Summer camp youth leadership development:
An investigation of adolescents' perceptions of leadership and program value

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Abstract

This qualitative study aims to explore adolescents' perceptions of leadership and Waycross Camp, specifically its Leaders-in-Training (i.e., L.I.T.) program. Data was collected through interviews with former L.I.T. program participants and reflective memos. Research aims evolved as the study progressed, ultimately posing one research question and three sub-questions. The guiding research question asked: How has Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program informed participants' notions of leadership? The remaining sub-questions asked: a) How do external factors (i.e., location, peers, or staff) contribute to Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program participants' camp experience?, b) What do participants value about Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program?, and c) How has Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program influenced participants since the program's completion?

A review of the literature led to this study's conceptual framework, which included three overlapping domains: 1) "Youth development," 2) "Youth leadership," and 3) "Summer camp." Using grounded theory and constructivism, a constant comparison data analysis revealed four emergent participant themes, including 1) "Bridging the gap," 2) "Giving permission to be human," 3) "Rolling up your sleeves," and 4) "Serving the greater good." Each of these four themes yielded an outcome, including 1) "Community," 2) "Openness," 3) "Empowerment," and 4) "Character," respectively. Four camp outcomes depicted in relevant research were synthesized with the four emergent themes and their outcomes, including 1) "Social relationships," 2) "Identity and self concept," 3) "Agency and engagement," and 4) "Spirituality, ethicality, and morality," respectively. Together, the themes, outcomes, and camp outcomes produced a holistic model of youth leadership.

Ultimately, these four themes, outcomes, and camp outcomes revealed an overlap between participants' valued notions of leadership and valued aspects of Waycross Camp and its L.I.T. program. In framing leadership as a relational experience, participants demonstrated an understanding of leadership congruent with contemporary leadership theories. While participants reported that some external factors (i.e., location and peers) contributed to their L.I.T. experiences, responses were mixed as to the perceived impact of L.I.T. program staff. Although participants struggled at times to identify specific skills acquired during L.I.T. that they were able to apply to specific circumstances, participants reported feeling better equipped and assured in exercising leadership after the program's completion. Furthermore, many participants attributed significant gains in life skills (e.g., compassion, understanding, etc.) to Waycross Camp experiences.

Key words: youth development, youth leadership, camp

Résumé

Cette étude qualitative vise à explorer les perceptions des adolescents au leadership et au Waycross Camp, en particulier à son programme Leaders-en-Formation (c-à-d.: Leaders-in-Training (L.I.T.)). Les données ont été recueillies au moyen d'entretiens auprès des anciens participants du programme L.I.T. et des notes de réflexion. Les objectifs de recherche ont évolué avec la progression de l'étude en posant une question de recherche et trois sous-questions. La question directrice de la recherche était la suivante: « De quelles façons le programme L.I.T. de Waycross Camp a-t-il informé les notions de leadership aux participants? » Les sous-questions restantes posées: a) « Quels facteurs externes (c-à-d : l'endroit, les pairs, ou le personnel) ont-ils contribué aux expériences des participants au programme L.I.T. de Waycross Camp?, » b) « Quelles sont les choses que les participants ont appréciées du programme L.I.T. de Waycross Camp? », et c) « De quelles façons le programme L.I.T. de Waycross Camp a-t-il influencé les participants depuis la fin du programme? »

Une revue de la littérature a conduit au cadre conceptuel de cette étude, qui comprenait trois domaines qui se chevauchaient : 1) « Le développement de la jeunesse », 2) « Le leadership des jeunes », et 3) « Le camp d'été. » En utilisant le motif de la théorie à base empirique et le constructivisme, une analyse constante et comparative des données a révélé quatre thèmes émergents de participants, y compris respectivement: 1) « Combler l'écart », 2) « Donner la permission d'être humain », 3) « Retrousser ses manches », et 4) « Servir le bien de tous ».

Chacun de ces quatre thèmes a donné un résultat, y compris respectivement : 1) « La communauté », 2) « La largeur d'esprit », 3) « Les pleins pouvoirs », et 4) « Le caractère ». Quatre résultats de camp représentés dans les recherches pertinentes ont été synthétisés avec les

quatre thèmes émergents et leurs quatre résultats, y compris respectivement : 1) « L'interaction sociale », 2) « L'identité et le concept de soi », 3) « L'intention et l'engagement », et 4) « La spiritualité, l'éthique, et la moralité ». En tout, les thèmes, les résultats, et les résultats du camp ont produit un modèle holistique de leadership de la jeunesse.

En fin de compte, ces quatre thèmes, leurs résultats, et les résultats du camp ont révélé un chevauchement entre les notions valorisées des participants du leadership et les aspects valorisés de Waycross Camp et son programme L.I.T. En élaborant le leadership comme une expérience relationnelle, les participants ont démontré une compréhension du leadership en harmonie avec les théories contemporaines de leadership.

Bien que les participants aient indiqué que certains facteurs externes (c-à-d : l'endroit et les pairs) contribuaient à leurs expériences L.I.T., les réponses des participants concernant l'impact perçu du personnel du programme furent mitigées. Même si les participants ont parfois lutté pour identifier les compétences spécifiques acquises au programme L.I.T. qu'ils étaient en mesure d'appliquer dans des situations particulières, les participants ont déclaré qu'ils étaient mieux équipés et mieux assurés en utilisant le leadership une fois le programme L.I.T. terminé. En outre, de nombreux participants ont attribué des gains importants dans leur savoir-faire quotidien (par exemple, leur compassion, leur compréhension, etc.) suite aux expériences de Waycross Camp.

Mots clés: le développement de la jeunesse, le leadership, le camp

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Above all, I am grateful for my parents. I would not be here today without the countless sacrifices they have made for me over the years. Your selflessness, devotion, and unconditional love make me a better person each and every day. You mean everything to me.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Over the years, summer camp has become an American institution. It is a unique model of youth development with an elevated caliber of "duration, intensity, and breadth," placing it in a category all unto its own (Garst, Browne & Bialeschki, 2011, p. 76-77). While enjoyable for many, for some it is a transformative experience that has a lasting impact on personal interests, vocation, and values (Henderson, Bialeschki & James, 2007a).

Time and again camp experiences have been shown to nurture and instill leadership skills in youth (Hastings, Barrett, Barbuto & Bell, 2011; Henderson et al., 2005; Thomas, 1996). Campers and their parents have reported additional significant gains in leadership development as a result of their camp experience up to six months after the conclusion of camp (Thurber, Scanlin, Scheuler & Henderson, 2007). As such, camp leadership development programs are an anticipated rite of passage for many youth (Garst et al., 2011), often spurring significant change in campers' perceptions of leadership (Bialeschki, Henderson & James, 2007).

Since the 1990's about-face from a prevention science model to positive youth development (i.e., P.Y.D.), youth leadership development programs' design, implementation, and evaluation have been reshaped and restructured (Bialeschki et al., 2007). Despite this paradigm shift, leadership development within camp contexts is cited as one of several camp outcomes that demonstrates "the greatest potential for improvement," according to a benchmark 2007 study, which indicated that contemporary youth leadership development programs may fall short (Henderson et al., 2007a, p. 761). Given the discrepancy between theory and practice, this study aims to explore leadership as a camp outcome, gain an understanding of the factors that

influence its outcome, and recommend ways in which this outcome can be maximized in residential summer camp settings.

1.1 Personal Rationale

I started attending Waycross Camp, a small, residential, Christian summer camp in Morgantown, Indiana, when I was 10 years old, later becoming a camp counselor when I turned 17. While I am far from the rugged, outdoor type, camp for me has always carried with it deep personal meaning, challenging me physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually over the years. As such, it is a place where I have seen countless peers and campers alike find the purpose and passion I discovered there 16 years ago.

After working as a camp counselor for several years, I became an Assistant Director in May 2012, specifically working as the camp's Leadership Coordinator. One of my responsibilities was to develop a youth leadership curriculum for the camp's Leaders-in-Training (L.I.T.) program, geared towards 15 to 17 year old high school students. The program targeted four facets of leadership, including 1) "Responsible leadership," 2) "Intelligent leadership," 3) "Motivational leadership," and 4) "Servant leadership" (Martin, 2012, p. 1). Program goals were implemented through classroom curriculum and structured/unstructured group activities.

As a proponent of outdoor, experiential education rooted in meaningful mentoring and peer relationships, admittedly, I conducted this research study from the viewpoint of a camp advocate. I discuss this viewpoint, along with the assumptions and preconceptions associated with it, in depth in Chapters Three, Four, and Six. Equally as noteworthy as my biased standpoint is how I executed my study from the perspective of a scholar, exercising rigor in my research initiatives and implementing reflexivity throughout my research practice. Thus, it is with great personal joy and academic pride that I present the following qualitative study.

1.2 Study Overview

This qualitative study consists of six chapters. Chapter Two provides an overview of relevant literature, outlining a conceptual framework that includes three domains: 1) "Youth development," 2) "Youth leadership," and 3) "Summer camp." Chapter Three delves into research methodologies and elaborates on the rationale for conducting this study. Chapter Four organizes the aggregate research findings into a series of emergent participant themes and outcomes. Chapter Five synthesizes these emergent participant themes and outcomes with four key camp outcomes corroborated in relevant research. It concludes by proposing a holistic model of youth leadership, founded in this study's emergent participant themes, outcomes, and camp outcomes. Finally, Chapter Six discusses various facets of my research findings, including their implications for present practice and recommendations for future directions.

1.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter's main function is to set the scene for my qualitative study. It introduces my study, framing it in the context of relevant research. In explaining my background and interests, it also places my study in the context of my personal rationale. This chapter concludes by providing an overview of the chapters to come and outlining the content therein.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

This chapter provides an overview of the literature relevant to my research. The conceptual framework utilized in this study is outlined and explained. It is divided into three sections: 1) "Youth development," 2) "Youth leadership," and 3) "Summer camp." The relevance of my study becomes more apparent and further contextualized through these three lenses. In this way, the effectiveness of formative youth leadership development education initiatives implemented in residential summer camp settings is explored.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is comprised of three domains: 1) "Youth development," 2) "Youth leadership," and 3) "Summer camp." The first section, "Youth development," explores the structural components that contribute to developmental outcomes in youth, shedding light on the paradigm shift from prevention science to positive youth development (i.e., P.Y.D.). It transitions to the second section, "Youth leadership," which discusses leadership as a youth initiative and illustrates the dichotomy between adult and youth leadership theories. It contrasts youth learning *about* leadership with youth learning leadership (MacNeil, 2006) and how each school of thought impacts youth leadership practice. The third and final section, "Summer camp," describes camp as an institution in terms of its programming, goals, and outcomes. It explores the facets of organized camp activities, including their structure, purpose, and duration. Together, these three domains set the scene for my research. Figure 2.1 illustrates the overlap of the various bodies of research that inform this study.

Figure 2.1

Overview of Conceptual Framework
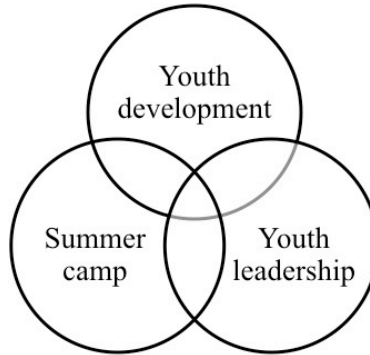
2.2 Youth Development

Youth development is complex, multi-dimensional, and evolving, making an exact definition difficult to articulate. Generally, youth development is thought of as the process of building young people's abilities and competencies to prepare them for productive adult life. In essence, youth development was established with the goal of improving the lives of youth. Today, youth development has grown from a mere concept into a field of its own, where organized, communal efforts are put in place in an attempt to create a healthy environment conducive to youths' successful transition to adulthood (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a; Bialeschki et al., 2007; Garst et al., 2011; MacNeil, 2006).

Historically, youth development has been approached from a precautionary angle. To date, the bulk of youth outcomes research is dedicated to intervention and prevention of high-risk behavior in adolescents, including substance abuse, violence, pregnancy, and suicide (Larson, 2000), reflected in the recommendation that preventative measures be put in place prior to the sixth grade (Seal & Seal, 2011). In this way, youth have been characterized as liabilities rather than assets, and burdensome rather than beneficial to society (MacNeil, 2006).

Worse yet, much of the research seeks to prevent high-risk behavior without asking why youth are engaging in it in the first place. Larson and Richards (1991) conducted a study in which adolescents recorded their experiences at random moments throughout the day. Self-reports of 16,000 randomly selected moments revealed that participants felt "bored" for 27% of these instances, with honors students equally as likely to report boredom as those engaging in high-risk behavior (Larson & Richards, 1991, as cited in Larson, 2000, p. 170).

On a similar note, 62% of 14 to 17 year olds agreed with the statement: "Adults criticize teens for wasting time, but adults don't realize there's not much for teens to do after school" (Roth & Brooks Gunn, 2003b, p. 94). Upon closer investigation, researchers identified factors including accessibility, expense, and transportation as possible limitations that youth face when participating in relevant youth-targeted activities (Roth & Brooks Gunn, 2003b). Other research on adolescence and boredom suggests that youths' perceived loss of control and autonomy might have a negative effect on their levels of interest in a given subject. In other words, if an adolescent boy concludes that his parents' desire for him to play baseball outweighs his interest in playing baseball, his intrinsic motivation to pursue the sport may decline, resulting in boredom. Or, for example, if a teenage girl focuses on studying mathematics because she does not believe she is proficient in other disciplines, feeling limited in her choice of academic pursuit may lead to disinterest and ultimately, boredom (Sharp & Caldwell, 2005). Today, researchers posit that boredom might be a sign of a detached social and intellectual climate, rather than an indicator of psychopathic tendencies (Larson, 2000).

Social and intellectual disengagement have implications beyond adolescence. Larson (2000) explains that youth face deficits in school and leisure, lacking intrinsic motivation in academia and concentration in recreation. This discrepancy poses a problem, as traits like

initiative and independence are crucial when it comes to succeeding, particularly in Western society. Despite the importance placed on these qualities, the Western world displays a noticeable hiccup when it comes to acclimating youth to adulthood. Whereas some cultures deliberately and incrementally introduce youth to the expectations of adulthood, Western society does not (Larson, 2000). Alarming rates of young adults' unemployment, low voter turnout, and cohabitation with parents highlight the discontinuity in the transition from youth to adulthood, with *The New York Times* dubbing today's young adults "the go-nowhere generation" (Buchholz & Buchholz, 2012, p. SR4).

In light of these findings, many researchers are calling for a radical change in youth development, moving away from a deficit model of youth to a model of youth as resources/ problem-solvers (MacNeil, 2006), or positive youth development (i.e., P.Y.D.). Advocates of this youth development paradigm shift cite prevention science as inadequate, namely because it does not cultivate adolescents' skills or prepare them for adulthood (Thurber et al., 2007; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a). Moreover, research revealed that prevention-focused programs offered fewer opportunities for skill building and empowerment, whereas structured extracurricular activities provided more opportunities for initiative development (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a; Larson, 2000).

Refocusing youth development from a preventative perspective to a positive one requires a change in the way we view youth as members of society. In the past, youth have been assessed based on what they take from society; in contrast, proponents of P.Y.D. argue that youth should be assessed based on what they can contribute to society (MacNeil, 2006). While some lament the civic shortcomings of today's adolescents and young adults, more youth than ever are involved in community service (Hastings et al., 2011). Indeed, some research indicates that

activism and outreach compel youth towards positive civic identity (Klau, 2006). Still others

believe a focus on civic engagement has a greater impact on P.Y.D. outcomes than other

programs that strictly target youth development (MacNeil & McClean, 2006). In viewing youth

as productive members of society, youth are characterized as partners with their adult

counterparts, united by a desire to create and sustain a healthy community (Hastings et al., 2011).

This mutuality and common interest transforms the dominant youth leadership discourse from a

practice that is "good for youth" to a structure that is "good for all" (MacNeil, 2006, p. 35).

MacNeil (2006) cautions against grooming youth for future leadership and civic

engagement, rather than concentrating on the influence and voice they can exert today.

Emphasizing youths' future potential takes away from the positive, meaningful influence they

may have in present day society and can make leadership seem distant and abstract; the bottom

line is youth leadership is needed *now* (MacNeil & McClean, 2006). Equally unproductive is

upholding adolescence as a troubled life stage, thereby discounting youths' social capital

(Bourdieu, 1986). Such attitudes may mean that young people are "silenced and 'warehoused' in

schools or youth programs until they are old enough to join society" (MacNeil, 2006, p. 33).

Ultimately, discussions and decisions are more comprehensive, sound, and informed when youth

and adults work together in leadership roles and "organizational decision-making" (MacNeil &

McClean, 2006, p. 101).

Since the paradigm shift to P.Y.D. in the 1990's, researchers have worked to establish

measurable elements, objectives, and results (Bialeschki et al., 2007); however, obtaining

empirical evidence proves difficult due to the breadth of the field and the variety of practice.

Despite these challenges, researchers have developed preliminary youth development measures

and outcomes to target physical, emotional, intellectual, and social competence, in addition to spiritual and civic growth (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a).

Gambone and Arbreton (1997) postulate a series of categories of youth development outcomes, including physical and cognitive learning; social relationships; positive values; and positive identity. These outcomes were later grouped as either developmental supports or opportunities for growth within a youth development context (Gambone & Arbreton, 1997). On a similar thread, Henderson, Bialeschki, and James (2007b) cite the need for support (e.g., familial, communal, institutional, etc.) for youth to access opportunities for growth (e.g., physical, emotional, civic, etc.).

Today, researchers continue to emphasize the importance of support in procuring P.Y.D. outcomes. One study identified 40 principles that foster such outcomes, including support (i.e., family support, peer support, and support from other adults, including neighbors and teachers), positive values, social competencies, and empowerment. These 40 items were categorized as either internal or external aspects of youth development outcomes, thereby offering a roadmap for future youth development research (Bialeschki et al., 2007).

Lerner and colleagues (2005) proposed another set of youth development outcomes known as the five 'Cs'. These researchers believe that when opportunities for skill building, leadership, mentorship, and participation occur in a P.Y.D. environment, outcomes can be grouped under the umbrella of competence, confidence, character, connection, or caring (Bialeschki et al., 2007). Others later added an additional 'C,' compassion (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a).

Organized youth development programs and their physical settings have been analyzed in several ways. By outlining the aspects required to create positive developmental settings,

including establishing safety, structure, support, belonging, affirmative social norms, competency, skill building, and integration, the National Research Council set a standard for effective youth development programming (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a). Likewise, Roth's and Brooks-Gunn's (2003a) research evaluated programs based on their goals, atmosphere, and activities and found that participants' characteristics and sponsorship did influence individuals' experiences in youth development settings.

The paradigm shift from prevention science towards P.Y.D. is promising for the next generation of youth. Youth are more likely to grow in environments where they are supported and encouraged, rather than safeguarded and cautioned (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a). Accordingly, one of the goals of this study is to identify catalysts for positive developmental outcomes in youth.

2.3 Youth Leadership

Reminiscent of the changes in the youth development sphere, the precise definition of leadership development for youth is equally as dynamic, multilayered, and broad (Klau, 2006). In many ways, it is an extension of youth development. Researchers found more than 75% of youth development programs taught leadership training (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a). Thus, while youth development is a field that seeks to improve young people's lives and prepare them for adulthood, leadership development for youth adds an action-oriented focus to the practice. It fosters initiative and equips young people with skills to improve their lives and those around them on their journey towards adulthood (Fertman & van Linden, 1999; Klau, 2006). As such, the terms *youth development* and *youth leadership* have become so intertwined that often they are used interchangeably or even combined (i.e., youth leadership development).

Youth leadership development stems from the need for accessible, structured youth programming (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a). Here, young people voluntarily participate in skill building activities, cultivating leadership in healthy, positive, and supportive environments (Thurber et al., 2007). One group of researchers summarized youth leadership as the process of effectively exchanging, respectfully challenging, and positively influencing ideas (Klau, 2006). Fertman and van Linden (1999) elaborate, outlining three stages of youth leadership development. In these three stages, youth progress from awareness of their strengths and competencies to dynamic social interactions and finally, to mastery, where youth transfer and apply their skills (Fertman & van Linden, 1999).

While adult leadership literature is prevalent, youth leadership discourse is not, resulting in a forgotten subset within the discipline. Interestingly, one noticeable difference in the literature is the emphasis of authority in adult leadership, in contrast to the youth leadership focus on ability and potential. MacNeil (2006) addresses this disconnect, stating that in order for youth leadership to be a worthwhile pursuit, the gap between adult leadership development literature focusing on authority (i.e., doing) needs to be bridged with the youth leadership development literature emphasizing ability (i.e., learning). For MacNeil (2006) "authority" encompasses the participatory, active, and experiential aspects of learning leadership skills by providing "opportunities for developing and practicing voice, influence, and decision-making" (p. 40). In this way, MacNeil (2006) differentiates between learning *about* leadership and learning leadership. Youth leadership, therefore, is not a haphazard outcome, but a developmental experience rooted in application (Fertman & van Linden, 1999).

