is also his duty to assist the TOPO Engineer in the coordination between active and reserve TOPO elements under Corps control. For 1986 he has the additional duty as Engineer Representative in Echelons Above Corps at the III Corps Simulation Center for Golden Saber exercise.

2. INDICATE YOUR MAJOR PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

1. During Inactive Duty Training periods accomplish the following:
   a. Monitor training needs and professional development of the enlisted personal in the TOPO section with a goal of MOS qualification or significant progress towards that goal.
   b. Establish and maintain open lines of communication through visitations, with the 102nd Engineer Co., CARTU, so as to better assist in their training needs.
   c. Learn the functions of the Corps Staff Engineer Section with emphasis on TOPO, so that I will be better able to support the Topographic mission and will be able to provide quality assistance to NATO and US forces involved in the Golden Saber exercise.

2. During Annual Training accomplish the following:
   a. Act as Engineer Representative to Echelons Above Corps in the III Corps Simulation Center during Golden Saber, providing assistance as needed to NATO and US forces.
   b. Establish and maintain solid working relationship with members of the NATO forces involved in the exercise that will benefit myself and the unit in future operations involving those allied forces.
   c. Assist the Senior Engineer Adviser in his activities at the Simulation Center.
My significant contributions during the rating period included the following:

1. I served as junior representative to the Golden Saber, simulation center exercise conducted by III Corps. I coordinated communication between Corps and Echelons Above Corps units for all Engineer activities that took place during my shift. In the exercise, my primary responsibility was to advise subordinate units on Engineer assets and capabilities and to communicate Engineer problems to the NATO forces we were supporting.

2. I met and became familiar with counterparts in the Allied forces and established an open line of communication that I hope to use to the units benefit during future exercises.

3. I acted as the Senior Engineers representative whenever he was unavailable to the subordinate Engineer commands that participated in the exercise.

4. I went on two staff visits to the 302nd Engineer Co. CARTO, and established a very positive line of communication for future coordination. I served as liaison between this unit and the 400th Engineer Bde. when the Topographic officer was attending the Army Topographic Conference. I have begun learning the function and operation of the CARTO Company so that I will be better able to support their mission.

5. I assisted the Topographic Engineer in coordinating training for enlisted members of the section and acted as their section leader during his absence.

---

PART V - RATER AND/or INTERMEDIATE RATER

1. AUTHORITY: See 301 Title 10 USC; See 3012 Title 10 USC.

2. PURPOSE: DA Form 67-9, Officer Evaluation Report, serves as the primary source of information for officer personnel management decisions. DA Form 67-9-1, Officer Evaluation Support Form, serves as a guide for the rated officer's performance development of the rated officer, enhances the accomplishments of the organization mission, and provides additional performance information to the rating chain.

3. ROUTINE USE: DA Form 67-9 will be maintained in the rated officer's official military Personnel File (OMPF) and Career Management Individual File (CMIF). A copy will be provided to the rated officer either directly or sent to the forwarding address shown in Part I, DA Form 67-9. DA Form 67-9-1 is for organizational use only and will be returned to the rated officer after review by the rating chain.

4. DISCLOSURE: Disclosure of the rated officer's SSN (Part I, DA Form 67-9-1) is voluntary. However, failure to verify the SSN may result in a delayed or erroneous processing of the officer's OER. Disclosure of the information in Part IV, DA Form 67-9-9 is voluntary. However, failure to provide the information requested will result in an evaluation of the rated officer without the benefits of that officer's comments. Should the rated officer use the Privacy Act as a basis and to provide the information requested in Part IV, the Support Form will contain the rated officer's statement to that effect and be forwarded through the rating chain in accordance with AR 613-109.
APPENDIX C

LIST OF CHILDREN BY TRIAD, ID NUMBER, AND PSEUDONYM.
### LIST OF CHILDREN BY NAME AND NUMBER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
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BIBLIOGRAPHY


