



Brave and Faithful Leaders: Broadening Year 11 Boys' Understanding of Leadership Through Stories

David F. Idstein
The King's School, Sydney, Australia

Further Information
This poster and further information is available at <http://www.theibsc.org/>

Researcher's Email: dfi@kings.edu.au

Introduction

How do I influence those around me? How does this compare to those who have led successfully before me?

In the excitement of our young men moving into senior leadership roles within our schools the knowledge and skills required to allow for appropriate and broad leadership behaviours can be overlooked.

Could the study of Brave and Faithful leaders of the past help our young men develop their leadership understanding and practice?

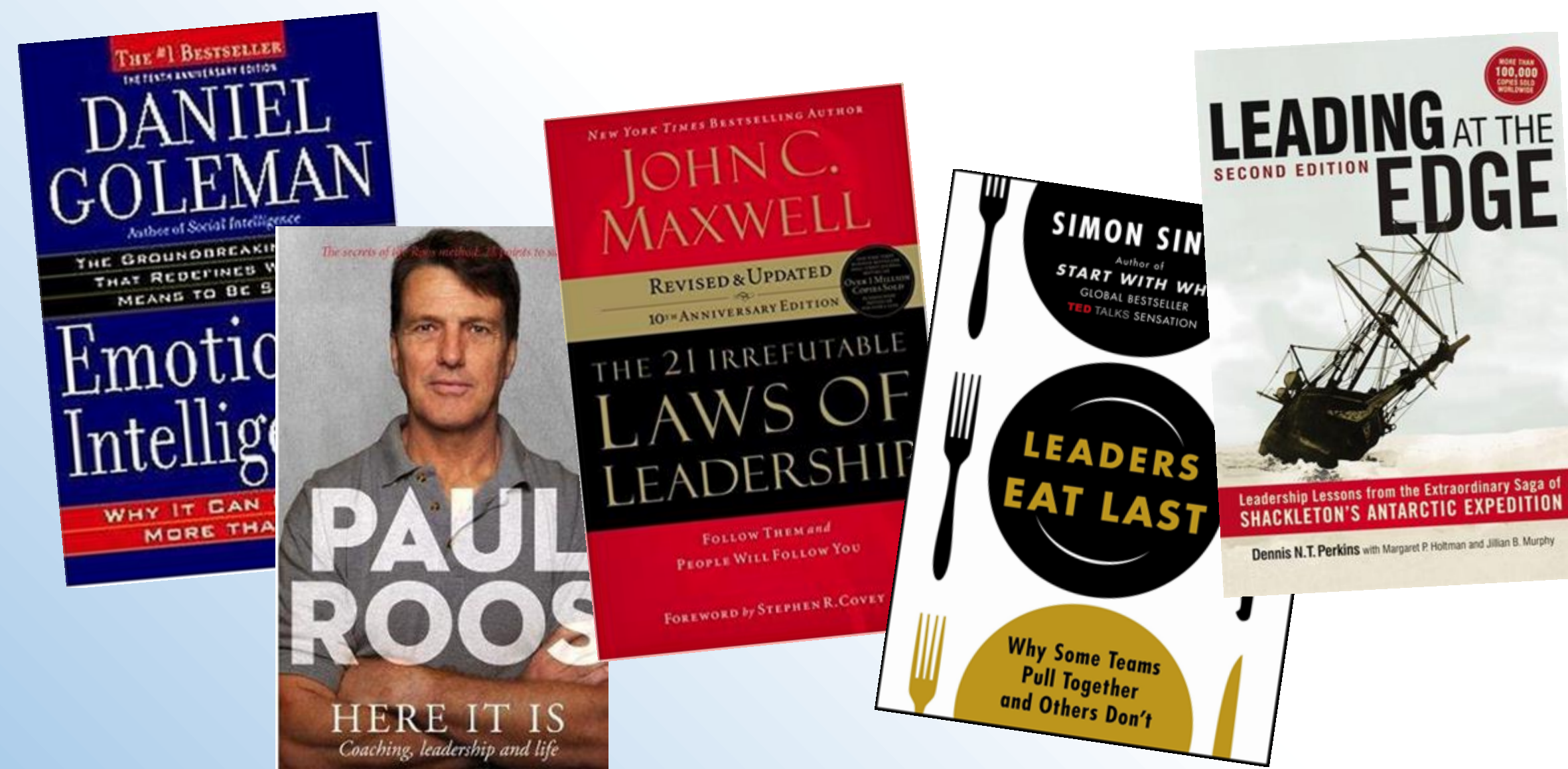
The Research Question

How might the stories of past and present leaders help Year 11 boys develop broader notions of leadership?

Research Context and Participants

The research was conducted at The King's School, Sydney, an independent Anglican boys' school. The participants were the year 11 tutor group from Broughton Forrest Boarding House.

The Research Action



The above stories formed a leadership benchmark against which the young men could compare themselves and aspire to. The boys reflected on their own behaviour and leadership style in group discussions, articulated how their leadership developed, reflected on how the younger boys interacted with them as leaders, and discussed what they found successful, challenging, and how they grew.

Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative data allowed for an insight into how the boys' knowledge, notions and intended mechanisms of leadership broadened through the study of leadership stories.

Data were collected in the form of two speeches, one pre- and one post-action, that addressed the topic: *What is leadership and why is it important to Broughton Forrest*. Post-action focus groups were also conducted.

Speeches and interview transcripts were then coded, categorised and aligned to leadership styles.

Key Findings and Discussion

Four key elements of the boys' understanding of leadership emerged from the data:

Authoritarian versus relational leadership

Understanding changed from: "They [leaders] set direction, build an inspiring vision, and create something new" to a greater focus on building relationships: "Leaders inspire people through a shared vision and create an environment where people feel valued and fulfilled."