Youth leadership development is a division of leadership development that has experienced substantial change in theory and practice over the last 100 years. Popular in the early

1900s, leadership philosophies including "great-man" theories and trait-theories worked to uncover the elusive, individual qualities of leaders. For many of the early 20th century thinkers, leadership was considered innate, meaning effective leaders could be identified early in life. By the mid-1900s, the focus of leadership development had shifted to a contextual, applied, and theoretical investigation. Here, leadership was viewed as institutionally, organizationally, and communally based, rather than as an individualistic, autonomous, and sovereign entity. In its most recent shift, leadership ideology has emerged that concentrates on the relational components of leadership, asserting its co-dependent nature (MacNeil, 2006). Bolman and Deal (1997) emphasize the importance of the relationship between a leader and his/her follower(s), insisting that very notion of leadership hinges on this dynamic.

Similar to Bolman and Deal (1997), several contemporary leadership theorists posit that leadership is relational, not autonomous (MacNeil, 2006). Relational-cultural theory states that youth gravitate toward interdependence as they mature, rather than independence, highlighting the need for meaningful relationships in the lives of youth and adults alike (Henderson et al., 2007b). By extension, developmental systems theory contends that these codependent relationships, both between other people and various contexts, are bidirectional. In this way, youth are in a constant state of flux, indicating dynamic development and plasticity. In essence, youths' behavior and views change based on who and what they interact with, which suggests that an effective P.Y.D. organization can have a transformative impact on their lives. As such, youth have unbridled potential for positive development and systematic change (Lerner et al., 2005).

The emphasis on the co-dependent aspects of leadership has had repercussions in the youth leadership development field. Researchers often clarify that youth leadership is not an

individual skillset, but a shared responsibility and an untapped, universal potential among adolescents (Fertman & van Linden, 1999; Thomas, 1996). They contend that because leadership is relational, it is not confined to the academic world, rather it extends to everyday adolescent activities. In short, following this logic, youth can be leaders by taking an active role in student government or simply by organizing a group hangout at the mall on a weekend. Critics argue that this comprehensive, multi-dimensional, relational nature of leadership has created a confused, misinformed youth leadership culture (Klau, 2006).

In one study, Klau (2006) conducted research on youth leadership initiatives through three separate site visits. He found that two national programs, the National Leadership Conference (i.e., N.L.C.) and the Institute for Justice and Leadership (i.e., I.J.L.), had inconsistent, unclear, and uninformed notions of leadership at the heart of their mission statements. He notes, "It is remarkable that so much infrastructure, manpower, and effort goes into an educational endeavor that is so amorphous at its core" (Klau, 2006, p. 79-80). Klau (2006) continues, citing the results of a 10-year study that targeted youth development organizations and their outcomes. Findings indicated inconsistencies between implemented youth leadership education initiatives and the actual needs, desires, and interests of youth. Youth leadership theories and programming, he argued, should not be mutually exclusive (Klau, 2006).

Although it is a worthwhile pursuit, youth leadership has a long way to go. It is clear that youth leadership needs to articulate its goals in a way that meets youths' needs and engages their interests (Klau, 2006). With this in mind, it is my aim as a researcher to explore the untapped potential of youth leadership as a discipline and to gain a better understanding of what youth believe constitutes best practice within this domain.

2.4 Summer Camp

Aims to better youths' physical, emotional, intellectual, psychological, social, and educational well-being through skill building are among the central pursuits of youth development programming (Bialeschki et al., 2007). As previously discussed, research and theory suggest that attaining these overarching goals requires more than a prevention science approach, but rather the provision of multidimensional opportunities for growth. One such educational organization and social movement that historically achieves and exceeds P.Y.D. objectives is the institution of summer camp (Thurber et al., 2007).

Summer camp or simply *camp*, as referenced throughout this paper, is known as a seasonal (i.e., summer-specific), youth organization that incorporates 1) "Community living," 2) "Away from home," and 3) "In an outdoor, recreational setting," which Thurber, Scanlin, Scheuler, and Henderson (2007) refer to as "the trinity of organized camping" (p. 242). While a substantial amount of variation exists in camp missions, designs, and content (Thurber et al., 2007), the vast majority of summer camps offer an array of structured, participatory, challenging, and voluntary activities, making it an ideal setting for P.Y.D. (Larson, 2000). Seemingly paradoxical, camps are able to pose risks in a safe environment, cultivate mastery by teaching new skills, and create a sense of family while being away from home. They are characterized as unique, positive, holistic experiences for campers and staff alike. As such, summer camp has become a childhood staple for many youth and subsequently, a critical catalyst of P.Y.D. (Thurber et al., 2007).

Summer camps are considered by many to be the pinnacle of P.Y.D. Conventional wisdom has perpetuated this belief and now research and theory are helping to substantiate it. Lead researchers in the field have identified elements of positive identity (e.g., independence,

self-determination, self-confidence, self-esteem, etc.); higher order thinking (e.g., problem-solving, critical thinking, decision-making, delegation, etc.); social skills (e.g., social comfort, peer relationships, mutual aid, communication, etc.); curiosity (e.g., adventure, exploration, etc.); morality and ethics (e.g., positive values, spirituality, etc.); environmental awareness; and leadership in summer camp settings (Henderson et al., 2007a; Collins, 2006; Bialeschki et al., 2007; Thurber et al., 2007; Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008). Camp staff, parents of campers, and campers themselves report gains in each of these fields, a substantial amount of which is sustained over time (Thurber et al., 2007).

With 12,000 locations serving between 10 and 12 million children a year in the United States alone (Thurber et al., 2007; Henderson et al., 2007a), summer camp is the "social institution that touches more [children's] lives than any other" apart from schools (Garst et al., 2011, p. 73). Organized summer camp took root more than 100 years ago in response to parents' growing concerns that children were too far removed from nature (Henderson et al., 2007a). Fearing health repercussions as a byproduct of industrialization, community members began to create programs in which youth could escape from technology and pollution (Sweatman & Heintzman, 2004).

Restoration and nature remain key elements in summer camps, with 93% of residential camps and 63% of day camps nestled in "nature-based settings" (Garst et al., 2011, p. 76). To this day, campers credit camp experiences with instilling healthy habits, including improved diet, exercise, and sleep (Dworken, 1999, as cited in Henderson et al., 2007a). Continued urbanization coupled with environmental destruction has spurred new research, theories, and changes in camp practice. Louv (2008) believes that children's behavioral problems stem from their ecological exodus, a phenomenon he refers to as nature deficit disorder. For Louv (2008), parents who

pacify their children's misbehavior with media exacerbate the negative effects associated with nature deficit disorder. Other researchers suggest social ecology as a model for understanding how physical and social environments impact decision-making. Similar to nature deficit disorder, social ecology posits that the environment affects individuals' behavior and well-being (Henderson et al., 2007a).

In response to industrialization and the toll it takes on psychological health, Kaplan and Talbot (1983) proposed a theory of restorative environments (as cited in Sweatman & Heintzman, 2004). Here, factors found in natural environments offer renewal and increased well-being, including retreat, fascination, coherence, and compatibility. Research demonstrates that natural environments do indeed reduce stress and procure restorative outcomes. Out of all three approaches, nature deficit disorder, social ecology, and Kaplan and Talbot's (1983) theory of restorative environments, Kaplan and Talbot (1983) appear to have the most empirical evidence to substantiate their claims (Hartig, Mang & Evans, 1991).

Summer camps have been shown to provide psychological benefits (Sweatman & Heintzman, 2004). One study of 191 campers with emotional/behavioral disorders found that campers' manifest anxiety significantly decreased following a 10-day stay at a residential, therapeutic summer camp; however, a specific correlation between this decrease and time spent in nature was not demonstrated. On the other hand, research findings do allude to a link between P.Y.D. outcomes and setting, although more research is needed to gain a greater understanding of this relationship (Bialeschki et al., 2007).

With the fallout from urbanization still a prevalent concern among parents, camps found a new market between 1920 and 1950. As many prepared for combat, military pursuits and patriotism rekindled interest in the camping industry. Shortly thereafter, the 1960s and '70s

ignited the camp movement yet again with cultural trends sparking a newfound fascination with restorative, natural experiences (Thurber et al., 2007). Recently, camp has regained momentum and has come to the forefront of youth development literature with advocates of outdoor education, values education, and physical education propelling it forward (Henderson et al., 2005). Furthermore, modern-day parental dilemmas, including working families' need for childcare, youths' dietary and health concerns, and children's access to uncensored media/technology, have played a role in the resurgence of camp research (Thurber et al., 2007).

Although studies suggest that both camp staff and campers benefit from summer camp experiences, this paper focuses on how camp impacts youth participants (i.e., campers). Research indicates that the vast majority of participants and their families characterize summer camp as a positive experience (Thurber et al., 2007). In fact, one study conducted over three years that surveyed over 5,000 families from 80 American Camp Association (i.e., A.C.A.) accredited camps asked campers to rate their camp experience between 0 (i.e., "terrible") and 10 (i.e., "excellent") yielded an average score of 8.79 (Burkhardt et al., 2005, as cited in Bialeschki et al., 2007, p. 769). This result led researchers to conclude that participants generally considered camp to be an enjoyable experience (Burkhardt et al., 2005, as cited in Bialeschki et al., 2007). Even more remarkable are the results from Sweatman and Heintzman's (2004) study in which all of the participants surveyed indicated enjoyment and personal development during camp. Interestingly, the select few who report disliking camp often have not been accurately paired with a program that targets their interests, needs, or talents (Thurber et al., 2007). Scholar Anne Rinn (2006) puts it best: "Some students may not benefit from summer programs, certainly, but those students who do participate seem to experience noteworthy gains" (p. 72).

Surprisingly, children's camp enjoyment and their resulting developmental outcomes may not be one in the same (Bialeschki et al., 2007). When asked to rate their overall camp experience, where 0 indicated "terrible" and 10 indicated "excellent," data analysis did not reveal a significant relationship between camp enjoyment and personal growth (i.e., positive identity; social skills; physical and thinking skills; and positive values and spirituality) (Thurber et al., 2007, p. 251). It seems that an enjoyable camp experience does not guarantee positive developmental outcomes and therefore, should not be the only factor taken into consideration when designing, implementing, or evaluating a youth development program (Bialeschki et al., 2007).

While camp enjoyment does not appear to be unique to a select demographic, certain populations seem to report greater gains than others. A parent pre-/post-test showed that older children (i.e., 11 years and older) demonstrated more positive change than their younger counterparts (Henderson et al., 2007b). Research conducted by Bialeschki and colleagues (2007) posited that being female, Caucasian, and/or older (i.e., 14 to18 years old) was correlated with self-reports indicating a positive camp experience. By contrast, Thurber, Scanlin, Scheuler and Henderson (2007) found no association between gender, ethnicity, and P.Y.D. outcomes. Returning to camp (i.e., children who had attended camp for four or more years) was an additional factor that appeared to be related to more positive camp experiences (Bialeschki et al., 2007). Researchers suggest that campers who have the most to gain demonstrate the greatest gains; in other words, those who had the lowest self-reported scores pre-camp had the largest margins of growth post-camp. In sum, while most youth benefit from camp experiences, more research is needed to solidify demographic links with P.Y.D. outcomes (Thurber et al., 2007).

Camp outcomes are not limited to the duration of the camp experience or even the immediate period thereafter; summer camp can yield long-term outcomes (Thomas, 1996). Researchers, campers, campers' parents, and staff alike have noted long-term benefits that exceed expected maturation and normal child development (Thurber et al., 2007). Researchers speculate that this is in part due to the intensity and concentration of the camp experience (Thomas, 1996) and its unique combination of communal living and isolation from the outside world (Bialeschki et al., 2007). In one study, campers, campers' parents, and staff from 80 A.C.A. accredited camps were asked about positive growth in campers. All parties cited significant, sustained growth in a variety of areas, including positive identity; social skills; physical and thinking skills; and positive values and spirituality. Campers' parents and campers reported that specific outcomes, such as leadership and independence, had additional significant gains up to six months after a given camp session (Thurber et al., 2007).

When it comes to facilitating and producing positive camp outcomes, researchers have long asked: What matters and why? Pinpointing specific structural components that facilitate positive camp outcomes is difficult in part because of the challenge researchers face in isolating variables and eliminating outside influences (Henderson et al., 2007a). Ultimately, researchers are divided on what constitutes best practice when it comes to camp programs' structure, purpose, and duration.

Program activities are perhaps camps' biggest attraction (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a). Typically categorized as either structured/formal or unstructured/informal, camp is unique in that it includes both types of activities, even blending the two at times (Garst et al., 2011). Structured youth activities encompass the vast majority of adolescents' organized extra-curricular endeavors, including most sports, arts, and volunteer programs. They are credited with

integrating intrinsic motivation, attention (Larson, 2000), experiential learning, and choice (Garst et al., 2011), thereby acting as a catalyst for P.Y.D. (Larson, 2000). Research suggests that structured activities may be conducive to the development of initiative (Larson, 2000), self-directed learning (Dynan, Cate & Rhee, 2010), academic success, and social competence (Fletcher, Nickerson & Wright, 2003).

Unstructured activities are equally formative when it comes to the camp experience. Perhaps counter-intuitively, researchers report that unstructured, informal activities can be used intentionally to cultivate positive developmental outcomes, such as social self-confidence (Garst et al., 2011). In contrast, unstructured time can be allocated for personal reflection away from others. One camp study found that participants who engaged in voluntary, unstructured, individual activities (e.g., writing, drawing, etc.) reported enjoyment in exercising choice and having opportunities to reflect (Sweatman, & Heintzman, 2004).

When it comes to deliberate, intentional camp programming, there are two schools of thought: put simply, one that claims it matters, the other that claims it does not. The former argues that in order for camp to produce positive developmental outcomes, opposed to simply a "fun" experience, clear goals need to be established (Lishner & Myers, 1997, as cited in Henderson et al., 2005, p. 1). This notion is founded on the belief that when sound theory meets effective practice, particularly in camp staff training, positive developmental outcomes are procured (Klau, 2006; Henderson et al., 2007b).

Marsh (1999) affirms the need for clarity and intentionality. His research showed that camps with intentional programming were more likely to produce desired developmental outcomes, particularly increased self-constructs such as self-esteem, than camps without explicit goals (as cited in Thurber et al., 2007). Many cite this study in their recommendations for

intentional programming, cautioning that the lack thereof may undermine positive developmental outcomes (Klau, 2006).

On the other end of the spectrum are those who question the extent to which deliberate programming impacts camp outcomes. In one study, researchers asked camp directors whether or not they had explicit program goals and, if so, to articulate them. Later, directors and campers were asked to identify developmental outcomes resulting from their camp experiences. Data analysis did not reveal a relationship between program intentionality and developmental outcomes (Henderson et al., 2005). Taking a different approach, Henderson and colleagues (2005) later incorporated campers' parents' perspectives and reached the same conclusion: intentional, explicit programming was not correlated to specific positive developmental outcomes. Without a solid link, researchers face challenges in determining which program elements yield positive camp outcomes (Henderson et al., 2005).

Similar to the question of intentionality, researchers are divided on whether or not the length of camp programs influences P.Y.D. outcomes. Thurber, Scanlin, Scheuler, and Henderson (2007) reported findings that indicate cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual growth for campers who spent at least one week at camp. Another study found that residential camp sessions of four weeks or more are linked to optimal camp experiences, but did not address positive developmental outcomes (Bialeschki et al., 2007). In contrast, Henderson and colleagues (2005) did not find any association between the duration of camp programs and positive developmental outcomes.

Summer camp is a youth organization that is characterized by many as unique, positive, and transformative (Thurber et al., 2007; Henderson et al., 2007a). As such, it is ideal for P.Y.D.

(Thurber et al., 2007). Gaining a better understanding of these positive developmental outcomes in youth and the contexts conducive to facilitating them is at the heart of this study.

2.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed the conceptual framework utilized in this study. It was comprised of three domains: 1) "Youth development," 2) "Youth leadership," and 3) "Summer camp." "Youth development" discussed the structural components that contribute to positive developmental outcomes in youth. "Youth leadership" situated leadership as a youth initiative and addressed the discrepancy between teaching youth leadership skills and empowering adults with leadership skills. "Summer camp" explored camp as a positive, transformative institution for youth. Together, these bodies of literature informed my research and set the scene for my study.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology utilized in this study. It details my research process in a number of ways, including revisiting my research questions; articulating my research design and the L.I.T. program's design; framing contexts of the study (i.e., setting and participants); explaining data refinement (i.e., collection and analysis); disclosing ethical considerations; and substantiating trustworthiness and credibility.

3.1 Study Overview

The purpose of this study is to explore adolescents' experiences at Waycross Camp, specifically its Leaders-in-Training (L.I.T.) program, and their perceptions of leadership. This study seeks to understand how a formative youth leadership development education initiative implemented in a residential summer camp setting contributes to the overall L.I.T. program. My research aims evolved as my study progressed, ultimately posing the following research question and sub-questions:

- How has Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program informed participants' notions of leadership?
  - How do external factors (i.e., location, peers, or staff) contribute to Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program participants' camp experience?
  - What do participants value about Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program?
  - How has Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program influenced participants since the program's completion?

3.2 Research Design

For this study, I used a qualitative research design for several reasons. When considering the purpose of my research, I knew that I wanted to understand how participants made meaning out of their L.I.T. experience; how a residential summer camp context contributed to participants' thoughts and actions; and how individual L.I.T. experiences complemented or contrasted with program objectives (Maxwell, 2013). Because I sought to answer "how" questions, rather than "how much" or "how many" questions (McKinney, 2000, as cited in Silverman, 2000, p. 11), qualitative research was a logical approach to examine meaning making, context, and processes (Maxwell, 2013).

I chose to view data through a Glaserian lens and from a Strauss and Corbin perspective (Maxwell, 2013). Glaser maintains that "all is data" and as such, the research process is enriched beyond data collected on site (Glaser, 2007, p. 1). Paired with Strauss and Corbin, who argued that personal experiences are valid paths towards contributing to literature in academia, my research was based in grounded theory (Maxwell, 2013).

Grounded theory, a term Glaser and Strauss (1967) coined, relies on induction. In grounded theory, theory is developed from data analysis and research findings, rather than the former framing the latter (Maxwell, 2013, p.237). In other words, I wrote my literature review and developed my conceptual framework *after* I conducted qualitative interviews and analyzed my data through constant comparison inquiry. The purpose of this research approach was to explore the contextual elements that contributed to participants' L.I.T. experience without other researchers or theorists priming my findings (Maxwell, 2013; Crooks, 2001).

In addition to grounded theory, I used a constructivist lens to guide my data analysis. Constructivism holds that all of our interpretations are subjective and partial to our experiences,

realities, values, etc. (Maxwell, 2013, p. 43). By employing this lens, the purpose of my research

was not to unearth definitive truths, but to understand how participants interpreted and made

meaning out of their varied L.I.T. experiences. Consequently, while induction and grounded

theory were at the core of my study, influences beyond my control, including "subjectivity and

multiple realities," undoubtedly affected participants' responses and my data analysis (Butler-

Kisber, 2010, p. 26).

3.3 Setting

Initially, my research setting began at Waycross Camp, a small, Christian residential summer

camp situated in southern Indiana. Here in June 2012, 20 participants, also referred to as L.I.T.s,

completed Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program.

The data collection portion of my study took place outside of camp through telephone

interviews with participants. I maintained contact with Waycross Camp's Executive Director and

Director during the research process and consulted them on certain aspects of my study (e.g.,

whether or not to include Waycross Camp's name in my final paper, etc.). Upon the completion

of my thesis, I will come full-circle by returning to Waycross Camp to meet with the Executive

Director and Director to discuss my aggregated research findings. Participants' privacy and

confidentiality rights were protected throughout the various stages of my research and were not

revealed to any camp staff or personnel.

3.4 Participants

My participant population was identified through purposeful selection, with my central criterion

for selection based on participants' completion of Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program in June

2012. Other criteria for selection included signed consent forms from parents/guardians of

underage participants (i.e., minors under the age of 18; see Appendix C: Parent/Guardian

Consent Form), and participants' verbal and signed consent to be audiotaped during the interview (see Appendix D: Participant Consent Form).

All L.I.T.s who expressed an interest in participating in my study were given the opportunity to do so. Of the 20 American, Midwestern high school students ranging from 16 to 18 years of age who participated in L.I.T. in 2012, 10 took part in my study. All of those with whom I communicated who chose not to take part in my research cited busy academic and/or athletic schedules as their main reason to opt out of my study. Additionally, many of these same students informed me that they were applying to colleges at the time I was conducting my interviews, which added to their academic workloads, reduced their free time, and posed interview scheduling constraints.

For recruitment purposes, I mailed each of the 20 L.I.T.s a packet, including an introductory letter to L.I.T.s and their families; a cover letter written by Waycross Camp's Executive Director; and participant and parent/guardian consent forms (see Appendix A: Waycross Camp Participant Recruitment Cover Letter; Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Letter; Appendix C: Parent/Guardian Consent Form; and Appendix D: Participant Consent Form). Prior to their interviews, each of the 10 participants returned their participant consent form and parent/guardian consent form if necessary (i.e., if the participant was under the age of 18), in which they were assured anonymity and confidentiality. They did not receive compensation for their participation in this study.

Participants registered for Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program online or by phone largely based on an interest in leadership development (e.g., a desire to work as a camp counselor at Waycross Camp or another facility, to apply for a student leadership position at their respective high schools, etc.) and/or based on the desire to continue a relationship with Waycross Camp.

Although participants came from varied socioeconomic backgrounds and family structures, the vast majority of them were familiar with Waycross Camp prior to attending L.I.T. Most were well rounded, socially adept, high achieving, college bound, and involved in at least one extracurricular activity, as indicated during their interviews. Of these 20 L.I.T.s, two had never previously attended Waycross Camp. A gender imbalance was apparent, with 17 girls and three boys attending L.I.T. in 2012. This gender discrepancy found in Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program was not unusual; likewise, after completing the program, more female L.I.T.s typically go on to apply for Waycross Camp counselor positions than male L.I.T.s. As such, a gender imbalance may have skewed my findings and should be taken into consideration in future research endeavors.

The small size of my participant pool meant that any identifiable information (e.g., age, gender, etc.) obtained through interviews was omitted from my aggregated research findings in order to ensure participants' confidentiality rights. Based on the order in which they were interviewed, participants were assigned a letter A through J. Upon the conclusion of my data collection, L.I.T.s were given a gender-neutral pseudonym based on the letter they were assigned (e.g., the first participant I interviewed, Participant A, is referred to throughout this paper as "August"). Designating a gender-neutral pseudonym was key due to the gender imbalance among L.I.T. program participants.

3.5 L.I.T. Program Design

This study focused on describing the experiences of individuals who participated in a five-day Leaders-in-Training (L.I.T.) program in June 2012 at an American residential summer camp. L.I.T. is an annual Waycross Camp specialty program geared towards adolescents in grades nine through 12. Waycross Camp provides a description of this program as follows:

Learn to develop necessary skills for future leadership roles in a camp setting.

Understand a counselor's role in taking initiative, in decision-making, and in group

leadership. Review and understand associated duties and responsibilities. Learn how to

set and attain group goals and identify personal strengths and talents that contribute to a

well-balanced team of leaders. The low ropes experiential course and the climbing tower

and zip line help to instill personal growth and confidence as well as teach teamwork

(Waycross Camp and Conference Center, 2011, para. 8, 9).

Although Waycross Camp's L.I.T. session had been up and running for several years, I

was the first facilitator to organize, develop, and implement a structured form of course work for

the program, a limitation I will address in more depth in Chapter Six. The design of the L.I.T.

program was threefold, with time designated for group activities, formal curriculum, and skill

application. The program targeted four aspects of leadership, including responsible leadership

(e.g., conflict management, safety, etc.), intelligent leadership (e.g., emotional intelligence,

Maslow's hierarchy of needs, etc.), motivational leadership (e.g., locus of control, intrinsic and

extrinsic motivation, etc.), and servant leadership (e.g., faith, stewardship, etc.) (Martin, 2012).

In this way, leadership was presented pedagogically to program participants in a variety of ways,

emphasizing the breadth of the field in an organized forum.

3.6 Data Collection

Several data sets were collected for my study. As previously mentioned, the main data set was

collected off-site through scheduled telephone interviews. These interviews were conducted after

participants had returned their consent form(s) (see Appendix C: Parent/Guardian Consent Form

and Appendix D: Participant Consent Form).

In sum, out of 11 scheduled interviews, 10 interviews were conducted. One L.I.T. who expressed interest and returned the required consent forms was unable to participate in my study due to a heavy academic workload. Interviews were conducted in October and November of 2013. The shortest interview lasted 11 minutes and 26 seconds and the longest interview lasted 41 minutes and 20 seconds. Once all interviews were conducted, I wrote thank you notes to all 10 L.I.T. participants expressing my gratitude for their time, candor, and willingness to participate in my research.

Each interview was conducted individually. I chose not to conduct follow-up interviews for a couple of reasons: not all participants were available for a second interview and I did not have any additional questions for participants at that time. Participants were informed of their rights at the beginning and conclusion of the interview, including their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Participants were asked a series of open-ended questions from an interview protocol (see Appendix E: Interview Guide). This protocol helped to standardize my interviews and kept participants focused on the questions at hand. The questions were divided into four categories, echoing my research questions and sub-questions. These four categories were created in an effort to guide participants' interviews, keep participants on track, and allow time for elaboration, when appropriate.

The four categories of open-ended questions included, 1) "An overview," 2) "The camp experience," 3) "Notions of leadership," and 4) "Program application/value." Overview questions focused on participants' perceptions of the L.I.T. program. Camp experience questions explored the influence of external factors (i.e., location, peers, or staff). Notions of leadership questions asked about participants' understanding of what it meant to be a leader. Finally,

program application/value questions centered on the degree of transferability and applicability of skills acquired and/or refined during the L.I.T. program.

In qualitative research, analysis is an ongoing process that begins when the study is conceived, thereby going beyond mere data collection. To begin my data analysis, I transcribed each interview upon its completion. Transcription proved to be a difficult process, particularly in accounting for non-verbal cues and subtleties (e.g., pauses, laughter, sighs, use of emphasis, etc.). To account for these nuances, I listened to each interview in full prior to and after each transcription. Pauses, laughter, and sighs were indicated in parentheses and any use of emphasis was italicized in the transcriptions.

After transcribing each interview, I wrote a reflective memo in order to record my thoughts and ideas. Reflective memos are "short statements written regularly and reflexively" that document what is happening throughout the research process (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 20). I approached writing reflexive memos with intentionality, transparency, and openness, acknowledging my observations, assumptions, and impressions. Through this process, I was able to chronicle my reflections and refer back to specific stages of my research. The following excerpt is from a reflexive memo I wrote after conducting Blair's interview:

> For Blair, having friends present during L.I.T., particularly Emerson, was distracting at times; however for Blair, the pros of having peers as friends present during L.I.T. outweighed the cons. Despite the distraction, Blair felt that group cohesion was critical, particularly for future staff unity, as many of the L.I.T.s had the intention of applying to be Waycross Camp counselors in the near future. The notion that having peers as friends was beneficial rather than detrimental to the learning process was surprising to me,

particularly as it seemed to be a recurring theme throughout my interviews (K. Martin, reflexive memo, October 5, 2013).

Writing memos also helped me track the progression of my interview techniques:

As previously noted, my interview with Casey was similar to other early interviews in which I stuck closely to the interview script without asking detailed follow-up questions. During my first interview, when August did not answer the question - When you think of leadership, what five words or terms come to mind? - I did not even repeat the question, because I thought I had to stick exactly to the interview protocol. As a result, my early interviews were shorter and the data I gathered were more limited than those of my final interviews (K. Martin, reflexive memo, October 5, 2013).

As I was new to qualitative research, naturally I faced difficulties throughout my data analysis. My primary challenge, discussed in these reflective memos and later discussed in Chapter Six, was learning how to conduct interviews by asking follow-up questions, simultaneously allowing the conversation to ebb and flow, but being careful not to dominate the interview or coax certain responses.

3.7 Data Analysis

After conducting and transcribing interviews, I used constant comparison inquiry, based on grounded theory, to analyze my data thematically (Butler-Kisber, 2010). The constant comparison approach is an inductive form of analysis that blends an exploratory research process, unguided by a priori hypotheses, with systematic, methodical approaches to data collection and analysis. As mentioned earlier, in this approach, interview questions are open-ended with an emphasis on understanding how participants make meaning out of a given situation/context (Qualitative Data Analysis [QDA] Training, 2012).

While constant comparison inquiry required me to dissect complex ideas and to identify specific concepts, it is a holistic approach to research that is fluid, contextual, and ongoing (Butler-Kisber, 2010, pp. 26, 30). In working with my data, I unitized verbatim transcriptions from interviews with participants and placed them into descriptive categories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in QDA Training, 2012). Table 3.1 provides an example from my research of how I extracted key points from unitized data (i.e., verbatim transcriptions from interviews with participants), which were later organized into categories using rules of inclusion (i.e., defining criteria).

Table 3.1

Example of Unitized Data and Notes for Rules of Inclusion

Examples of unitized data	Examples of notes for rules of inclusion
But one thing that I took away from it that was really *beautiful… is you can go back there and meet the same people - at this place where, you know, different conferences over the summers, if you want.* (August, 10/04/2013)	Emphasis on consistency; familiarity; comfort; positive social climate; meaningful relationships
But I think being with everyone there was helpful, because that - those are the people that, if we all were on staff together, that would be the group of people it would be. (Blair, 10/05/2013)	Emphasis on group activities; togetherness; united by a shared/common goal
I think it helped because you're out, like, in the woods. I don't know, just kind of in nature and not in, like - taking - you're taking, like, a break from the real world, I guess, and just kind of helping you, like, focusing in on what you're learning. (Emerson, 10/19/2013)	Emphasis on nature; atypical/distinct experience; respite; retreat; removal from distractions/stressors

Once this process was complete, I examined the relationships within these descriptive categories and collapsed or expanded them accordingly. When these categories were saturated, I focused on uncovering conceptual themes through thematic analysis (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Table 3.2 provides an example of this process taken from my research.

Table 3.2

Example of Notes for Rules of Inclusion, Descriptive Categories, and Conceptual Theme

Notes for rules of inclusion	Descriptive categories	Conceptual theme
Consistency; familiarity; comfort; positive social climate; meaningful relationships	Building connections	
Group activities; togetherness; united by a shared/common goal	Sharing experiences	Bridging the gap
Nature; atypical/distinct experience; respite; retreat; removal from distractions/stressors	Separating from the outside world	

Through this analytic process, 12 distinct descriptive categories surfaced. As previously

mentioned, after unitizing the data, I provided each category with its own definition, also known

as a rule of inclusion. My rules of inclusion acted as a guide for the placement of data excerpts.

For example, for the category, "Building connections," I wrote the following rule of inclusion:

"The data excerpts reflect participants' emphasis on the importance of developing meaningful

relationships." Discussed in greater depth in Chapter Four, data excerpts placed in this category

included the following:

> *Well, since it was, like, people that I've been to camp with before, also other people, I think it was good to, like, get to know some people that I haven't been as close with before.* (Emerson, 10/19/2013)

> *... It was a good environment to learn it in with a group of my peers and really close friends.* (Dana, 10/13/2013)

Grouped into sets of three, these categories defined four themes.

In the final stage of my analysis, after much reflection, I realized that each theme yielded

a distinct outcome; in other words, each theme fostered a unique attribute that nurtured youth as

L.I.T. program participants, leaders, and individuals. To identify outcomes, I examined verbatim transcriptions from participant interviews to see what each conceptual theme produced or procured. For example, for the theme, "Bridging the gap," its outcome, "Community," included the following data excerpt:

> *And - that, for me, is more the spiritual element… the getting to know the other person on that deep level and - (pause) - you know, having just a short amount of time with them, but still, basically they'll be friends for life - is what makes it - (pause) - special.* (Dana, 10/13/2013)

Outcomes and their processes are discussed in greater depth in the following chapter.

Discussed in greater depth in Chapter Four, my first theme, "Bridging the gap," consisted of three categories: 1) "Building connections," 2) "Sharing experiences," and 3) "Separating from the outside world." Based on my interpretation of the data, when participants *bridge the gap*, a sense of "Community" emerges as a central outcome.

My second theme, "Giving permission to be human," consisted of three categories: 1) "Providing psychosocial and emotional safety," 2) "Starting with a clean slate," and 3) "Validating your true self." Based on my interpretation of the data, when participants *give one another permission to be human*, a sense of "Openness" emerges as a central outcome.

My third theme, "Rolling up your sleeves," consisted of three categories: 1) "Taking initiative," 2) "Taking control," and 3) "Rallying the troops." Based on my interpretation of the data, when participants *roll up their sleeves*, a sense of "Empowerment" emerges as a central outcome.

My fourth theme, "Serving the greater good," consisted of three categories: 1) "Working behind the scenes," 2) "Considering other points of view," and 3) "Finding a happy medium." Based on my interpretation of the data, when participants *serve the greater good*, a sense of

"Character" emerges as a central outcome. Table 3.3 outlines the criteria I used to support my

each of my four themes, including categories, rules of inclusion, and outcomes.

Table 3.3

Rules of Inclusion for Participant Themes

Categories	Rules of inclusion: The data excerpts	Theme	Outcome
Building connections	… reflect participants' emphasis on the importance of developing meaningful relationships	Bridging the gap	Community
Sharing experiences	… reflect the bonds created among participants based on activities done together		
Separating from the outside world	… reflect the effects of an immersive experience on participants		
Providing psychosocial and emotional safety	… reflect participants' need for a judgment-free space	Giving permission to be human	Openness
Starting with a clean slate	… reflect participants' desire to begin anew with equal footing		
Validating your true self	… reflect the effects of affirmation on participants' expressions of self-worth and authenticity		
Taking initiative	… reflect participants' proactive dispositions	Rolling up your sleeves	Empowerment
Taking control	… reflect participants' ability to exercise choice and command		
Rallying the troops	… reflect the impact of morale, energy, and enthusiasm on participants		
Working behind the scenes	… reflect the value participants placed on serving others without seeking credit or attention	Serving the greater good	Character
Considering other points of view	… reflect participants' ability to listen and acknowledge different perspectives		
Finding a happy medium	… reflect participants' desire to strike a balance while avoiding extremes		

3.8 Ethical Considerations

In order to conduct my study, I applied to and received approval from two divisions of McGill University's Research Ethics Board (i.e., R.E.B), one that specialized in my faculty of study and another that reviewed research proposals involving minors. Prior to conducting my research, I met with Waycross Camp's Executive Director and Director informally. Together, we collaborated on a written agreement outlining my research process and discussed the creation of a cover letter addressing all 20 former L.I.T.s and their families, in which we would explain my research and Waycross Camp's involvement (see Appendix A: Waycross Camp Participant Recruitment Cover Letter and Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Letter).

Participants were informed in a variety of ways that their involvement (or lack thereof) in my study would not affect their present or future relationship with Waycross Camp. The Executive Director and I conveyed this to participants in separate letters (see Appendix A: Waycross Camp Participant Recruitment Cover Letter and Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Letter). I also indicated this on parent/guardian and participant consent forms (see Appendix C: Parent/Guardian Consent Form and Appendix D: Participant Consent Form) and I reiterated this at the beginning of each audiotaped interview (see Appendix E: Interview Guide).

As previously mentioned, all L.I.T.s who expressed an interest in participating in my research, who were available to schedule an interview, and who returned their consent forms were interviewed. In addition to the separate letters the Executive Director and I sent, explanations of participants' confidentiality rights and participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time were outlined in consent forms and stated at the beginning and completion of each interview (see Appendix C: Parent/Guardian Consent Form and Appendix D: Participant Consent Form).

I held participants' confidentiality and privacy rights in the utmost regard in order to minimize potential harms and risks. Any identifiable information was not and will not be released. Identifiable data were securely stored electronically, shared only with my academic supervisors, and destroyed once pseudonyms were assigned.

3.9 Trustworthiness and Credibility

In qualitative research, trustworthiness constitutes validity (Reissman, 2013). A key element of validity is understanding and articulating how a researcher may be incorrect in his/her conclusions. While relative, it is also relevant as it targets the relationships between research findings and reality (Maxwell, 2013).

One critical element of trustworthiness is credibility, which is bolstered by transparency and persuasiveness. Throughout my research, my credibility was established through my adherence to grounded theory; my systematic, methodical, and consistent use of constant comparison inquiry; my varied data sources (i.e., interviews and reflexive memos); and the rigor I exercised during my data collection (e.g., attention to detail, including non-verbal cues and subtleties during interviews; the inclusion of the dates of interviews in my transcriptions and reflexive memos; etc.). Furthermore, I believe the credibility of my study was strengthened through my practice of reflexivity.

As previously indicated, when conducting qualitative research, it was important for me to step back from my research periodically to reevaluate, reassess, and reflect through a process called reflexivity. In this way, I was able to explore my relationship with my research in order to understand the construction and production of knowledge (Barry, Britten, Barbar, Bradley & Stevenson, 1999; Hsuing, 2010). In condoning self-awareness, exercising reflexivity encouraged me to acknowledge my biases, to consider how these biases impacted various facets of my

research, and to reflect on how my language, actions, and reactions affected my relationships with research participants (Hsuing, 2010). As such, I would argue that employing reflexivity helped to integrate accountability, honesty, and openness in my research practice (Day, 2012).

As a researcher and an advocate of both summer camp and youth leadership development, my choice of research topic was rooted in academic interest and personal value. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that I brought inherent biases, assumptions, and preconceptions to the table (Butler-Kisber, 2010), which in turn colored the lens through which I viewed participants, evaluated data, and drew conclusions (Hsuing, 2010). It is important to note that in acknowledging these biases, I did not apologize for them, but rather, I addressed them by writing reflexive memos and meeting with my supervisors, who questioned my assumptions and provided different perspectives throughout the research process (Butler-Kisber, 2010, pp. 14-15).

By situating myself in my study, I made an intentional effort to be transparent and candid in my research. While my personal beliefs undoubtedly influenced my decision to research this topic and the ways in which I conducted my research, the nature of qualitative research is not to find objective truths, but rather to comprehend how context has an impact on participants' meaning-making. One such context is relational, contingent on participants' interaction with the researcher, making joint knowledge construction inevitable (Hsuing, 2010).

Although my relationship with participants posed certain constraints, it was also an asset. In some cases, having known participants for several years strengthened my study, as it cultivated a comfortable, open interview dynamic. In addition, by interviewing L.I.T.s who returned their consent forms and by following an interview protocol, I was able to maximize the number of interviews conducted and to structure interview questions similarly (see Appendix C: Parent/Guardian Consent Form; Appendix D: Participant Consent Form; and Appendix E:

Interview Guide). As previously discussed, after each interview was transcribed, I wrote reflective memos documenting my personal thoughts, ideas, and reactions (Butler-Kisber, 2010). With reflexivity in mind, these intentional research practices helped to substantiate my study. Additional assets related to my study will be discussed in Chapter Six.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology employed in my study. My research sought to understand the effectiveness of formative youth leadership development education programs implemented in residential summer camps by focusing on the contributions of Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program. In this chapter, I explained why I chose qualitative inquiry and how it guided my data collection and analysis. I described the contextual factors that shaped my research (i.e., setting and participants) and acknowledged various considerations, concerns, and challenges in order to establish trustworthiness and credibility as a researcher.

Chapter Four: Participant Themes

This chapter provides an overview of the research findings that emerged from this study by organizing them into a series of themes. After an intensive process of transcribing and reviewing participants' interviews; writing reflexive memos; and unitizing and categorizing responses, I discerned four conceptual themes that emerged during my analysis. Through the use of constant comparison inquiry, categories and outcomes, reflected in participants' perceptions of Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program and their notions of leadership, developed during my data analysis. These in turn guided my rules of inclusion and supported my four themes: 1) "Bridging the gap," 2) "Giving permission to be human," 3) "Rolling up your sleeves," and 4) "Serving the greater good." Each theme offers insight into participants' perceptions of leadership, outside influences, program value, and program impact, thereby answering my research question and sub-questions.

4.1 Theme One: Bridging the Gap

Grounded in data accumulated through interviews with L.I.T.s, some themes were easier to recognize than others. My first theme, "Bridging the gap," permeated my research and dominated participants' discourse. This theme is comprised of three categories: 1) "Building connections," 2) "Sharing experiences," and 3) "Separating from the outside world." Based on my interpretation of the data, when participants *bridge the gap*, a sense of "Community" emerges as a central outcome. Table 4.1 outlines the criteria I used to support this theme, including categories, rules of inclusion, and outcome.

Table 4.1

Rules of Inclusion for Theme One: Bridging the Gap

Categories	Rules of inclusion: The data excerpts	Theme	Outcome
Building connections	… reflect participants' emphasis on the importance of developing meaningful relationships	Bridging the gap	Community
Sharing experiences	… reflect the bonds created among participants based on activities done together		
Separating from the outside world	… reflect the effects of an immersive experience on participants		

4.1.1 Building connections. One concept that emerged from my data analysis was the significance all participants placed on social dynamics, particularly on social exchanges among L.I.T.s. This multi-layered element was eventually teased out to comprise several categories. The first of these categories is "Building connections," a category I detailed in my rules of inclusion as "The data excerpts reflect participants' emphasis on the importance of developing meaningful relationships."

While at camp, L.I.T.s built connections with one another in various ways. In the most basic sense, participants built connections with one another through communication, by introducing themselves, interacting with new people, and making conversation.