Awareness of self versus others

Understanding changed from a strong focus on the behaviour of those in their charge: "By working to improve areas that they [the leader] believe needs attention" to a greater focus on themselves: "Lead by example and know [my] strengths and weaknesses."

Leading by example

The pre-action data indicated a strong desire by most boys to lead by example: "Lead by example [through] displays of integrity and provide a role model." This desire did not appear to develop throughout the action, nor did the boys consistently live up to their expectations of themselves.

Outcome-focused versus process-focused leadership

In the early stages of the study, the leaders focussed on the behaviour of the younger students: "[Leaders need to] set direction ... use management skills to guide their people ... [and] create new patterns of thinking." There was little shift in the boys' appreciation of leadership being process-driven. Student G typified the boys' responses, saying, "We want more respect." The boys seemed more focussed on the outcome of getting respect and not the actions required to achieve that.

Whilst as a group, they did not progress towards being more process-driven, a few students had strong inclination towards this style, exemplified by one student's desire to "take care of younger students and make friends with them [as this] is the goal of this community."

Conclusions

The boys' notions of leadership, knowledge, and intentions did broaden, becoming more relational and self-aware. However, there was less evidence of the boys enacting leadership by example.

The findings provided valuable insight into how students saw leadership, what they saw as a good leader, and how to best develop the necessary traits. The boys' reflections and discussions demonstrated a keenness, honesty, and accuracy in how they viewed themselves as leaders.

The success of this study will support and inform a whole-school approach and clarification. The desired framework and resourcing will be based on stories of leaders of the past and modelling behaviour on their example. The use of speeches and tutor group reflections will also be considered as an important element in a whole school approach to leadership.