Well, since it was, like, people that I've been to camp with before, also other people, I think it was good to, like, get to know some people that I haven't been as close with before. (Emerson, 10/19/2013)

Upon a closer read of this excerpt from Emerson's interview, the word "before" jumped out at me. This idea of consistency, where an individual is able to return to camp year after year

and reconvene with familiar faces, set the scene for developing meaningful relationships.

Claiming the status of a returning camper was considered a bragging right and instilled a sense of

pride and camp loyalty among program participants. L.I.T.s often tried to outdo one another in

this regard, asserting that they had attended Waycross Camp for several years more than a fellow

L.I.T. Despite competition among L.I.T.s, based on my analysis, it appeared that returning

campers generated a sense of familiarity and comfort, conducive to a positive social climate.

> *But one thing that I took away from it that was* really *beautiful… is you can go back there and meet the same people - at this place where, you know, different conferences over the summers, if you want.* (August, 10/04/2013)

> *… It was a good environment to learn it in with a group of my peers and really close friends.* (Dana, 10/13/2013)

Dana's remark in particular segues to a running comment that surfaced throughout my

interviews with participants. Surprisingly, a couple of participants stated independently of one

another that having friends present at L.I.T. did not distract them from the program's curriculum,

but rather motivated them to stay engaged with the material and active in group discussions. To

me, this is somewhat counterintuitive, as I would have expected that the presence of friends

would detract from classroom learning; however, this was not the case.

> *… You know, I think the thing with the friends was good - and it was fun to learn - (pause) - with that group of peers and also see their leadership styles and kind of learn from what other people were doing.* (Dana, 10/13/2013)

> *Um - (pause) - especially I've gotten to know all these kids - (pause) - years and years. And my best friend… we sat next to each other - I think we just had a good time, cause we're really good friends and having someone there who you're friends with absolutely helps you. Not only can you pay attention - but you - you can work together… so I think it helped me pay attention and grasp on a lot of things.* (Isa, 10/27/2013)

Isa elaborated:

> *It - cause it's kind of difficult when you're by yourself. And, like - I have to go to these leadership things… and - (pause) - you - you just, like, go alone. And you're just kind of, like, "Well - (pause) - I don't really have anything to do, I don't really know these people*

- my phone's right there and it's kind of easy to just do that - (trails off)" - but - (pause) - I really - I really enjoyed being with my friends, the people I love. (10/27/2013)

Thus, the category, "Building connections," shaped participants' experiences through meeting new people; creating a comfortable, familiar social climate; and keeping participants engaged.

4.1.2 Sharing experiences. Based on my analysis of the data, Isa and Dana suggested that the time they spent at L.I.T. was enriched by a second category that I have referred to as "Sharing experiences," which I have outlined in my rules of inclusion as "The data excerpts reflect the bonds created among participants based on activities done together." It was through these shared experiences, particularly through informal, unstructured activities (e.g., hiking to Ghost Town, going on the overnight (camp-out), etc.), that participants' relationships were strengthened.

… I - (pause) - enjoy the overnight. Cause I think - I think every camper would say - (pause) - that it is definitely when you bond with your friends. (Isa, 10/27/2013)

Um, I felt, like, there was a lot of bonding and, um, we're getting to know each other [on the overnight]… (Casey, 10/05/2013)

And cooking together and all that stuff, like, over the fire - is just, um, a really nice sense of community, I guess. (Harper, 10/27/2013)

Further elaborating, Blair offered valuable insight when it came to explaining the impact of shared experiences on interpersonal relationships. Blair believed that shared goals, particularly the goal of one day becoming a Waycross Camp counselor, gave greater depth to participants' shared experiences.

… I think because all of us wanted to go be a camp counselor, it helped a lot to be at Waycross because we could directly see what our eventual goal was going to be. You are right there in the setting, so - so it kind of gives motivation, I think. (Blair, 10/05/2013)

Blair continued, concluding:

But I think being with everyone there was helpful, because that - those are the people that, if we all were on staff together, that would be the group of people it would be. (10/05/2013)

In this way, the category, "Shared experiences," fostered new relationships, solidified old friendships, and united participants with a common goal.

4.1.3 Separating from the outside world. A third category surfaced during my analysis, which I deemed "Separating from the outside world." In my rules of inclusion, I explained this as "The data excerpts reflect the effects of an immersive experience on participants." Strikingly, out of the three categories I identified in this section, "Separating from the outside world" proved to be the most complex.

First and foremost, participants described their time at L.I.T. as distinct from their day-to-day experiences.

The overnight? Um - I don't know - I mean, sleeping in the woods is fun. (Laughs). It's something different that you never really get to do anywhere else. (Harper, 10/27/2013)

As Harper hinted, nature factored into participants' view of camp as a distinct experience, atypical of their everyday lives.

I think it helped because you're out, like, in the woods. I don't know, just kind of in nature and not in, like - taking - you're taking, like, a break from the real world, I guess, and just kind of helping you, like, focusing in on what you're learning. (Emerson, 10/19/2013)

Furthermore, when asked for feedback, several L.I.T.s stated that they wished that we had spent more time outdoors as a group during the L.I.T. program.

Yeah. But I'm, like, pretty outdoorsy, so, like - I don't know if everyone would want that. But, like - for me, at least, I do better - (pause) - like, paying attention and - having fun if I'm outside. (Harper, 10/27/2013)

Although nature played a part in the camp experience, interestingly, it did not appear to alter the camp experience to the same extent as my review of camp literature suggested. Perhaps this is because participants associated separation from technology (i.e., being without cell

phones, laptops, etc.) more with being in nature than the actual physical experience of being outdoors.

> *I like the fact that it's* really *out there in the middle - of nowhere… and, like, there isn't really any way to get ahold of you out there and I - like that it's separated.* (Francis, 10/20/2013)

> *I feel, like, a lot of different people - (pause) - can come together really well when they're at Waycross, but I don't know if that has to do with the fact that it's in the middle of nowhere and you can't get cell reception…* (Harper, 10/27/2013)

At times, separating oneself from the stressors of everyday life to come to camp meant more than parting with technology. For Emerson and Isa, separation brought with it a sense of relief, respite, and retreat.

> *And, like, since it's, like, a different set of friends than I have at, like, school and stuff, it definitely, like, made it more fun just to take a break from, like, home and go to camp and be with your other friends.* (Emerson, 10/19/2013)

> *Half is the escape - (pause) - and then, I think the other half - it's people… Especially if you have - (pause) - you - you just get to kind of, like, leave for a week and, like, come back.* (Isa, 10/27/2013)

For many, this "escape," as Isa described it, gave rise to an intensive experience (10/27/2013). While reading over the transcripts from participants' interviews, at the outset, I was interested in how a program with a relatively brief duration (i.e., approximately five days) could seemingly forge such deep friendships. After analyzing the data, however, it became apparent that participants' removal from the outside world sustained an immersive experience, which subsequently cultivated meaningful relationships.

> *It - it feels kind of weird cause, like, once you go there - I was only there for a week, and I felt, like, I was there for, like, a lifetime…. and then getting to know these people as close friends really (laughs) in a week when you can have a class with somebody and, like, not even know their name for the entire year -* (August, 10/04/2013)

> *I think it - it goes with the same thing with - (pause) - with - (pause) - I guess, the L.I.T. week, because you got removed from any other distractions. There's no distractions…*

> *You - really got to bond with who you're working with, cause you didn't really have a choice - but I think that's - for the better.* (Isa, 10/27/2013)

Isa summarized this category, concluding:

> *…There's - no cell phone service, you're kind of cut off… Not only is it, like, geographically dislocate you… but you're also there 24 hours a day for about a week… you also don't really have contact to anyone else but who you're there with. So, I think - that definitely impacts you, cause you're - (pause) - you're removed from where you were in that other mindset.* (10/27/2013)

All in all, the category, "Separating from the outside world," provided an overview of participants' commentary on their experiences that were distinct from those of their everyday lives, time spent outdoors, and sense of respite/retreat.

   4.1.4 Bridging the gap. Participants' camp experiences informed their notions of leadership in a theme I have referred to as "Bridging the gap." By this, I mean participants viewed leadership as a combination of "Building connections," "Sharing experiences," and "Separating from the outside world," in which they believed individuals led effectively by bringing people together. One participant illustrated this theme when reflecting on an experience as a team captain by contemplating the actions of former team captains; considering how to improve upon previous standards; and implementing new ideas in order to create a better team experience.

> *…I remember looking back at, like, old captains and stuff - and I never really, like, got to know any of them that well… they were always there and you always looked up to them, but I never personally, like - (pause) - got to know any of them…. and, so, I, like, I wanted to make, like, a specific effort to, like, all - especially all the younger ones… I wanted to, like - with the freshman and stuff - because they're obviously going to be - they're obviously a little, like, intimidated… I wanted to… try to, like - make friendship bonds with everyone on the team, not just with - (pause) - specific people.* (Francis, 10/20/2013)

Inclusion, as Francis alluded, is a staple of this theme. One way in which participants felt

included during the L.I.T. program was when others pulled them in, found common ground with

them through discussion, or engaged them in an activity.

> *And then Van [Waycross Camp's Executive Director] came over and was, like, you know, "Hey!" Um, you know, and he was talking to me and he got me into the group and talking to everybody and that's basically where I got to know everyone and become friends and it was really - (pause) - it was really fun.* (August, 10/04/2013)

> *... I feel part of it almost is because of the training or whatever you guys [Waycross Camp staff] do. To, like, help prevent kids from feeling left out or not part - of the group, or - just getting everyone involved and taking part and stuff.* (Galen, 10/26/2013)

Combined, the three categories, 1) "Building connections," 2) "Sharing experiences," and 3)

"Separating from the outside world" produced the first theme, "Bridging the gap."

4.1.5 Community. Based on my interpretation of the data, when people *bridge the gap*, a

sense of "Community" emerges as a central outcome. One manifestation of this phenomenon

was the formation of unlikely friendships, which united different worlds.

> *... I talk to people at Waycross, but, like - (pause) - I'm sure, like, if I had met them, like, we probably wouldn't be that great of friends, but, like - because you're at camp, like - (pause) - it's just a given that you, like, become friends with them - (laughs) -* (Harper, 10/27/2013)

> *Yeah, we're so different. It's just weird… there's some people who - who I would never, ever be friends with… and then, we meet at camp and I am now, so, I guess - I'm glad I am and I'm thankful for that, but it's - weird to think about.* (Isa, 10/27/2013)

The sense of community that permeated camp was so profound that, at one point during

the interview, Harper referred to Waycross Camp as "a holy place" (10/27/2013). Although I did

not explicitly ask questions regarding participants' perceptions of spirituality as reflected at this

Christian camp, it struck me that the only time participants touched on religion was in the

context of community.

> *... I think the spiritual aspect is really - (pause) - central to Waycross. As well, um - (pause) - and not just spiritual in, like, the worship setting. It's spiritual in the community*

you form and - and the friends you make and how you, um, are able to relate with other people on a more personal level - you really get to know these people in such a short amount of time. (Dana, 10/13/2013)

When asked to elaborate, Dana concluded:

And - that, for me, is more the spiritual element… the getting to know the other person on that deep level and - (pause) - you know, having just a short amount of time with them, but still, basically they'll be friends for life - is what makes it - (pause) - special. (10/13/2013)

For participants, inclusion was the tip of the iceberg when it came to the glue that binds the camp community. Many L.I.T.s felt a sense of unity, fellowship, and solidarity that went beyond mere group cohesion. They expressed feeling a deep, emotional, familial connection that tied them together.

It's because you get to know people over the years. And then, like, even if there are people who are new, you know who they're friends with or you know their counselors. And so, you just really click when you become a part of the - (pause) - essential, like - (pause) - quote un-quote, "Waycross family." (Isa, 10/27/2013)

Like, I left Waycross and I was, like, (gasps), "I'm homesick! (Laughs). And I'm at my house!" (August, 10/04/2013)

… And it's [Waycross] their home away from home where they can really be themselves. (Dana, 10/13/2013)

In the end, participants reported that Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program established an infrastructure that provided reprieve from the outside world through its physical location and nurtured a social sphere in which emotional, intellectual, and spiritual connections fostered community.

4.2 Theme Two: Giving Permission to be Human

In reviewing participants' transcripts, it became apparent to me that Waycross Camp's social structure had implications beyond community. My second theme, "Giving permission to be human," is comprised of three categories: 1) "Providing psychosocial and emotional safety," 2)

"Starting with a clean slate," and 3) "Validating your true self." Based on my interpretation of the data, when participants *give one another permission to be human*, a sense of "Openness" emerges as a central outcome. Table 4.2 outlines the criteria I used to support this theme, including categories, rules of inclusion, and outcome.

Table 4.2

Rules of Inclusion for Theme Two: Giving Permission to be Human

Categories	Rules of inclusion: Data excerpts	Theme	Outcome
Providing psychosocial and emotional safety	… reflect participants' need for a judgment-free space	Giving permission to be human	Openness
Starting with a clean slate	… reflect participants' desire to begin anew with equal footing		
Validating your true self	… reflect the effects of affirmation on participants' expressions of self-worth and authenticity		

4.2.1 Providing psychosocial and emotional safety. One concept that emerged from my research was participants' desire for acceptance. While the theme "Bridging the gap" nourished inclusion and tolerance, the category "Providing psychosocial and emotional safety" acknowledged participants' fundamental need for security. I described this category in my rules of inclusion as "Data excerpts reflect participants' need for a judgment-free space."

The cornerstone of establishing a safe space for many L.I.T.s was to ensure a judgment-free domain, where participants could let down their guard.

> *[At camp], like - it's okay to be goofy and - and, you know, say how I really feel here…*
> (Dana, 10/13/2013)

... Um, just, like, the atmosphere of not just, like, the campers, but I feel, like, the counselors probably play a huge impact on that, too... they're usually pretty silly people. (Galen, 10/26/2013)

On a surface level, this category and "Separating from the outside world" share an element of physical dissociation from everyday life, but "Providing psychosocial and emotional safety" goes further.

Um - (pause) - at school - (pause) - I'm a lot more self-conscious, kind of - um - (pause) - I mean, I don't really know how to explain why... But at Waycross I always feel a lot more comfortable - (pause) - in what I have to say and that I'm not going to be judged - it kind of sounds - it kind of sounds cliché, but at school I always feel, like, everyone is looking at me critically - (Jordan, 11/07/2013)

Like Jordan, the sanctity of freedom from judgment was monumental to Dana:

...Waycross is such - (pause) - kind of a safe haven for people... Um, and a lot of kids, you know, being away from... school peers and your parents allows you to - (pause) - be almost a different person... you're not afraid of being judged. Because there's - that's what I love about us is... that understanding that whatever you do, whatever you say, you're not going to be judged for it. (10/13/2013)

One way the program secured a judgment-free space was by having L.I.T.s and L.I.T. staff partake in "The circle activity." For this exercise, L.I.T.s and L.I.T. staff stood side-by-side to form a circle. Among the L.I.T. staff, two activity facilitators alternated making neutral statements (e.g., "I have brown eyes."). Once read, those who chose to identify publicly with a statement would walk into the middle of the circle, silently face those in the circle for a few seconds, and then walk back to their places within the circle. As the activity progressed, the facilitators' statements became more and more personal (e.g., "I and/or someone I know has suffered from depression," or "When considering abortion, I am pro-choice.").

Upon concluding the activity, L.I.T.s and L.I.T. staff engaged in a thought-provoking group discussion. Some participants talked about how they identified with the statements (for example, some felt their peers could tell they had brown eyes by looking at them, whereas their

social and political views were not necessarily apparent); how they fit into the categories (for

example, one participant had green eyes, did not fit the categories provided, and therefore, did

not have a chance to step forward); and how they took comfort in knowing others felt similarly

(for example, participants expressed surprise knowing others had experience with depression,

too). Several of the L.I.T.s reflected:

> *… The circle thing, um - (pause) - I thought it was just good to get to - (pause) - express your opinion in a different way without having to straight up say it…* (Dana, 10/13/2013)

> *I think the most beneficial and worthwhile thing was the… group circle that we did, where - we walked into it - and… you would say - like, ask or say, like, um, a statement that might - (pause) - um - (pause) - correspond to us. And we would walk in and - (pause) - we just wouldn't judge the people that would walk in… I thought that was really good. That was - really bonding...* (Casey, 10/05/2013)

In sum, the category, "Providing psychosocial and emotional safety," delineated participants'

need for a place where they could let their guard down without fearing judgment and ideally

build deeper relationships with others through the process.

4.2.2 Starting with a clean slate. Along with access to a judgment-free space, several

L.I.T.s emphasized the importance of promoting equality, both at Waycross Camp and in

leadership practice. When asked to describe an asset that was key to leadership, Isa commented:

> *In order to be a leader, you have to be respectful, because if you can't respect, like - whoever you're working with and can't see them as - (pause) - equals - (trails off) - so, I guess, equality.* (10/27/2013)

By equality, I am not only referring to participants' need for identical privileges and rights as

individuals. This second category, "Starting with a clean slate," is outlined in my rules of

inclusion as "Data excerpts reflect participants' desire to begin anew with equal footing." For

many L.I.T.s, equality encompassed a need for mutual respect, giving one another a fair shot,

and leaving behind preconceptions and biases, "despite what you are associated with outside of

camp" (Harper, 10/27/2013).

And, you know, going to this place and meeting people like this and really getting to know them and like them - just sharing these things with you and, you know, you having an equal kind of, like, neutral conversation about anything basically and getting them to bring out who you really are - it's really inspiring. (August, 10/04/2013)

I totally feel, like, I can talk to anyone at Waycross… um, I feel, like, I can talk to anyone and then, like, people that I wouldn't normally talk to if they were in my high school… and then I see that, oh yeah, I can get along with this type of person… which is the type of person that I wouldn't normally have the courage to go up to in high school. (Jordan, 11/07/2013)

For Jordan in particular, camp functioned as an equalizer, where participants suddenly found themselves on level ground; a stark contrast from the fierce competition for social status they faced on a daily basis in high school. In this way, the category, "Starting with a clean slate," promoted equality, established respect, and offered participants a fresh start.

4.2.3 Validating your true self. The third and final category for this theme was "Validating your true self." I described this in my rules of inclusion as "The data excerpts reflect the effects of affirmation on participants' expressions of self-worth and authenticity." Based on responses from L.I.T.s, I concluded that the effects of validation were threefold: validation boosted participants' self-esteem, affirmed participants' worth as individuals, and presented participants' personality quirks as assets.

Although conventional camp wisdom will say that increased self-esteem is a natural outcome of the camp experience (Henderson et al., 2007a), as a researcher, it was encouraging to hear participants independently raise the topic without prompting.

Um, I liked all that about - kind of self-esteem. And - how to - (pause) - you know, make people feel good about themselves and kind of talking about - (pause) - our own self-esteem. I think that's a - (pause) - big problem - with kids and it's nice to kind of be able to talk about it. (Jordan, 11/07/2013)

… And people like you and I think - I think that's - (pause) - good for the ego, maybe - too. (Isa, 10/27/2013)

… Like, in middle school, like, everybody kind of goes through that time when they don't really - (pause) - like themselves or they don't like how they look or anything… and I came home from Waycross - (pause) - and - (pause) - I felt so good at Waycross. And then I came back home and realized - (pause) - that I had felt better at Waycross than I had, like, ever… So - whenever I come home from camp, I always - (pause) - like myself more and like my personality and - (pause) - my ability to make friends. (Jordan, 11/07/2013)

Jordan continued:

Whenever I go to Waycross, I always come back home - (pause) - feeling a lot better about myself - like, self-esteem-wise… Cause at camp, there's no, like - (pause) - there's not really much of a social - (pause) - kind of hierarchy, like, there is at high school. (11/07/2013)

Many campers and staff characterize Waycross Camp as "a place to find yourself" (August, 10/04/2013). Trying to understand exactly what August meant by this, I reviewed participants' transcripts in greater depth. In doing so, I found a recurrent thread of affirmed identity and authenticity that was distinct from self-esteem; it seemed that while at camp, participants felt that they were seen for who they were as individuals - no more and no less. It was a common expression of adequacy, a feeling that they were enough, echoed by participants' expressions of self-worth.

… Your camp friends are very different than, like, your school friends… They - they understand you on kind of a different level and they - they know your real personality, as opposed to what you may come up as in school… [Whereas camp friends] have really known you and who are truly your friend. (Dana, 10/13/2013)

When asked to elaborate, Dana replied:

… You've been a counselor for so long and we feel, like, we know you and you know us as people. (10/13/2013)

Validation and affirmation were focal points of the L.I.T. program. During one activity called "Warm fuzzies," L.I.T.s and L.I.T. staff were each given a bag labeled with their name. They were encouraged to take time to write personalized affirmations on scraps of paper and

place them in the respective recipient's bag. August reflected on this activity, stating, "… stuff like that that gives you actually endorsement and everything. It's nice" (10/04/2013).

Another L.I.T. week activity was "Award making." At the completion of a given camp session, Waycross Camp counselors create personalized awards for each camper, celebrating something each individual contributed to the camp experience. These awards are written on certificate paper and presented in a public forum. In a twist, at the end of the L.I.T. program, participants were split up into two groups. Each group was asked to create and present awards for individuals in the other group, rather than the counselors presenting the awards to the L.I.T.s. Isa contemplated this, citing differences in personality as enhancing the experience, rather than taking away from it.

> *…. Yeah, I think that [making awards] was fun. I remember presenting those. But yeah, we made awards, cause we did them in groups and we made them for ourselves. And so I think that helped you think a lot more about, like, what everyone brought to the group - as well as, like - the quirks about everybody.* (Isa, 10/27/2013)

In sum, the category, "Validating your true self," touched on participants' reflections on perceived self-worth, authenticity, and affirmation.

4.2.4 Giving permission to be human. Participants' camp experiences informed their notions of leadership in a theme I have referred to as "Giving permission to be human." By this, I mean participants viewed leadership as a combination of "Providing psychosocial and emotional safety," "Starting with a clean slate," and "Validating your true self," in which they believed individuals led effectively by giving others the benefit of the doubt. Casey addressed this theme when reflecting on an experience as a team member.

> *… Sometimes the underclassmen, they can get - (pause) - a little bit crazy… and it's helpful, um, to just take responsibility and be understanding of other[s]… [who] - might be going through a hard time or, um, just need someone to talk to or just need to get something done. Um, just to help them.* (10/05/2013)

In addition to empathy, "Giving permission to be human" included elements of trust.

Um, you know, if you don't trust someone you - you won't follow them. (Dana, 10/13/2013)

... [While working as a Counselor-in-Training (C.I.T.)] if they [younger campers] had - (pause) - you know, if they had little issues they could always come talk to me. I was - (pause) - there to help them out. (Dana, 10/13/2013)

Combined, the three categories, 1) "Providing psychosocial and emotional safety," 2) "Starting with a clean slate," and 3) "Validating your true self" created the second theme, "Giving permission to be human."

4.2.5 Openness. Based on my interpretation of the data, when people *give one another permission to be human*, a sense of "Openness" emerges as a central outcome. It is worth noting that many L.I.T.s had mixed feelings when it came to the cause(s) and effect(s) of openness. Some felt Waycross Camp produced open individuals, whereas others believed Waycross Camp attracted open individuals, an example of a dilemma that is at the heart of camp research today.

... I feel, like, the people who go to Waycross are generally, like, willing to, like, talk about - their feelings and, like, what - things mean, um, to them and all that kind of stuff. (Harper, 10/27/2013)

Openness manifested in several ways. In a basic sense, Waycross Camp nurtured openness by encouraging introverted participants to push past their comfort zone and to come out of their shell.

I was just, you know, that one quiet person. And then once you get to know me, you realize I'm not quiet at all… It helped that a lot of the people were, like, kind of Waycross people in general, cause Waycross is such an open place that when L.I.T. was there, everyone was just so open with themselves that - that it helped get someone like me who wasn't as open to get to communicating with other people. (August, 10/04/2013)

Yeah, uh, well, actually, like, right now, I've probably, like, taken up some leadership by, um, just really opening up, cause I'm usually kind of shy. (Casey, 10/05/2013)

Noted in participants' interviews, openness and vulnerability go hand-in-hand. One way in which

several L.I.T.s expressed vulnerability was through their comfort level when it came to asking

questions and their willingness to ask for help.

> *And, like, asking questions that almost felt, like, kind of stupid or obvious questions - weren't such, like - (pause) - wasn't such a big deal, you know… And that was nice, cause then you didn't - I mean - that way, we're doing stuff you already had friends that were there to talk to and it wasn't just weird to, like, ask questions and say stuff in front of them - cause you kind of already knew who they were.* (Galen, 10/26/2013)

Galen continued:

> *… It made me feel more comfortable when I was - (pause) - like, actually a C.I.T. with just - (pause) - asking other counselors or other people - kind of, like - (pause) - is this really, like, what I should be doing?... It helped me be more open to, like, asking other people for help. I'm not always good with that. (Laughs).* (10/26/2013)

Interestingly, while unstructured, informal activities (e.g., hiking to Ghost Town, going

on the overnight (camp-out), etc.) seemed to facilitate participant bonding by allowing time for

L.I.T.s to interact with one another, structured, formal activities (e.g., "The circle activity,"

course work from the L.I.T. handbook's curriculum, etc.) presented unique opportunities for

consequential, meaningful discussion, where participants felt comfortable enough to "bring up

any idea" (Galen, 10/26/2013).

> *… I actually really liked being in the classroom… I, like, just - (pause) - having conversations with people and talking about things that I wouldn't normally talk about - um - like, self-esteem.* (Jordan, 11/07/2013)

> *… You got to learn different things about people [during "The circle activity"] that you would never really learn - cause it would never come up in a normal conversation.* (Dana, 10/13/2013)

> *… I found that [Maslow's hierarchy of needs] really interesting, but I can't think of a time when I would have gotten to talk about that, like - with my peers - in any time - (pause) - other than - (pause) - the classroom.* (Jordan, 11/07/2013)

Overall, participants reported that Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program facilitated a positive environment that affirmed participants' self-worth by creating an equal, authentic, judgment-free space yielding social and emotional openness.

4.3 Theme Three: Rolling up Your Sleeves

While my second theme, "Giving permission to be human," emphasizes sensitivity, my third theme, "Rolling up your sleeves," is all about charging ahead. This theme is comprised of three components: 1) "Taking initiative," 2) "Taking control," and 3) "Rallying the troops." Based on my interpretation of the data, when participants *roll up their sleeves*, a sense of "Empowerment" emerges as a central outcome. Table 4.3 outlines the criteria I used to support this theme, including categories, rules of inclusion, and outcome.

Table 4.3

Rules of Inclusion for Theme Three: Rolling up Your Sleeves

Categories	Rules of inclusion: Data excerpts	Theme	Outcome
Taking initiative	… reflect participants' proactive dispositions		
Taking control	… reflect participants' ability to exercise choice and command	Rolling up your sleeves	Empowerment
Rallying the troops	… reflect the impact of morale, energy, and enthusiasm on participants		

4.3.1 Taking initiative. One concept that emerged from my data analysis was the value participants placed on taking initiative. "Taking initiative" is a category I defined in my rules of inclusion as "Data excerpts reflect participants' proactive dispositions." Above all, for many L.I.T.s, taking initiative meant stepping up to the plate. It was a trait propelled by ambition, action, and courage.

But also having the ability to - (pause) - step up and say what needs to be said and do what needs to be done - if the situation calls for it. If nobody else is doing it or nobody else can do it, to be able to actually - (pause) - do that, I guess - not be so shy or so in the background that - that it would be - (pause) - impossible or weird, you know? (Galen, 10/26/2013)

Equally so, initiative was a characteristic that could be paralyzed by fear.

... Basically, when I went there I was the kind of person that didn't get connected to things easily... I wasn't that into activities. I wasn't, you know, you know, into people and talking to them and, like, "Hey," you know, "What's your name?" I wasn't really social at all. I was just that person that hanged back and didn't say anything... I was shy. (August, 10/04/2013)

August continued:

So, it really helped to have those people that were… the type of people that were, that would actually go out and be like, "Hey, what's your name?" or "Do you want to do this? We're going to do this." You know? (10/04/2013)

In addition to stepping up, for many participants, initiative meant throwing oneself

completely into an activity, without holding anything back.

But, you just have to, like, take the initiative and just go ahead - just, like, go all in and - (pause) - do it. And I think, like, in the future, um, leadership might help by - like, might help me by just the same thing: getting things done. (Casey, 10/05/2013)

A prime example of this aspect of initiative was when L.I.T. staff became involved in activities,

rather than simply giving directions from the sidelines.

And, the way they [L.I.T. staff] were (laughs) so good at jumping into things as well with us - that they weren't, like, "Do this," they were more, like, "Hey we're going to do this with you and see how this goes!" (Laughs). (August, 10/04/2013)

Thus, the category, "Taking initiative," was characterized by ambition, involvement, and above

all, action.

4.3.2 Taking ownership. In line with "Taking initiative" is a second category that I have

referred to as "Taking ownership." In my rules of inclusion, I elaborate, stating, "Data excerpts

reflect participants' ability to exercise choice and command." Exercising command was both an

important aspect of participants' notions of leadership and a character trait that participants felt

the L.I.T. program highlighted. In the eyes of Jordan, one aspect of "Taking ownership" was not

letting others "step all over you" (11/07/2013). Jordan continued, discussing a key attribute of

leadership:

> *Firm? I don't know how to say that, like, somebody who, like, says something and doesn't back down from it. Like, they don't - (pause) - take exceptions and… yeah, firm - like, uh - (pause) - no-nonsense…* (11/07/2013)

Having some degree of control over the activities they took part in during L.I.T. was yet

another element of the category "Taking ownership." Granted, several L.I.T.s reported enjoying

previous regular camp sessions more than the L.I.T. program, others preferred the L.I.T.

experience to regular camp sessions, because they were able to choose the activities in which

they took part.

> *… I enjoyed it [L.I.T.], I think, more than - (pause) - being a camper, because I got to, uh, choose what I wanted to do, but - (pause) - other than being in control of kind of what we were doing… it, uh - (pause) - it was a different kind of enjoyment…* (Jordan, 11/07/2013)

Incidentally, several participants took note of fellow L.I.T.s' program attendance by

choice, commenting on this in their interviews. To them, the fact that the majority of L.I.T.s had

made a conscious decision to attend the L.I.T. program, rather than being forced by a parent or

teacher to register for the program, had tremendous implications. Participants commented on the

distinction between participating by choice and participating out of obligation, stating:

> *… I think in some ways that was good in the way that - (pause) - then you only have people showing up who really want to learn this stuff.* (Galen, 10/26/2013)

> *… They're [fellow L.I.T.s] definitely mature and ready to learn and not, like - like, I didn't feel, like, they had bad attitudes. I felt, like, they were always ready to work or do something.* (Casey, 10/05/2013)

Going hand-in-hand with their ability to exercise choice and control, several L.I.T.s felt that the program enabled them to take ownership of the L.I.T. experience and engage with it.

So, like - (pause) - everyone was participating; everyone was, like, doing all the effort they could - to try to make it fun, because everyone wanted it to be fun. And, I feel, like, if it had been with, like, a group of classmates that - (pause) - they wouldn't have put in the same amount of effort to try to make it enjoyable. (Francis, 10/20/2013)

Well yeah, I guess "Warm fuzzies" were pretty cool, too. Kind of more or less reading them and writing them... when you're doing it with people that, you know, from Waycross, it makes it so much funner. Like, it wasn't, like, "Oh well"- it was, like, we were really enthusiastic to do this. (August, 10/04/2013)

In this way, the category, "Taking ownership," encompassed the value participants placed on choosing activities and on taking ownership of/engaging with the L.I.T. experience.

4.3.3 Rallying the troops. In discussing "Warm fuzzies," August touched on the third and final category for this theme. "Rallying the troops" is a category I labeled in my rules of inclusion as "Data excerpts reflect the impact of morale, energy, and enthusiasm on participants." One such example of this category was several L.I.T.s' reflections on the effects of participant engagement on the program.

... Like me, everyone was, like, looking more forward to it... we were more excited to be there than I think just a group of, like, classmates would have been - too. (Francis, 10/20/2013)

...Like - I said earlier, like, being enthusiastic about learning new things - I think is, um, really important for being able to, like, engage with others. (Harper, 10/27/2013)

Similarly, enthusiasm, passion, and personal investment underpinned participants' views of leadership practice. When asked to describe attributes critical to leadership, participants responded:

Yeah, um - (pause) - love, and not just in, like, the loving people - but love in what you do - because if you don't, then, um - you won't - (pause) - feel as much responsibility for it. Like, you won't care as much - (Francis, 10/20/2013)

And then you also have to be, like, caring about what they're, like, leading about, because if you're not going to, like, care about - (pause) - what, um, you're, like, leading, then what's the point of you leading it? (Emerson, 10/19/2013)

When considering the impact of enthusiasm, participants readily linked it with the importance of being able to relate to others. Although participants had mixed responses when asked if the L.I.T. program staff had an impact on their L.I.T. experience, all agreed that when it came to motivating a group of adolescents, age was of the utmost importance.

And the fact that, like, young people did it [led L.I.T.] and - (pause) - they're enthusiastic about it, like - makes it a lot more - um - makes - makes it easier for us to be enthusiastic about it. (Harper, 10/27/2013)

I felt, like - (pause) - at that point, you're still a good bit younger than the counselors - but - (pause) - you still feel close enough in age to them, as opposed to someone a lot older - that it seems easier to talk to. (Galen, 10/26/2013)

Yeah, I think, like, that the fact that we had the experience with, like, people closer to our age rather than, like, middle-aged people - lecturing you - (trails off) - like, at some of the retreats, I don't really like to go to the retreats anymore, because it's usually, like, older people just, like, lecturing to you - (laughs) - and it's, like, really dry. (Harper, 10/27/2013)

The importance participants placed on the age of L.I.T. staff is a hard pill for me to swallow. As someone who enjoys working in youth development, imagining reaching an age when I am no longer as relevant or as effective in what I love to do is disconcerting and disheartening. At the same time, taking participants' responses in stride, it is encouraging to know that energy and engagement are perhaps just as relevant to participants as age. Thus, the category, "Rallying the troops," offered insight into the value participants' placed on enthusiasm, personal investment, and an individual's ability to relate to others.

4.3.4 Rolling up your sleeves. Participants' camp experiences informed their notions of leadership in a theme I refer to as "Rolling up your sleeves." By this, I mean participants viewed

leadership as a combination of "Taking initiative," "Taking ownership," and "Rallying the

troops," in which they believed individuals led effectively by engaging others experientially.

> *...It [role play] was - it was pretty funny. And I think it was a - good way to learn - so - interactive and also a little - (pause) - it was memorable, to say the least.* (Isa, 10/27/2013)

> *And I just think Waycross is a great place in general, because you get to - besides the L.I.T. program, you also get to see all these - you get to go hands-on with some of the cabins and some of the kids...* (August, 10/04/2013)

By the same token, while all of the participants I interviewed enjoyed their L.I.T. experience,

perhaps the biggest criticism of the program was that participants felt that L.I.T. should offer

more hands-on activities.

> *...I liked being in more of a classroom setting when we were learning - but I think it would help to do more hands-on things…* (Blair, 10/05/2013)

> *...I mean, [if] there's something, like, that I had to add, it probably would have been… like, actually doing and, like, putting our learning to, like, physical work, instead of - in the classroom.* (Casey, 10/05/2013)

Having participants *roll up their sleeves* put certain L.I.T. program elements in action.

Cultivating autonomy and simulating authentic scenarios were among these elements.

> *… I think that was, like, when you guys let us do more. And, um, so we had to - (laughs) - we had to do it more ourselves. So, um, I like that… like, taught us how to be counselors, so I liked it better.* (Francis, 10/20/2013)

> *Well, I do really remember when we all had - well, the counselors acted out being kids [role play]. And, at the time, I was kind of, like, "No way this situation's actually going to, like, happen!" And - (pause) - they* did *happen! Maybe - not quite as dramatically - as you guys performed them -* (Galen, 10/26/2013)

> *Um, the - (pause) - role-playing was kind of a practical application of what we had learned… It was - like, it was fairly true to life. It was, like, situations you might experience with, like, if you were to become a counselor with a camper.* (Dana, 10/13/2013)

Above all, this theme gave L.I.T.s a unique opportunity to practice new leadership skills and

apply preexisting ones.

Um - (pause) - I really - the things that were really beneficial for me were… working at the scenes and the situations - the role-play… we had learned, um, and kind of studied a little during the week and then really applied it… I also thought it [L.I.T.] was really - it was a great way to learn how to apply - some of the leadership skills I already had. (Dana, 10/13/2013)

As Dana mentioned, "The role-play activity" was a crowd favorite. For this exercise, L.I.T.s were given a challenging camper/camp counselor situation (e.g., a camper is homesick and tells his counselor that he wants go home; a camper is bullying another camper and a counselor intervenes; etc.). L.I.T.s were asked to act out what they would do as a camp counselor in that situation, with the L.I.T. staff playing the role of campers.

I liked - (pause) - when we did, like, the role-play - so each group had a chance to see how we would react - in a situation. And so, we were directly, like, critiqued on what we did and didn't do well. (Blair, 10/05/2013)

And (laughs) so, I liked it when… it was more, like, activity-ish… I felt, like, I got more from that. Like, it wasn't just, like, reading - and talking about it and comprehending it. It was - about, like, how you can actually apply it. (Francis, 10/20/2013)

Combined, the three categories, 1) "Taking initiative," 2) "Taking control," and 3) "Rallying the troops" created the third theme, "Rolling up your sleeves."

4.3.5 Empowerment. Based on my interpretation of the data, when people *roll up their sleeves*, a sense of "Empowerment" emerges as a central outcome. Galen touched on this theme when reflecting on an experience working as a camp counselor at another facility.

I applied to be a counselor at [a different camp]… and, um, when I applied, I told them I was doing this [L.I.T.] program... And that was really my first experience actually getting to do some of the stuff I learned - (laughs) - from my week at L.I.T. and I remember specifically that I definitely - it definitely helped me feel more comfortable working with them, which was really cool. (10/26/2013)

As Galen suggested, the L.I.T. program gave many participants a sense of confidence, which played a crucial role in their empowerment.

And, um, I mean, plus the people, the people at Waycross helped me tremendously through that as well to come home and be, like, "Yeah, (sighs), yeah I'm going to go do something now!" (August, 10/04/2013)

… I think I was trying to become a stronger leader at that point in my life and L.I.T. week gave me, like, the tools and concepts that I needed to be, like - (pause) - to just really push myself and become, like, more outgoing when it comes to being a leader, because I was kind of more reserved. (Emerson, 10/19/2013)

Another way in which empowerment surfaced as an outcome was through participants' expressions of preparation, specifically in light of unanticipated, chaotic situations. In short, several L.I.T.s expressed a sort of readiness to expect the unexpected. For me, this outcome was unanticipated, mainly because the concept seems paradoxical: How can you expect the unexpected? Two L.I.T.s put it succinctly, however, by paraphrasing their own inner dialogue:

And, um, basically I can handle - like, when something unexpected happens, I can handle it way better than I thought I would be able to, like, before it's, you know, something major happened and it was, like, really out of the blue, I would be super shocked and just stunned and just stand there. But now, I'm - you know, I can actually do something about it and be, like, "Well, I think I need to do something now." (August, 10/04/2013)

… It was interesting to kind of be, like, "Oh, I guess that actually - (pause) - it's something I hadn't really thought about, but how would you handle a situation… if something like that came up?" (Galen, 10/26/2013)

In sum, participants conveyed that Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program encouraged experiential learning by providing opportunities for participants to exhibit initiative, ownership, and enthusiasm, resulting in participants' expressions of empowerment.

Theme Four: Serving the Greater Good

In contrast with taking charge, a subtler, more intrinsic theme took shape during my data analysis. My fourth and final theme, "Serving the greater good," is comprised of three categories: 1) "Working behind the scenes," 2) "Considering other points of view," and 3) "Finding a happy medium." Based on my interpretation of the data, when participants *serve the*

greater good, a sense of "Character" emerges as a central outcome. Table 4.4 outlines the criteria

I used to support this theme, including categories, rules of inclusion, and outcome.

Table 4.4

Rules of Inclusion for Theme Four: Serving the Greater Good

Categories	Rules of inclusion: Data excerpts	Theme	Outcome
Working behind the scenes	… reflect the value participants placed on serving others without seeking credit or attention	Serving the greater good	Character
Considering other points of view	… reflect participants' ability to listen and acknowledge different perspectives		
Finding a happy medium	… reflect participants' desire to strike a balance while avoiding extremes		

4.4.1 Working behind the scenes. One idea that resurfaced in various interviews is a

category I refer to as "Working behind the scenes." "Working behind the scenes" is explained in

my rules of inclusion as "The data excerpts reflect the value participants placed on serving others

without seeking credit or attention." For example, when asked to depict aspects specific to

leadership, Emerson described a personal experience when working as a volunteer for a non-

profit organization:

> *… So I, like, am, like, the Social Director, so I help with, like - (pause) - I, um, have, like,*
> *the Twitter account and inform people when we have meetings…* (10/19/2013)

For this L.I.T., the logistical aspects of effective leadership (e.g., planning, preparing, marketing,

strategizing, etc.) were critical when it came to keeping an organization up and running. Emerson

continued:

… You also have to be organized, because if you're not organized, then you won't be able to get as much done, because everything will just be, like, out of control. And - not as, like, planned and stuff. (10/19/2013)

For the vast majority of positions and professions in the U.S., project management and logistics are neither glorified nor distinguished. Frequently, the people who perform the groundwork that sustains an organization do so away from the public's eye. Several L.I.T.s commented on this aspect of leadership, suggesting that capable leadership is not confined to a spotlight or restricted to a megaphone.