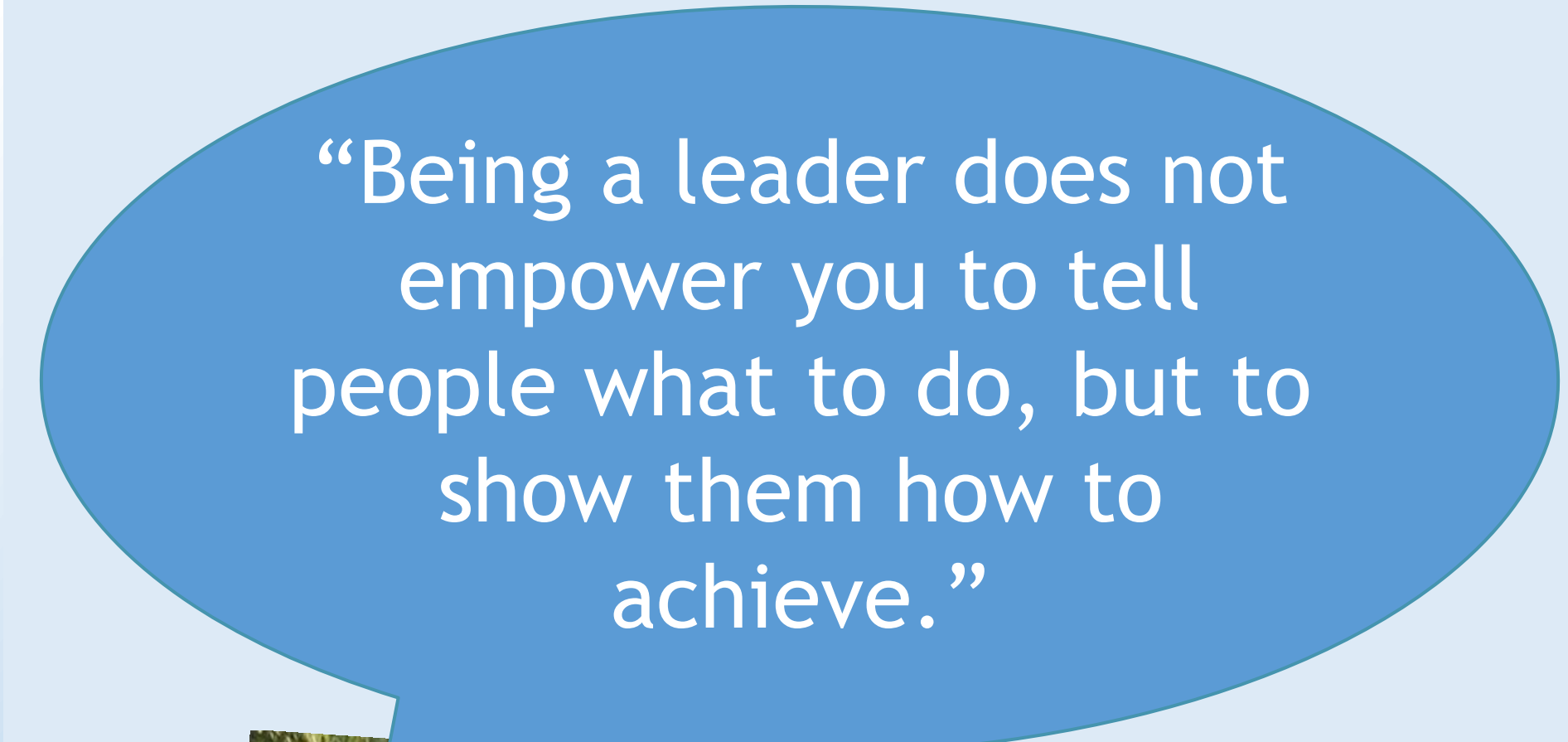
The initial data collect process provided a useful tool in identifying the knowledge and intended leadership styles of the students, and thus, was a useful mechanism in itself.

Key Readings

Perkins, D. N. T. (2000). *Leading at the edge, Shackleton's Antarctic Expedition*. New York, American Management Association.

Rubinstein, A. (2013). *The making of men*. Australia: Griffin Press.

Zak, P. J. (2014, October 28). Why your brain loves good storytelling. *Harvard Business Review*.



International Boys' Schools Coalition Action Research Program 2018 - 2019
Boys and Stories: Pathways to Learning