… It's not always the person that stands up and - (pause) - you know, leads everyone. It might be the person who works behind the scenes that's - (pause) - really the leader. (Dana, 10/13/2013)

…I'm not particularly - a particularly extroverted person. And so, I don't know, I don't feel, like, you need to be super loud - or out there in order to, like, lead a group of people. And I think people mistake that sometimes… I almost feel, like, when you're being a leader, it's good to - (pause) - not necessarily be the one who comes off and says, "Do this…" (Galen, 10/26/2013)

Moreover, when asked to describe leadership, remarkably, "stewardship" and "servant leadership" were mentioned four times in separate interviews. Thus, the category, "Working behind the scenes," focused primarily on logistics, groundwork, and acts of service.

4.4.2 Considering other points of view. Thinking about others is a cornerstone of stewardship and an implicit mission of Waycross Camp (Waycross Camp and Conference Center, 2011). This theme's second category, "Considering other points of view," reflects this sentiment. Participants advocated awareness in leadership and reported feeling that the L.I.T. staff heard, understood, and responded to their needs. "Considering other points of view" is described in my rules of inclusion as "The data excerpts reflect participants' ability to listen and acknowledge different perspectives."

Fundamentally, this category highlights participants' comments on the value of listening.

I think - really good leaders are people who are willing to - (pause) - hear a lot of different opinions and learn from them… I feel, like, a lot of leaders, um - (pause) - are more interested, like, in themselves - (laughs) - rather than, like, actually listening to, like - (pause) - what other people have to say. (Harper, 10/27/2013)

Well, to be a leader… you have to be able to listen. And… give direction based on the feedback you get. (Emerson, 10/19/2013)

Patience, both inside and outside of camp, was also instrumental to the nature of this category.

And you need to - (pause) - to be a good leader, you need to be patient and hear all sides. (Dana, 10/13/2013)

An interesting aspect of this category was participants' emphasis on adjusting and revising their approach in order to relate more effectively with a target audience. In this case, the desired effect of "Considering other points of view" is improved communication. Participants touched on this concept, particularly in the simulated camp counselor exercises (i.e., "The role play activity") they experienced during L.I.T.

… I remember, um, having to deal with younger campers and - uh, how to, like, get on their level and not freak them out. (Casey, 10/05/2013)

Well, I remember [from L.I.T.] the how to handle - the kids situation… I specifically remember the whole - (pause) - don't tell them, "Stop running," - (pause) - "Walk please," instead. I remember using that all the time. I used that all the time. (Laughs). "Walk please!" (Laughs). (Galen, 10/26/2013)

In this way, the category, "Considering other points of view," included participants' capacity to listen, demonstrate patience, and communicate effectively in various contexts.

4.4.3 Finding a happy medium. Out of all of the categories that emerged during my data analysis, "Finding a happy medium" was the most difficult to define. I described it in my rules of inclusion as "Data excerpts reflect participants' desire to strike a balance while avoiding extremes." This third category encompassed the bulk of participants' comments on what *not* to be as a L.I.T, staff member, and/or leader, including coming across as bossy, forceful, or abrasive, to name a few.

… Being a C.I.T. this past summer… that was a very challenging *week. (Laughs). And, um, we had a really big problem with kids bullying each other - and I think all of the things that we learned in L.I.T. week about how to handle that without, um, saying anything that didn't need to be said and asserting your authority without being - (pause) - mean, I think that - (pause) - uh, really helped me out a lot - in that situation.* (Blair, 10/05/2013)

Like, they [L.I.T. staff] were always ready to help… and, um, not totally, like, um - (pause) - like, be too authoritative, but still know, like, their position, had, like - (trails off) - like, they're not too strict, but, like, they're definitely understanding. (Casey, 10/05/2013)

Um - (pause) - as an adolescent, my goals with leadership - (pause) - for me, I've always kind of been the bossy [one]… it's been learning how to take the bossiness and transfer it more into good leadership and trying to actually help people instead of just telling them, like, "Oh, you need to do this now." (Dana, 10/13/2013)

… I think the whole thing [L.I.T.], really… it taught me, like, more about, like, how to be, like, a good leader and how to - (pause) - like, also how to, like, get my ideas across without trying - (pause) - to, uh - (sigh) - without seeming, like, harsh about it. (Francis, 10/20/2013)

Supplementing L.I.T.s' comments stemming from a desire to avoid gravitating towards any one extreme, one participant spoke about the importance of finding a balance between fun and safety.

When I C.I.T.ed [i.e., worked as a Counselor-in-Training] it was helpful - (pause) - um, what I learned with how to work with younger children… and how to - (pause) - kind of be - be in charge, I guess - and be responsible for their safety. And their - you know, their having fun - (Dana, 10/13/2013)

Another element of this category was exercising discernment. Participants repeatedly talked about the importance of having the ability to interpret a given situation and react accordingly and appropriately. In other words, for many L.I.T.s, sound judgment and measured responses were indispensible.

Like, uh, um - based on, like, the - (pause) - emotions of the people around you and, like - what's going on. Like - knowing when it's time to be funny and when you actually need to be serious… And there's, like, certain times for everything… that's another skill - is knowing when - the correct time is for what type of leadership. (Jordan, 11/07/2013)

But, um - that's one thing and, like, a lot of the… [individuals on Harper's team] are… like, don't really get along - (laughs). So, like - I don't know, leadership comes into that,

because you don't know, like, at what extent you want to get involved and, like - at what extent you should just, like - (pause) - leave them alone… (Harper, 10/27/2013)

All in all, the category, "Finding a happy medium," provided an overview of participants' commentary on the importance of balance, discernment, and sound judgment.

    4.4.4 Serving the greater good. Participants' camp experiences informed their notions of leadership in a theme I refer to as "Serving the greater good." By this, I mean participants viewed leadership as a combination of "Working behind the scenes," "Considering other points of view," and "Finding a happy medium," in which they believed individuals led effectively by thinking of others.

> *… You know, [I] just help out wherever I can. It's a really nice way to help people get up and out and it [L.I.T.] taught me a lot about being - (pause) - well - (pause) - me.* (August, 10/04/2013)

> *Yeah, actually that [attending Waycross Camp years prior to L.I.T. with a fellow camper, Rick[1], who had special needs] was my first experience with somebody with special needs. And, like, that just, like, impacted me so much that I, like, went home and just got really involved… I actually wrote about Rick[1] in my college essay.* (Emerson, 10/19/2013)

> *… It's important to - (pause) - actually care about the people that you lead and, um, let them know that you care about them.* (Dana, 10/13/2013)

To Emerson and Blair, having others' "best interest at heart" was a concept that was so significant that it will likely alter their life's course, impacting future decisions (Dana, 10/13/2013).

> *So, I'm* really*, really hoping to do that [a volunteer program at a select college]. So that's kind of continuing the, like, outreach service learning trips kind of thing and the international experience. I would really love to do that.* (Emerson, 10/19/2013)

> *I want to eventually work in youth formation in other countries… basically, work with kids to help them figure out how to, uh, utilize what they have within either physically or, um, mentally. To help them figure out what they should do with their lives.* (Blair, 10/05/2013)

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[1] This name has been replaced with an alias in order to protect the individual's identity.

Combined, the three categories, 1) "Working behind the scenes," 2) "Considering other points of view," and 3) "Finding a happy medium" created the fourth and final theme, "Serving the greater good."

4.4.5 Character. Based on my interpretation of the data, when people *serve the greater good*, a sense of "Character" emerges as a central outcome. For participants, character was illustrative of being a good, ethical person.

> *… [In L.I.T.] we especially - you focused a lot of basic kind of - (pause) - life skills, which are life skills. Um, whether it's, like, conflict resolution or patience or just - kindness, I think was - (pause) - it's useful no matter what. And sometimes you have to be taught it… it's useful and it's something to remember.* (Isa, 10/27/2013)

> *… Waycross I feel, like, teaches you so much about, like, just being a good person. (Laughs). You know? (Laughs). Like, that's definitely been applicable, like, throughout my life…* (Harper, 10/27/2013)

As participants readily admitted, building character during the L.I.T. program was not necessarily an easy or enjoyable task.

> *Um - (pause) - but, yeah, I guess, I don't know if I would say it's [L.I.T.] - it was more meaningful [than other Waycross Camp experiences], but it was more - of, like, a learning experience - rather than just, like, going and having fun.* (Harper, 10/27/2013)

Similarly, when discussing an experience working as a Counselor-in-Training (C.I.T.), Blair reflected:

> *It was rough, but it was really rewarding by the end of the week.* (10/05/2013)

Blair continued, tying the L.I.T. program into the C.I.T. experience, concluding:

> *… I think it goes back to helping me mature a lot. I think that was something that was beneficial past the week that we were there. It's still really important to me now. It's still is - it - plays a really big part in my life.* (10/05/2013)

Ultimately, participants reported that Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program promoted thinking of others in a way that advocated discernment, humility, and altruism, all of which challenged participants to become better people, yielding an outcome of character.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an in depth explanation of the four participant themes that emerged from my data analysis, including 1) "Bridging the gap," 2) "Giving permission to be human," 3) "Rolling up your sleeves," and 4) "Serving the greater good." Each theme was comprised of three categories; each category was outlined by a rule of inclusion; and each theme yielded one central outcome, including 1) "Community," 2) "Openness," 3) "Empowerment," and 4) "Character," respectively. Cumulatively, the data and subsequent analysis provided insight into participants' perceptions of leadership, outside influences, program value, and program impact. As such, they reflected participants' L.I.T. program experiences and provided a comprehensive overview of what participants valued in leadership and at Waycross Camp, which might have implications for youth leadership development and summer camp best practices.

Chapter Five: Discussion of Findings

This chapter synthesizes four key camp outcomes depicted in relevant research with my four emergent participant themes and their outcomes. I have identified and grouped four skillset domains characteristic of the summer camp experience that were recurrent outcomes in my review of camp literature. These included: 1) "Social relationships," 2) "Identity and self-concept," 3) "Agency and engagement," and 4) "Spirituality, ethicality, and morality." I will discuss these in the context of my four participant themes and their outcomes. Lastly, I propose a holistic model of youth leadership, based on participants' responses.

5.1 Overview

Skill building is the hallmark of summer camp outcomes. In a post-camp study that surveyed over 3,000 families whose child(ren) attended one of 80 different A.C.A. accredited camps, 76% of campers stated that they had learned something new and 71% cited skill improvement in some area while at camp (Thurber et al., 2007). Likewise, Bialeschki and colleagues (2007) indicated that new skill acquisition was the second most frequently cited benefit of camp for youth.

In an effort to ground my participant themes further, I identified and grouped four recurrent, key categories of camp outcomes throughout my research and literature review. These four skillset domains or developmental assets for youth are considered positive developmental outcomes in youth that are characteristic of the camp experience. These include: 1) "Social relationships," 2) "Identity and self-concept," 3) "Agency and engagement," and 4) "Spirituality, ethicality, and morality." Based on my analysis, these align with my respective participant themes: 1) "Bridging the gap," 2) "Giving permission to be human," 3) "Rolling up your

sleeves," and 4) "Serving the greater good" and their respective outcomes: 1) "Community," 2)

"Openness," 3) "Empowerment," and 4) "Character."

After a process of reflection and rereading various studies, four research domains in camp

literature took shape. My first participant theme, "Bridging the gap," and its outcome,

"Community," fall under the umbrella of interpersonal interactions, a domain I refer to as "Social

relationships." My second participant theme, "Giving permission to be human," and its outcome,

"Openness," focus on the individual and how he/she views him/herself in a given environment, a

domain I refer to as "Identity and self-concept." My third participant theme, "Rolling up your

sleeves," and its outcome, "Empowerment," targets participation and active involvement, a

domain I refer to as "Agency and engagement." My fourth participant theme, "Serving the

greater good," and its outcome, "Character," encompass participants' values and motives, a

domain I refer to as "Spirituality, morality, and ethicality." Table 5.1 depicts these groupings.

Table 5.1

Linking Participant Themes and Outcomes with Research Domains in Camp Literature

Participant themes	Outcomes	Research domains in camp literature
Bridging the gap	Community	Social relationships
Giving permission to be human	Openness	Identity and self-concept
Rolling up your sleeves	Empowerment	Agency and engagement
Serving the greater good	Character	Spirituality, morality, and ethicality

5.2 Social Relationships

As indicated in my participant themes, "Bridging the gap" was comprised of three components:

1) "Building connections," 2) "Separating from the outside world," and 3) "Sharing

experiences," yielding one central outcome, "Community." Camp research supports my findings

regarding participants' desire to bond with others and develop meaningful relationships in a

genre I deemed "Social relationships." Youth development organizations in and of themselves are structured to create community, camaraderie, and support. Consequently, social relationships are a natural outcome, central to youth development research. Upon completing a camp session, campers will often say that they acquired people skills during their camp experience. In other words, aspects of social interaction, including communication, respect, and mutuality, dominate group living, making relationship building inevitable. Due to their prevalence, social outcomes have been analyzed more than any other topic in camp research (Bialeschki et al., 2007).

At camp, children's social relationships tend to take two forms: connections made with peers that may develop into friendships and rapport with staff in the form of mentorship. These two types of relationships account for the greatest developmental growth among campers during their time at camp and after camp (Thurber et al., 2007). Research attests to the importance of healthy peer relationships and peer group acceptance during youth development. Newcomb and Bukowski (1983) note that youth who are accepted within peer groups are more sociable and possess greater problem-solving skills in social contexts.

Peer group acceptance and friendship are two popular topics in P.Y.D. and camp research. After attending a residential summer camp, Rinn (2006) found increases in the quantity of children's self-reported relationships with peers. This same study found that while antisocial behavior is not correlated to peer group acceptance or friendship quality, prosocial behavior is associated with both. Prior research supports the idea that prosocial behavior (e.g., support, teamwork, etc.) is linked to peer group acceptance and is constructive when forming friendships (Hanna, 1998).

Studies on friendship in the early 1990s showed that adolescents cite spending time with friends as their favorite activity and discuss everything from daily happenings to significant life

events with friends. In addition to an enjoyable pastime, research indicates that healthy

adolescent friendships may ease discomfort. For example, junior high school students who began

the academic school year with one or more friends felt more confident in their new school

environment than those without similar support (Hanna, 1998).

Friendship is a valuable and consistent outcome in summer camp research. In one post-

camp questionnaire, 75% of children and 69% of parents agreed "a lot" with the statement

"Camp helped [me/my child] make new friends" (Thurber et al., 2007, p. 251). Markedly, in the

largest summer camp study to date where more than 8,000 4-H campers were surveyed, making

new friends was considered the greatest benefit of camp. This same study also revealed that

improving communication skills and strengthening previous friendships were additional social

outcomes of camp (Bialeschki et al., 2007). While forming friendships was not limited to girls,

female campers were found to be more likely to bring a friend along with them to camp and

more likely to report positive aspects of friendships solidified at camp than their male

counterparts (Hanna, 1998).

One social phenomenon that occurs at camp is a change in reference group. As

previously discussed, when children come to camp, they are often attending a specialty camp that

targets specific youth interests (e.g., sports, music, religion, mathematics, etc.), resulting in a

more homogenous youth group than would be expected at school. That said, a child who is

accustomed to excelling in soccer at school might not have the same perceived athletic prowess

at a soccer summer camp, where skilled soccer players are the norm (Hanna, 1998).

Changes in reference groups impact camp research findings. Hanna (1998) reported that

contrary to prior research, findings in his study showed that peer group acceptance and making

friends were not associated with athletic and academic self-concepts. Likewise, Thurber, Scanlin,

Scheuler, and Henderson (2007) revealed a decrease in self-reported confidence levels among campers surveyed in a "heterogeneous, representative cross-section of campers and camps," citing "intrapersonal recalibration" as a possible culprit (p. 252). Marsh and Parker (1984) agreed, stating that the self-perceived intelligence of academically gifted students decreased when attending a summer camp program for the gifted, because "being suddenly surrounded by peers of equal ability may challenge a gifted student's prior perceived level of competence" (as cited in Rinn, 2006, p. 67).

In a world where many youth are raised in fractured families, neighborhoods, and communities, healthy relationships with adults in youth development organizations are paramount (Henderson et al., 2007a). One response to this call for healthy child-adult relationships is mentorship. Mentorship is a unique dynamic, where an experienced individual (i.e., the mentor) guides, trains, transitions, and/or advises a less experienced person (i.e., the mentee). The Rhodes (2002) conceptual model of youth mentoring posits that the relationship between mentors and mentees is cemented by an emotional bond and solidified through personal investment. Rhodes (2002) states that this connection positively impacts mentees' social, psychological, and emotional spheres. Research supports this, with some findings indicating that mentorship has been found to diminish high-risk behaviors; enhance youths' attitudes towards school and perceived self-competency; and improve relationships with other adults, including parents and teachers (Little, Kearney & Britner, 2010).

Mentorship plays a significant role in children's camp experiences (Garst et al., 2011). A 2007 benchmark study posited that summer camps' greatest asset was their ability to foster supportive relationships, particularly those between mentors and mentees (Henderson et al., 2007b). When asked about the most beneficial element of camp, 57% of campers referenced

camps' atmosphere, 27% of which referred to a relationship with camp staff (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a). Correspondingly, when asked to what extent camp staff contributed to a child's positive self-concept, 65% of campers and 73% of parents responded that camp staff had contributed "a lot" (Thurber et al., 2007, p. 251).

A recent summer camp study looked at the mentor/mentee relationships of 72 academically gifted adolescents and their adult, academic mentors. Researchers identified various elements in camper journals that affected campers' relationships with their mentors, including visibility and presence; engagement and approachability; lasting impressions; and consistency in perspective. Although campers' comments on mentors' visibility and presence dominated journal entries, mentors' visibility and presence were largely noted when absent. Data showed that campers appreciated mentors who were open to questions, generous with their time, and relatable. In the end, research findings revealed that youth who were mentored showed heightened self-perceived academic competence (Little et al., 2010).

One aspect missing from the Rhodes (2002) conceptual model of youth mentoring is mutuality. Rhodes (2002) stresses the ways in which mentorship favors mentees, but does not appear to discuss mentors' gains; something most anyone in a mentoring role will attest to as real and invaluable (Little et al., 2010).

The concept of mutual aid, where benefits in relationships are bidirectional, is prevalent in camp research. In a 2006 study, mutual aid emerged as an influential factor in children's camp experiences (Collins, 2006). Contrary to some schools of thought, Henderson and colleagues (2007b) suggest that youth development involves moving away from autonomy and towards relationships, making mutual aid all the more relevant to adolescents. Konopka (1963) cites three elements conducive to mutual aid, indicating that groups should support and validate their

members' self-worth; take responsibility for and be held accountable for their members' actions; and secure and advocate for members' healthy development (as cited in Collins, 2006).

With its group living arrangements and collective brotherhood, relationships develop organically at camp. Camps strive to create a physically and psychologically safe environment that nurtures trust, belonging, and connectedness, where healthy relationships can flourish (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a). When actualized, a sense of community among campers and staff is realized. This sense of community formed at camp is powerful, with many campers referring to fellow camp members as "family" (Bialeschki et al., 2007, p. 770). By the same token, when speaking about the ways in which camp was meaningful to them, sense of community was among the top three topics campers mentioned (Collins, 2006).

The camp community is bound by a profound sense of belonging, support, cooperation, and communication (Bialeschki et al., 2007; Thurber et al., 2007). Researchers have identified summer camp as a community that can boost participants' teamwork skills and cultivate altruism, both of which are instrumental when working with new, different, or difficult people. Researchers found that 69% of children and 58% of parents strongly agreed with the statement, "Camp helped [me/my child] get to know kids who are different from [me/him/her]" (Bialeschki et al., 2007, p. 782). Correspondingly, research indicates that the camp experience improved youths' ability to work through disagreements (Bialeschki et al., 2007). Put simply, time and again researchers have identified improved interpersonal skills as a direct outcome of the summer camp experience (Thurber et al., 2007; Bialeschki et al., 2007; Sweatman & Heintzman, 2004).

Mentoring, friendship, mutual aid, belonging, and communication all contribute to the domain "Social relationships." Each of these components is tied to my first theme, "Bridging the

gap," and its outcome, "Community." In this way, camp research supports my findings in which participants emphasized the importance of meaningful connections, collectivity, and camaraderie.

5.3 Identity and Self-concept

"Giving permission to be human" is my second theme, comprised of three components: 1) "Providing psychosocial and emotional safety," 2) "Starting with a clean slate," and 3) "Validating your true self," yielding one central outcome, "Openness." Openness in the context of this study refers to the provision of a judgment-free space in which participants felt they could be vulnerable and trust one another. Camp research supports my findings regarding participants' emphasis on acceptance, reflections on validation, and focus on equality, in a genre I deemed "Identity and self-concept." Identity and self-concept refer to various facets of an individual, particularly how that individual views him/herself in a given environment (Bialeschki et al., 2007). These perceptions are cumulative, experiential, circumstantial, and ever changing (Rinn, 2006). Formally limited to adolescence, some researchers indicate that identity development may spill over into emerging adulthood (Henderson et al., 2007a).

Self-concept is a trademark research target when it comes to camp studies and a favorite pursuit among youth development scholars. Self-esteem, which is comprised of self-worth (i.e., an individual's assessment of personal value) and self-competence (i.e., an individual's assessment of personal efficacy) (Tafarodi & Swann, 1995), all refer to a person's perception of how skilled, qualified, valuable, and capable he/she is as an individual. Heightened self-esteem is associated with friendship and peer acceptance (Hanna, 1998), as well as counselor consistency (i.e., having the same camp counselor as the year prior) and access to nature (Bialeschki et al., 2007). Along the same lines, youth who felt that their opinions were acknowledged were found

to have demonstrated increased self-worth (Mitra, 2006). Parents, too, have noticed changes in self-esteem in their children; 70% of parents surveyed indicated that their child(ren) exhibited heightened self-esteem post-camp (Thurber et al., 2007).

Similarly, in a meta-analysis of 22 camp studies, elevated self-concepts, including self-esteem, were linked to positive camp experiences (Marsh, 1999, as cited in Bialeschki et al., 2007). One study evaluated 18 children who participated in a 10-day wellness summer camp and found that self-reports of competence among children were statistically significantly higher directly following their time at camp (Seal & Seal, 2011). These findings have real world application: Seal and Seal (2011) contest that youth with high levels of self-competence are considered better adjusted, more inclined to take on challenging tasks, and better prepared for learning than their peers. Notably, high self-competence has been linked to motivation and achievement later in life (Seal & Seal, 2011).

Similar to self-competence is the notion of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to a person's perception of his/her ability to attain a goal, complete a task, fulfill requirements, or succeed (Bialeschki et al., 2007). Bandura (1989) posits that perceived self-efficacy is largely contingent on social contexts in which learning takes place through observation. Bialeschki and colleagues (2007) cited a study in which youth who participated in a seven-day camp program showed increased self-efficacy, which they believed could be translated to settings beyond summer camp.

Self-awareness, considered a developmental asset indicative of maturation, is related to a person's mindfulness or consciousness of his/her feelings and actions. Thomas (1996) argued that summer camp might cultivate self-awareness among other skills. Likewise, self-reliance, a person's perception of his/her ability to be independent and resourceful, has been substantiated

as a significant outcome among youth who participated in summer camp programs (Henderson et al., 2007a).

Social self-concept refers to a person's perception of how he/she fits into a group and the quality of relationships built therein. Several groups of researchers have reported heightened social self-concepts of academically gifted adolescents during their time spent at summer camp (Little et al., 2010). After completing a summer camp program designed for academically gifted students, the social self-concepts of 140 eighth to 11th grade students were evaluated. Findings showed heightened perceived same-sex peer relationships and heightened opposite-sex peer relationships from the beginning to the end of the camp session. Despite the perceived growth, no pre-camp or follow-up (i.e., several weeks or months after the program's completion) evaluations were conducted. Thus, any long-term benefits attributed to this program were left unexplored (Rinn, 2006).

As previously mentioned, many specialty camps target specific youth interests (e.g., sports, music, religion, mathematics, etc.). As a result, children attending a given camp program may be more alike in terms of their interests, values, etc. than those who regularly attend school together. These pronounced similarities along with an emphasis on community might create an environment where youth are more likely to interact with like-minded individuals and form group identity, both of which may impact social self-concept (Rinn, 2006).

Perceptions of self, including self-esteem, self-worth, self-competence, self-efficacy, self-awareness, and social self-concept all contribute to the domain "Identity and self-concept." Each of these components is tied to my second theme, "Giving permission to be human," and its outcome, "Openness." In this way, camp research supports my findings in which participants emphasized the importance of self-perception, affirmation, and confidence.

5.4 Agency and Engagement

"Rolling up your sleeves" is my third theme, comprised of three components: 1) "Taking

initiative," 2) "Taking ownership," and 3) "Rallying the troops," yielding one central outcome,

"Empowerment." Camp research supports my findings regarding the importance participants

place on their ability to exercise choice, their reflections on motivation, and their expressions of

autonomy, in a genre I deemed "Agency and engagement." Among the aims of the community

action framework for youth development are enabling youth to make decisions, take

responsibility, and exert choice through "agency" (Thurber et al., 2007, p. 243). Through this

lens, camp is highly participatory, not passive. As such, camp is a distinctive forum in part

because it hinges on active involvement.

MacNeil and McClean (2006) note, "Education is not a process of filling up learners with

new information; it is a process of creating conditions that support learners in making discoveries

themselves, then putting those discoveries to use" (p. 99). Experiential learning, or learning

through experience, is critical to P.Y.D. and is a pillar of camp. It eliminates sterility from

education and encourages hands-on physical and cognitive active engagement (Klau, 2006).

In his experiential learning theory (i.e., E.L.T.), David Kolb (1984) postulates four

learning preferences - experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting - that are cyclically linked.

This model of having, considering, conceptualizing, and practicing an experience provides youth

with a framework for understanding abstract concepts (Kolb, 1984). One study focusing on

perceptions of spirituality at camp found that although interpretations of spirituality varied, all

were rooted in experience and emotion (Sweatman & Heintzman, 2004).

Exercising choice and making decisions are central to P.Y.D.; campers who had input in

their camp experience reported more positive outcomes post-camp than their peers who did not

have input (Marsh, 1998, as cited in Collins, 2006). Enabling campers to direct their camp

experience is a cornerstone of the paradigm shift to "decentralized camping" (Goodrich, 1959, as

cited in Collins, 2006, p.136), reflected in the 80% of camp directors who reported that campers

exercised choice in some activities during camp (Henderson et al., 2007b). By offering a variety

of choices, camp validates campers' opinions, which in turn intrinsically motivate them to

remain active and engaged (Garst et al., 2011). One of the most prevalent ways campers are

involved in decisions is when they are asked for feedback (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a).

Despite the decentralized camping movement, research shows that the degree to which youth are

engaged in decision-making at camp remains insufficient (Henderson et al., 2007b).

Larson (2000) defines initiative as the process by which an individual is intrinsically

motivated to set and attain challenging goals, a phenomenon Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003a)

believe issues empowerment. Initiative is the intersection of agency, autonomy, and action and as

such, fundamental to P.Y.D. The 76% of campers who report learning something new while at

camp (Thurber et al., 2007) are a testament to the notion that camp activities that are structured

and voluntary do indeed cultivate initiative (Larson, 2000).

Decision-making, responsibility, choice, and experiential learning all contribute to the

domain "Agency and engagement." Each of these components is tied to my third theme, "Rolling

up your sleeves," and its outcome, "Empowerment." In this way, camp research supports my

findings in which participants emphasized the importance of active involvement, initiative, and

opportunities to apply/practice learned skills.

5.5 Spirituality, Ethicality, and Morality

My fourth and final theme, "Serving the greater good," is comprised of three components: 1)

"Working behind the scenes," 2) "Considering other points of view," and 3) "Finding a happy

medium," yielding one central outcome, "Character." Camp research supports my findings regarding participants' personal values, reflections on stewardship, and focus on others, in a genre I deemed "Spirituality, ethicality, and morality." Although spirituality, ethicality, and morality are among common camp P.Y.D. outcomes, exacting the definition of these terms proved difficult (Fleming, 2007).

Ethicality and morality are perhaps the simplest of the three to define. Often used interchangeably, ethics refer to cultural norms and regulations regarding behavior, in contrast to morals, which are individual principles and values based on what is considered right and wrong. The key difference between the two is their origins: ethicality is socio-cultural and philosophical, whereas morality is individualistic (Fleming, 2007).

Spirituality, as Elkins, Hedstrom, Hughes, Leaf, and Saunders (1988) explain, "is a multidimensional concept that includes components such as transcendence (i.e., an awareness of something beyond the physical world); meaning, purpose, and mission in life; and relationships with others, nature, and things characterized by values, such as sacredness, altruism, and idealism" (as cited in Sweatman & Heintzman, 2004, p. 23). Spirituality differs from religion insomuch as religion entails institutional, organized faith, while spirituality invokes personal beliefs (Bialeschki et al, 2007). For this reason, this paper references spirituality as an individualistic, personal outcome of camp, opposed to religiosity.

Scholars posit that increases in awareness contribute to spiritual identification in early adolescence. In a recent study of 11 returning campers (i.e., individuals who had attended camp for four or more consecutive summers) who participated in a religiously affiliated leadership program at a residential summer camp, all stated that camp contributed to their spiritual well-being. From the formal and informal experiences that impacted campers' spirituality, Sweatman

and Heintzman (2004) deduced various elements associated with campers' spiritual development, including camp setting, alone time, social experiences, and positive feelings. Researchers concluded that the majority of campers believed that camp fostered positive feelings and influenced their spirituality (Sweatman & Heintzman, 2004).

As previously mentioned, camp research suggests two seemingly opposite catalysts for adolescent spiritual growth: alone time and time with friends. Although my participants valued the time they spent with friends during the L.I.T. program (i.e., interpersonal aspects of the experience), they also emphasized the importance of introspection and reflection (i.e., intrapersonal aspects of the experience) during their interviews. Sweatman and Heintzman (2004) explained that in their qualitative interviews with campers, 90% of campers cited alone time as a positive influence on their spirituality. By contrast, social relationships with fellow campers and counselors allowed campers to let down their guard and "be themselves," which in turn encouraged spiritual growth (Sweatman & Heintzman, 2004, p. 27). Ironically, campers stated that much of their alone time was used to reflect on the meaningful relationships they had built with others during their time at camp (Sweatman & Heintzman, 2004).

Camp staff, campers, and campers' parents all reported gains in campers' (i.e., camp participants ages eight to 14 years old) positive values and spiritual growth while at camp for one week or more (Henderson et al., 2007b; Thurber et al., 2007). Alone time is a recurrent notion in youth spiritual outcomes research; many believe that camp is ideal for introspection, solitude, and reflection. With 93% of resident camps and 63% of day camps located in nature-based settings, camp provides the perfect backdrop for spiritual and philosophical contemplation for a couple of reasons. First, many find connecting with nature to be a tranquil, thoughtful, organic experience and second, nature provides an escape from the physical and emotional strains of city

life. Several independent researchers have linked natural settings to spiritual development, implying that spiritual growth may take place in secular summer camps as well as religiously affiliated camps (Sweatman & Heintzman, 2004; Bialeschki et al., 2007).

Thurber, Scanlin, Scheuler, and Henderson (2007) stated that camps "provide a kind of spirituality that helps develop social capital and morality" (p. 243). Ethical and moral outcomes at summer camp have not been researched as extensively as spiritual outcomes in campers, arguably because the former are more difficult to measure than the latter. Furthermore, while youth are asking philosophical and metaphysical questions (Sweatman, & Heintzman, 2004), the importance of a sense of purpose as "a motivator of good deeds and galvanizer of character growth" in youth development has only recently been realized (Damon, Menon & Bronk, 2003, p. 119). As previously mentioned, positive values are among parents' reported areas of campers' growth; studies show that this growth is largely maintained six months following a camp experience (Thurber et al., 2007).

When it comes to camp and leadership, several theories hinge on morality. As discussed in Chapter Four, during their interviews, four individual participants mentioned either *stewardship* or *servant leadership* when asked about their experiences at Waycross Camp or their notions of leadership. Pioneered by academics including Dewey (1938) and Greenleaf (1973), servant leadership is a current, values-based, conceptual trend in youth leadership and popular in today's Christian summer camps. Servant leadership presents the paradox of leading while serving as a valid, effective leadership practice (Russell & Stone, 2002).

Katzenbach and Smith (1993) explain that servant leaders are unconventional in that they ask questions and create opportunities for followers to lead (as cited in Bolden, Gosling, Marturano & Dennison, 2003). Highly participatory and steeped in ethics, advocates of servant

leadership seek to promote ways in which the needs and personal growth of followers are a priority (Russell & Stone, 2002).

In an effort to gauge moral developmental changes in children who were involved in physical activity, Gibbons, Ebbeck, and Weiss (1995) conducted research with three groups of children. One group followed the *Fair play for kids* curriculum in physical education only, another group followed the same curriculum in all school subjects, and a final group did not use the curriculum. Data analysis revealed that both treatment groups displayed increases in moral judgment (Gibbons, Ebbeck & Weiss, 1995). As a significant amount of time spent at camp is devoted to recreation and physical activity, it is possible these findings could be replicated in a similar environment.

Unsurprisingly, spiritual growth is reported more frequently in religiously affiliated camps than secular ones, however, this may be in part because of these programs' "intentional focus on the moral development of their campers that resonates well with the young people and their parents" (Bialeschki et al., 2007, p. 780). It is possible that spiritual, moral, and ethical growth may be more dependent on campers' understanding of these concepts and their personal experiences than it is on the actual camp experience (Sweatman, & Heintzman, 2004).

Principles, purpose, reflection, stewardship, and consideration of others all contribute to the domain "Spirituality, ethicality, and morality." Each of these components is tied to my fourth theme, "Serving the greater good," and its outcome, "Character." In this way, camp research supports my findings in which participants emphasized the importance of introspection, perspective, personal values, and service.

5.6 Holistic Model of Youth Leadership

In light of my four emergent participant themes, their four outcomes, and the four key research domains/outcomes in camp literature, I propose a holistic model of youth leadership. By holistic, I mean that youth leadership is multifaceted; youth perceive leadership as the culmination of many actions, elements, and traits that produce outcomes rooted in maturity and personal growth.

As previously stated, this holistic model of youth leadership depicts leadership as multidimensional. Based on the findings that surfaced from this research, this model is rooted in four key camp domains depicted in relevant literature and four emergent participant themes that yield four distinct outcomes. It presents participants' notions of leadership and their camp values pictorially. The first quadrant, "Social relationships," reflects participants' comments on the importance of "Community" formed by "Bridging the gap." The second quadrant, "Identity and self-concept," reflects participants' comments on the importance of "Openness" created by "Giving permission to be human." The third quadrant, "Agency and engagement," reflects participants' comments on the importance of "Empowerment" created by "Rolling up your sleeves." The fourth quadrant, "Spirituality, ethicality, and morality," reflects participants' comments on the importance of "Character" formed by "Serving the greater good." Figure 5.2 illustrates this model, summarizing the various dimensions of youth leadership.

Figure 5.2

Holistic Model of Youth Leadership
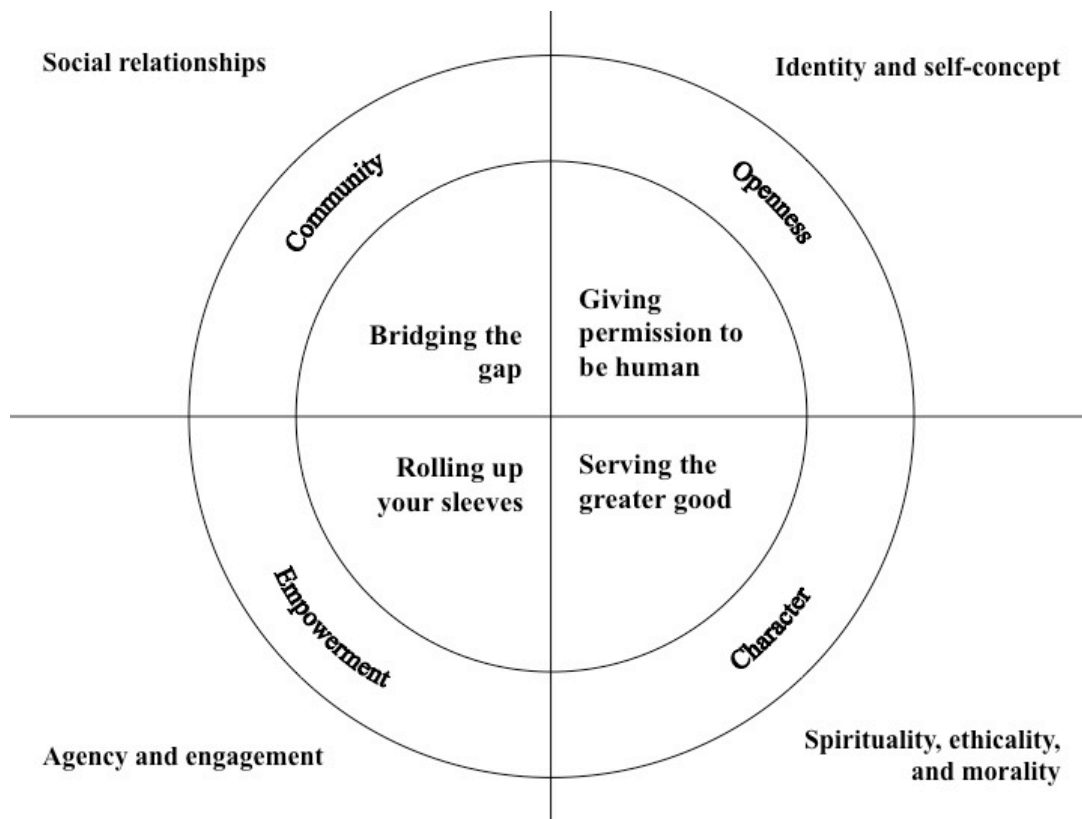
5.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter synthesized four key categories of camp outcomes depicted in relevant research: 1) "Social relationships," 2) "Identity and self-concept," 3) "Agency and engagement," and 4) "Spirituality, ethicality and morality" with my four emergent participant themes: 1) "Bridging the gap," 2) "Giving permission to be human," 3) "Rolling up your sleeves," and 4) "Serving the greater good," respectively and their outcomes: 1) "Community," 2) "Openness," 3) "Empowerment," and 4) "Character," respectively, to create a holistic model of youth leadership. This holistic model of youth leadership supplemented Chapters Two and Four; summarized this chapter, Chapter Five; and guides the final chapter, Chapter Six.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This chapter discusses various facets of my research and their bearings on the findings from my study. It explains my study's limitations, significance, and implications in regards to youth leadership development and summer camp research. Future directions for additional research are recommended and the study is summarized.

6.1 Responding to Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore adolescents' experiences at Waycross Camp, specifically its Leaders-in-Training (L.I.T.) program, and their perceptions of leadership. My first research question asked: 1) How has Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program informed participants' notions of leadership? Data analysis revealed an overlap in what participants valued about Waycross Camp and leadership through emergent participant themes: 1) "Bridging the gap," 2) "Giving permission to be human," 3) "Rolling up your sleeves," and 4) "Serving the greater good." Each of these themes yielded an outcome: 1) "Community," 2) "Openness," 3) "Empowerment," and 4) "Character," respectively. Four camp outcomes depicted in relevant research were synthesized with the four emergent themes and their outcomes: 1) "Social relationships," 2) "Identity and self concept," 3) "Agency and engagement," and 4) "Spirituality, ethicality, and morality," respectively. Together, the themes, outcomes, and camp skillset domains/outcomes produced a holistic model of youth leadership. The holistic model of youth leadership is a multifaceted approach to effective youth leadership practice as seen through the eyes of my participants.

In all, participants valued similar concepts in leadership as they did aspects of Waycross Camp (e.g., inclusion, acceptance, trust, active involvement, service, etc.; see Chapter Four). In

responding to interview questions, participants situated themselves and positioned their views on leadership in a relational context, congruent with contemporary leadership theories described in Chapter Two.

The first of three sub-questions asked: a) How do external factors (i.e., location, peers, or staff) contribute to Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program participants' camp experience? Data analysis revealed mixed responses. All participants agreed that location (e.g., being "in the middle of nowhere" (Harper, 10/27/2013), without technology, removed from every day settings, etc.) affected the L.I.T. experience positively. Most participants agreed that their peer group had an impact on their L.I.T. experience, but they were largely unsure as to why. Participants were divided, however, when it came to whether program staff made a definitive difference in their L.I.T. experience. Several participants expressed the belief that if a different set of program staff had enthusiasm and training comparable to that of the L.I.T. program staff, alternative program staff would not have changed their L.I.T. experience.

My second and third sub-questions asked: b) What do participants value about Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program? and c) How has Waycross Camp's L.I.T. program influenced participants since the program's completion? Feedback from participants regarding their L.I.T. experience was overwhelmingly positive. All participants felt that the L.I.T. program had merit; however, some had difficulty pinpointing specific skills acquired during L.I.T. that they used in a specific situation after the program's completion. In discussing application and transferability, the most pervasive situations were those attributed to the L.I.T.s who worked as Counselors-in-Training (i.e., C.I.T.s) at Waycross Camp after the L.I.T. program's completion; most frequently mentioned were conflict management techniques and role-play scenarios. A few participants also talked about exercising discernment and patience when dealing with underclassmen in

extracurricular activities. Several went on to say that they learned various "life skills" (Isa, 10/27/2013) during their time at Waycross Camp, namely how to be a "good person" (Harper, 10/27/2013) by being kind to others, with "The circle activity" and "Warm fuzzies" dominating the discourse. Thus, while it appears participants valued the L.I.T. program and gained applicable, transferable skills, few were attributed to specific sections of the curriculum.

6.2 Limitations

Camp researchers face several challenges and limitations, many stemming from sheer lack breadth. Camp studies are criticized for relying heavily on short-term, anecdotal evidence (Henderson, 2005), with "no large-scale random sample studies" to date and minimal longitudinal research to report (as cited in Henderson et al., 2007a, p. 757). Setbacks also arise from the wide variety of camps evaluated and the instruments used in assessment. Camp research tends to center on individual organizations without regard for the diversity in the industry and evaluative criteria fluctuate from study to study (Henderson et al., 2007a).

My participant pool had an impact on my research and the lens through which I interpreted my findings. Because eliminating outside influences entirely was impossible, establishing a control group was not feasible (Henderson et al., 2007a). Participants self-selected for this study on two levels: first, by selecting Waycross Camp as a match for their personal interests and second, by opting to participate in my study, both of which targeted positive camp outcomes (Thurber et al., 2007). Difficulty in isolating factors, such as maturation, socioeconomic status, and its byproducts (e.g., level of parental support, extracurricular opportunities afforded, etc.) posed additional challenges (Larson, 2000, as cited in Thurber et al., 2007). Likewise, my commitment to ensuring participants' confidentiality rights in light of my

small participant pool affected my analysis, as select demographic information (e.g., age, gender, etc.) was omitted from participants' interviews and subsequent analysis.

Despite employing critical reflexivity (see Chapter Three), my personal background and values influenced my research. I designed the L.I.T. curriculum and facilitated the program; conducted interviews; and analyzed the data. Thus, demand characteristics, a phenomenon that occurs when participants are aware of a researcher's expectations related to their performance, undoubtedly affected participants' responses. It is therefore safe to assume that some degree of researcher bias and reactivity effect were at play throughout my data collection and analysis (Maxwell, 2013).

6.3 Attributes

The attributes of my study are equally as noteworthy as the limitations. Unlike many camp studies, intrusiveness was minimized because I did not implement the L.I.T. program with the intent of conducting research (Henderson et al., 2007a). Instead, the decision to interview participants about their L.I.T. experiences came about after the program's completion.

Although some might perceive self-report as a biased evaluative measure, Bialeschki, Henderson, and James (2007) contend that the relevance and significance of self-report in camp research is downplayed. Campers, perhaps camps' greatest stakeholders, were at the heart of my research. While subjective, the intent of my study was to investigate campers' experiences; thus, self-report was a critical evaluative measure to consider (Bialeschki et al, 2007). As a qualitative study, this research is not meant to generalize, but rather to explore a specific population's interpretation and experience. In light of these factors, Henderson and colleagues (2007a) conclude, "Ironically, small-scale qualitative studies may be the best way to understand camp experiences," after all (p. 758).

In addition to being experientially credible, another strength of my research was participants' willingness and my forthrightness in acknowledging the program's flaws. Although the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, L.I.T.s made several suggestions for improvement, including extending the program to a full week (Emerson & Isa), incorporating more hands-on activities (Blair & Casey), and spending more time outside (Frances & Harper). Several L.I.T.s also discussed difficulty in evaluating aspects of the program, with some responding that they couldn't remember the program well enough to answer specific questions (Blair, Galen, Harper & Isa) and others saying they didn't have similar experiences with which to compare the L.I.T. program (Dana & Harper).

6.4 Significance

This research provided insight into adolescents' perceptions of leadership and Waycross Camp's Leaders-in-Training (i.e., L.I.T.) program. In some capacity, it answered the cry for additional rigorous camp outcomes research (Henderson et al., 2007b). It explored the effectiveness of formative youth leadership development education initiatives, addressing the applicability and transferability of skills acquired in a residential summer camp setting. Lastly, it demonstrated that adolescents understand leadership in congruence with contemporary, relational approaches to leadership and positive youth development (i.e., P.Y.D.). My findings suggest that camp may be a largely overlooked and under-recognized resource (Bialeschki et al., 2007).

6.5 Implications

In accordance with those of other studies, my research findings support the conventional wisdom that some P.Y.D. outcomes, including certain leadership skills, stem from camp experiences (Thurber et al., 2007). These findings are of the utmost relevance to educators, parents, and youth who are looking to build meaningful relationships (Rinn, 2006) in an authentic, safe,

positive environment (Sweatman & Heintzman, 2004). Garst, Browne, and Bialeschki (2011) put it succinctly when they wrote, "Camp is thus an equalizing context for youth… because campers eat the same food, participate in the same activities, and sleep in the same large, shared spaces, differences between the haves and the have-nots are minimized" (p. 78). That said, it is my belief that all youth who are receptive to a camp experience can indeed benefit from it in some capacity.

6.6 Future Directions

A lack of understanding exists when it comes to the complex relationship between summer camp youth leadership development programming and its attributed positive outcomes (Klau, 2006). Questions that arose from my research include: 1) When a participant says Waycross Camp makes people open, is that the case or does Waycross Camp attract open people? and 2) When a participant talks about knowing that Waycross Camp will be a good experience, is each camp experience uniquely positive or does the expectation of a positive experience invoke self-fulfilling prophecy? These questions taken from my memos align with Henderson and colleagues (2005), who note, "Little is known about how positive change occurs at camp. Are camp programs inherently good or are there factors that can be identified to explain why camp might result in a positive developmental experience?" (p. 1).

Clearly, more studies are needed to corroborate the relationship between summer camp youth leadership development experiences and their attributed positive outcomes. While I do believe my research has contributed to the field, youth leadership development programs in camp contexts have a long way to go before they achieve the credibility that would automatically include them in scholarly, pedagogical, youth development discourse (Thurber et al., 2007). Ultimately, to lend academic rigor to the field, camp research needs to extend past a simple

listing of positive developmental outcomes to assimilating a comprehensive understanding of "best practices" (Klau, 2006, p. 83; Thurber et al., 2007).

6.7 Conclusion

Without the support of families, schools, communities, and youth organizations, including summer camps, youth developmental efforts fall short (Henderson et al., 2005). P.Y.D. outcomes stemming from summer camp experiences are not haphazard; similarly, attending camp does not necessarily yield P.Y.D. outcomes (Henderson et al., 2007a). Instead, the two are inextricably linked when excellence is achieved across multiple domains, including facility, staff, peers, programming, and resources.

The purpose of this study was to explore adolescents' experiences at Waycross Camp, specifically its Leaders-in-Training (L.I.T.) program, and their perceptions of leadership. Data analysis from the 10 participating L.I.T.s revealed:

- Four themes: 1) "Bridging the gap," 2) "Giving permission to be human," 3) "Rolling up your sleeves," and 4) "Serving the greater good," yielding four outcomes: 1) "Community," 2) "Openness," 3) "Empowerment," and 4) "Character," respectively, that comprise four key categories of camp outcomes depicted in relevant research: 1) "Social relationships," 2) "Identity and self-concept," 3) "Agency and engagement," and 4) "Spirituality, ethicality, and morality," respectively, ultimately producing a holistic model of leadership

- Participants' varied responses regarding what external factors influenced their L.I.T. experience (i.e., all agreed on location; most agreed on peer group; some agreed on staff)

- Participants' reports of overwhelmingly positive, valuable experiences attributed to Waycross Camp and the L.I.T. program, despite suggestions for L.I.T. program improvement

- Participants' difficulty in identifying specific skills acquired/practiced during the L.I.T. program that they applied after the program's completion to specific circumstances, but their belief that the program provided them with leadership skills, moreover life skills, resulting in feeling equipped and self-assured

- Participants' notions of leadership, which emphasized leadership as interdependent, rather than autonomous, are congruent with contemporary leadership theories (MacNeil, 2006)

This study has demonstrated that youth leadership development programs can be implemented effectively in residential summer camp settings. Although P.Y.D. outcomes attributed to camp need to be examined more closely, it is apparent that they are not figments of program facilitators' imaginations. Although the aggregated benefits of the camp experience are not fully understood (Bialeschki et al., 2007), campers find value in the camp experience and in the leadership development initiatives implemented therein.

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Appendix A: Waycross Camp Participant Recruitment Cover Letter

<u>**Leaders-in-Training (L.I.T.) Waycross Camp Participant Recruitment**</u>
Letter of support for Katlyn Martin

Dear Camp Parents: August 27, 2013

  It has been an honor and delight to be a part of your camper's development through the Waycross summer camp leadership development programs. In the same spirit, we are honored to commend to you the professional and educational development of one of our former staff leaders and campers. I hope you will give your permission for your young adult to participate in this research project by Katlyn Martin.

  Katlyn's research is her own and not a Waycross project. We look forward to reading her final thesis but you should know that the research data will be hers alone and kept confidential. If you have questions about the data and process, Katlyn and her colleagues at McGill University can address them for you. If you have feedback about your camper's experiences that we need to hear, please direct that to me at director@waycrosscenter.org

  Again, thanks for considering this project. It is a wonderful educational opportunity for Katlyn and for your camper.

  Peace to you,

  Van Beers
  Executive Director

Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Letter

Leaders-in-Training (L.I.T.) Participant Recruitment Letter
Standard version; Ready for mail merge

Dear former Leaders-in-Training (L.I.T.s) and families,   September 1, 2013

  For those of you who don't know me, my name is Katlyn Martin and I worked as Waycross Camp's Leadership Coordinator during the summer of 2012. In June 2012, I facilitated Waycross Camp's Leaders-in-Training (L.I.T.) week, where I worked with 20 adolescents, including «First_Name», on developing their leadership skills. Each participant was given a L.I.T. handbook and completed various team-building and leadership activities throughout the week.

  Since my time at Waycross Camp, I have been working towards my Masters of Arts (M.A.) in Education and Society at McGill University. My research interests include active learning strategies, mentorship, and informal education. This fall, I am beginning the second year of my two-year program and look forward to graduating in 2014.

  For my thesis, I have decided to work with Van Beers and Eric Beers, Waycross Camp's Executive Director and Director respectively, to evaluate the 2012 L.I.T. program's value in terms of its application and transferability. My research will not only provide recommendations for future Waycross Camp leadership programs, but will also shed light on the degree of relevancy and influence youth leadership programming offers adolescents.

  I am writing to ask if «First_Name» is interested in participating in my research. As a participant, «First_Name» would be asked to partake in a 45-60 minute audiotaped interview regarding L.I.T. week 2012, which would take place via telephone or Skype. Additionally, I may request a second interview (i.e., 15-20 minutes) to ask «First_Name» a series of follow-up questions should clarification be needed. During the interview(s), I would ask «First_Name» about L.I.T. week, focusing on the camp experience, notions of leadership, and the program's application/value. Please note that «First_Name»'s identity would not be disclosed in any of my reports or published articles and that any and all feedback will not be discussed with other L.I.T.s or Waycross Camp staff/directors. In other words, participants' confidentiality and privacy rights are of the utmost importance. In addition, participation in this research or lack thereof will not affect «First_Name»'s present or future relationship with Waycross Camp.

  It is my hope that my final research analysis will be presented for peer review and subsequent publication in academic journals and professional conferences. Regardless, upon completing my research, I will be more than happy to share my aggregated findings, final analysis, and thesis defense with participants and their families if they are interested.

  Attached you will find a participant consent form and a parent/guardian consent form, detailing my research proposal and participants' rights. If you are interested in participating, please sign the consent forms, place them inside the stamped/pre-addressed envelope enclosed,

and mail them to me by Friday, September 27, 2013. I will contact all interested parties by October 1, 2013.

       I would greatly appreciate your participation and contribution to this endeavor should you choose to participate. Please don't hesitate to contact me; Waycross Camp Directors, Van Beers and Eric Beers; my academic supervisors, Dr. Anila Asghar and Dr. Lynn Butler-Kisber; or McGill University Research Ethics Board (R.E.B.) manager, Lynda McNeil should you have any questions or concerns. Contact information can be found on the enclosed consent forms.

       Sincerely,

Katlyn Martin
Department of Integrated Studies in Education (DISE)
3700 McTavish Street, McGill University
Montreal, QC Canada H3A 1Y2

Appendix C: Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Parent/Guardian Consent Form (For Participants Under 18 Years Old)
Leaders-in-Training (L.I.T.) interview

Based on your child's participation in Waycross Camp's summer 2012 Leaders-in-Training (L.I.T.) program, (s)he is invited to participate in a follow-up study conducted by Katlyn Martin, former Waycross Camp Leadership Coordinator. Questions related to the practicality and applicability of leadership skills; the transferability of leadership development curriculum content; and recommendations for improvement will be explored. This research will not only help Waycross Camp improve L.I.T. week for future participants, but will also shed light on the degree of relevancy and influence youth leadership programming provides adolescents. Additionally, as a graduate student at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, this study will supplement my M.A. thesis through the Faculty of Education.

For the purpose of the research, I would like to ask your permission to interview your son/daughter. The individual interview will last between 45-60 minutes and will take place either via telephone or Skype. Please note: Although unlikely, when conducting interviews by Skype, as with any data transmitted over the internet, there is a risk of interception of data. Additionally, I may request a second interview (i.e., 15-20 minutes) to ask your son/daughter follow-up questions should clarification regarding his/her primary interview be needed. All interviews will be audiotaped, transcribed, and coded for accuracy. The identity of your child will not be disclosed in any of my reports or published articles and his/her feedback will not be discussed with other participants or Waycross Camp staff/directors. Any identifiable information will be excluded from my analysis in an effort to protect your child's confidentiality and privacy.

Your child's participation is strictly voluntary, meaning (s)he can opt out of the study at any time. I do not foresee any discomfort, risk, or threat to your child's psychological or physical well-being as a result of participating in this study. Your decision to allow your son/daughter to participate or opt out of the study will not affect your or his/her present or future relationship with Waycross Camp or McGill University. If you have any questions about the study, please don't hesitate to ask me. Furthermore, if you have any concerns about your child's participation in this study, please contact my academic supervisors, Dr. Anila Asghar and Dr. Lynn Butler-Kisber.

It is my hope that the final analysis will be presented for peer review and subsequent publication in academic journals and professional conferences. Regardless, upon completing my research, I will be more than happy to share my aggregated findings, final analysis, and thesis defense with participants and their families if they are interested.

I would greatly appreciate your participation and contribution to this endeavor. Should you choose to participate, please mail the attached consent form to the address indicated therein. If you have any questions about this study or its application, please contact me, Katlyn Martin, at katlyn.martin@mail.mcgill.ca or contact my supervisors, Dr. Anila Asghar at anila.asghar@mcgill.ca and Dr. Lynn Butler-Kisber at lynn.buterkisber@mcgill.ca. Any questions or concerns about your or your child's rights or welfare as a participant in this study

should be referred to Lynda McNeil of the McGill Research Ethics Board at (514) 389-6831. Thank you for considering this request.

      Sincerely,

      Katlyn Martin
      Department of Integrated Studies in Education (DISE)
      3700 McTavish Street, McGill University
      Montreal, QC Canada H3A 1Y2

<u>Parent/Guardian Consent Form Signature (For Participants Under 18 Years Old)</u>
Leaders-in-Training (L.I.T.) interview

You are making a decision about allowing your son/daughter to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow him/her to participate in the study if he/she so chooses. If you later decide that you wish to withdraw your permission for your child to participate in the study, please let me know as soon as possible as you may discontinue his/her participation at any time.

Printed name of child   Date

_____   _____

Printed name of parent/guardian   Date

_____   _____

Signature of parent/guardian   Date

_____   _____

Best method of contact (please circle one)   Telephone number or email address

Telephone   Email   _____

Appendix D: Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form
Leaders-in-Training (L.I.T.) interview

Based on your participation in Waycross Camp's summer 2012 Leaders-in-Training (L.I.T.) program, you are invited to participate in a follow-up study conducted by Katlyn Martin, former Waycross Camp Leadership Coordinator. Questions related to the practicality and application of leadership skills; transferability of leadership development curriculum content; and recommendations for improvement will be explored. This research will not only help Waycross Camp improve L.I.T. week for future participants, but will also shed light on the degree of relevancy and influence youth leadership programming provides adolescents. Additionally, as a graduate student at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, this study will supplement my M.A. thesis through the Faculty of Education.

For the purpose of the research, I would like to ask your permission to interview you - asking you about your L.I.T. experience and your thoughts on leadership. The individual interview will last between 45-60 minutes and will take place either via telephone or Skype. Please note: Although unlikely, when conducting interviews by Skype, as with any data transmitted over the internet, there is a risk of interception of data. Additionally, I may request a second interview (i.e., 15-20 minutes) to ask you follow-up questions should I need clarification regarding your primary interview. Both interviews will be audiotaped, transcribed, and coded for accuracy. Your identity will not be disclosed in any of my reports or published articles and your feedback will not be discussed with other participants or Waycross Camp staff/directors. Any identifiable information will be excluded from my analysis in an effort to protect your confidentiality and privacy.

Your participation is strictly voluntary, meaning you can opt out of the study at any time. I do not foresee any discomfort, risk, or threat to your psychological or physical well being as a result of participating in this study. Your decision to participate or opt out of the study will not affect your present or future relationship with Waycross Camp or McGill University. If you have any questions about the study, please don't hesitate to ask me. Furthermore, if you have any concerns about your participation in this study, please contact my academic supervisors, Dr. Anila Asghar and Dr. Lynn Butler-Kisber.

It is my hope that the final analysis will be presented for peer review and subsequent publication in academic journals and professional conferences. Regardless, upon completing my research, I will be more than happy to share my aggregated findings, final analysis, and thesis defense with participants and their families if they are interested.

I would greatly appreciate your participation and contribution to this endeavor. Should you choose to participate, please mail the attached consent form to the address indicated therein. If you have any questions about this study or its application, please contact me, Katlyn Martin, at katlyn.martin@mail.mcgill.ca or contact my supervisors, Dr. Anila Asghar at anila.asghar@mcgill.ca and Dr. Lynn Butler-Kisber at lynn.buterkisber@mcgill.ca. Any questions or concerns about your rights or welfare as a participant in this study should be

referred to Lynda McNeil of the McGill Research Ethics Board at (514) 389-6831. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Katlyn Martin
Department of Integrated Studies in Education (DISE)
3700 McTavish Street, McGill University
Montreal, QC Canada H3A 1Y2

Participant Consent Form Signature
Leaders-in-Training (L.I.T.) interview

You are making a decision about your participation in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate in this study. If you later decide that you wish to withdraw from the study, please let me know as soon as possible as you may discontinue your participation at any time.

Printed name of participant   Date

_____   _____

Signature of participant   Date

_____   _____

Best method of contact (please circle one)   Telephone number or email address

Telephone   Email   _____

Appendix E: Interview Guide

<u>Leaders-in-Training (L.I.T.) Interview Guide</u>

Opening script:

   Thank you for your participation in my thesis project. I am interested in your thoughts, opinions, criticisms, and feedback on the 2012 L.I.T. program, namely to evaluate and to improve the L.I.T. curriculum, gain insight into your views of the L.I.T. program's value, and understand the impact summer camp settings have on leadership development. Thus, your feedback - both positive and negative - is important.

   That said, please answer the following questions as completely and honestly as possible. Rest assured any identifiable information will remain confidential throughout and upon the completion of my research. Furthermore, please know that your responses will not affect your present or future relationship with Waycross Camp.

   Feel free to elaborate, ask questions, and stop the interview at any time for any reason.

- Do you have any questions?
- Are you okay with your interview being audio-recorded?
- Are you ready to begin?

Interview questions:

- **Overview questions:**

  1. How would you describe your L.I.T. experience?
  2. What were your favorite sections from the L.I.T. sessions?
  3. What activities stand out to you from L.I.T. week 2012?

- **The camp experience:**

  1. Did Waycross Camp (i.e., opposed to an alternate location) impact your L.I.T. experience? If so, how?
  2. Did other L.I.T. program participants (i.e., opposed to a different set of peers) impact your L.I.T. experience? If so, how?
  3. Did the camp staff (i.e., opposed to a different set of program facilitators) impact your L.I.T. experience? If so, how?

- **Notions of leadership:**

  1. When you think of leadership, what five words or terms come to mind?
  2. What particular leadership interests and goals do you have as a youth leader?

- **Program application/value**

    1. What, if anything, did you find beneficial, meaningful, and/or worthwhile about your L.I.T. experience?
    2. Have you been able to use anything you learned from L.I.T. week since summer 2012? If so, what and in what context?
    3. Do you have anything else you would like to ask or add?

Closing script:

Those are all of the questions I have for you at this time. Thanks again for your participation in my research project. Please don't hesitate to contact my academic supervisors, the McGill Research Ethics Board (R.E.B.), or me if you have any questions or concerns. Complete contact information regarding the aforementioned individuals can be found on your consent form.