2014

Documenting The Experiences And Perceptions Of Youth Participants In The Shelton Leadership Challenge Program

Kimberly E. Ingold
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University

Documenting the Experiences and Perceptions of Youth Participants in the Shelton Leadership Challenge Program

Kimberly E. Ingold

North Carolina A&T State University

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department: Leadership Studies

Major: Leadership Studies

Major Professor: Dr. Elizabeth Barber

Greensboro, North Carolina

2014

The Graduate School

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
This is to certify that the Doctoral Dissertation of

Kimberly E. Ingold

has met the dissertation requirements of
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University

Greensboro, North Carolina
2014

Approved by:

Elizabeth Barber, PhD
Major Professor

Comfort Okpala, Ed.D
Committee Member

Ellen Van Velsor, PhD
Committee Member

Deborah Acker, Ed.D
Committee Member

Comfort Okpala, Ed.D
Department Chair

Arnold Barnes, PhD
Committee Member

Sanjiv Sarin, PhD
Dean, The Graduate School

Biographical Sketch

Kimberly E. Ingold was born September 6, 1969, in Albemarle, North Carolina, the youngest of three children. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Business Management from North Carolina State University. Kimberly began her 18-year teaching career in a lateral entry position teaching middle school Exploring Life Skills, a position which drew on her experience in the 4-H program. Transitioning from teaching Life Skills to Computer Skills began with organizing and teaching an afterschool program to show underprivileged students how to disassemble and reassemble a Central Processing Unit (CPU), install software, and carry out basic troubleshooting techniques. Kimberly taught keyboarding the next seven years at the middle school level. In addition to teaching responsibilities, Kimberly has worked with youth teamwork and leadership skills through sports coaching sports mascots, middle and high school cheerleaders, and middle school softball. Kimberly served as advisor for various youth clubs and groups.

Kimberly earned her Masters of Education in Instructional Technology from East Carolina where she was a member of the Golden Key International Honor Society. Upon completion of the Masters program, she chose to pursue her PhD at North Carolina A&T State University where she is a member of Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society in Education. Kimberly has been teaching at the high school level for the past four years.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and friends who have been my cheerleaders throughout my endeavors and to my late parents who have instilled the value of serving Christ and provided me with a Christian home. My parents encouraged and supported my education, drive, and determination to never give up on any of my dreams. They provided me the foundation that has molded me into the person I am today. My strength, wisdom, and positive attitude stems from their unconditional love. My brothers, Terry L. Ingold and Douglas S. Ingold have been there anytime their "baby sister" needed help. Their wives, Elaine Ingold and Sharon Ingold also provided assistance whenever I needed them. Without the encouragement of my friends, I would not have been able to survive these past four years. Dr. Louis Warren provided the spark for me to begin this journey and further my education and his belief in me has been an ongoing blessing!

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all faculty members and colleagues who have coached me in my journey through the Leadership Studies doctoral program. I have enjoyed every moment of my experience at North Carolina A & T State University because of my fellow cohort colleagues, who have given advice and encouragement to me since the first day we were in class together.

Dr. Liz Barber, you have been a true inspiration to me. I sincerely thank you for setting high expectations and modeling what a leader exemplifies. You have taken me under your wing and guided me to extend myself and reach for goals I never thought possible. I am humbled and honored to have worked with you and look forward to working together in the future.

I am deeply appreciative of my committee members, Drs. Acker, Van Velsor, Okpala, and Barnes, who were willing to support my work. I especially thank Dr. Acker for all the opportunities provided to me through the years with the Shelton Leadership Center events.

My study participants inspire me with their positive attitudes and drive to succeed. It has been an honor to get to know them and I look forward to future collaboration with them.

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Abstract

This ethnographic case study (Flyvbjerg, 2011) drew on intensive participant observation, interviewing, and analysis of archival materials, to document the experiences and perspectives of high school and college age participants in the Shelton Challenge, a summer camp designed to inspire and scaffold values-based, transformative leadership. This study focused in particular on youth reports of the impact of the Shelton Challenge experience on their use of reflection, critical thinking, and values in decision-making.

Purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2009) across 13 high school and 4 college students ages 14-19, allowed depiction of differently-positioned informant perspectives. Participant observation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009); fieldnotes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011); online, face-to-face, and teleconference interviews (Briggs, 1986; Gatson, 2011; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009); "power sensitive conversations" (Bhavnani, 1993; Haraway, 1988); and analysis of program-related documents and artifacts (Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2011) were layered (Ronai, 1995) to produce a multiply-voiced account. Data were indexed by emergent themes (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009), analyzed using the constant comparative method (Creswell, 2009), and member checking (Creswell, 2009) provided informant verification.

Cognitive reflection, decision-making, honesty and integrity, and to a certain degree, critical thinking emerged as key outcomes. Youth participants stated that they had learned to recognize the effects of values-based decision-making, reflection, and critical thinking on others, and its importance in leadership. Overall, the youth who participated in this study credited the Shelton Challenge with providing life-changing opportunities to lead, collaborate with teammates, face their fears, learn better communication skills, come out of their shell, gain a sense of accomplishment, and increase their self confidence. Narrative analysis (Chase, 2011) of

themes emerging from indexed field observations, archival documents, and transcripts of conversations with youth, yielded the following four moments in youth experience of the Shelton Challenge: a movement from initial isolation and disequilibrium to group cohesion; breaking out of the comfort zone; learning the value of teamwork; and reflection on a life changing experience. Thus the study documents both *the process* through which the youth moved across their experience in the Shelton Challenge, and also *the outcomes* of that experience. Such findings hold promise to inform program development for youth, particularly in the area of ethical leadership development, and future research on outcomes and processes involved in youth leadership development overall. Finally, the study's findings support the methodological importance of participant observation, interviews, and power sensitive conversations – as opposed to online interviews alone – to more authentically capture youth understandings of phenomena, which might not get expressed if the right questions are not asked.

CHAPTER ONE:

The Challenge of Youth Development

This ethnographic case study (Flyvbjerg, 2011) drew on intensive participant observation, interviewing, and analysis of archival materials, to document the experiences and perspectives of high school and college age participants in the Shelton Leadership Challenge, a summer camp designed to develop, inspire, and scaffold values-based transformative young leaders. Studies that focus on youth leadership development demonstrate the power of leadership skills learned during adolescence in the areas of critical thinking, problem-solving, and reflection, in order to fit youth for successful employment (Cano, 1993; Celuch & Slama, 1999; Densten & Gray, 2001; Gréhaigne, Godbout, & Bouthier, 2001; Myers & Dyer, 2006). These studies also document the challenges faced by varied types of in-school and out-of-school programs attempting to provide leadership development experiences yielding these necessary skills (Balduf, 2009; Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Eisner, 2010).

Martinek and Schilling (2003), who study youth leadership, argue that a youth's basic needs, including safety, personal gratification, and social needs must be met before leadership development can occur. These scholars argue that personal needs "must be acknowledged and addressed before guiding the youth leaders to more advanced levels of leadership" (p. 35). Youth development, then, begins within the self and is developed through first meeting the needs of the developing self. Murphy and Johnson (2011) contend that as young people engage in leadership opportunities they acquire confidence in their decisions and ability to lead. My research examined youth experiences within and perceptions regarding a program that aims to nurture young leaders and through nurturing them, to provide the skills they need for success in their futures.

The Shelton Challenge is a youth development program run by the Shelton Leadership Center. The Shelton Leadership Center was created by North Carolina State University (NC State) in 2001 for the purpose of supporting values-based leadership. General Henry Hugh Shelton, the 14th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is a 1963 graduate of NC State and the only North Carolinian to become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. General Shelton's lifelong commitment to leadership with integrity prompted the NC State initiative to develop the Shelton Leadership Center. From General Shelton's affiliation with NC State emerged a non-profit center with the vision of inspiring present and future generations of values-based leaders (Shelton Leadership Center ByLaws, 2011).

The focus of the Shelton Leadership Center is intergenerational, and aims to provide values-based leadership for corporate, K-12 education, and non-profit agencies ("Shelton Leadership Center," 2011). The mission of the center is "to inspire, educate, and develop values-based leaders committed to personal integrity, professional ethics, and selfless service" (Shelton Leadership Center ByLaws, 2011, p. 1). The support and guidance from adults that General Shelton received throughout his childhood influenced him to want to provide positive assistance to the next generation of youth. The result is the Shelton Challenge, a six-day residential experience for rising high school freshmen to seniors. In order to participate, youth must be rising freshmen to seniors, and possess a minimum 3.0 grade point average. Scholarships are available for students who are unable to afford the cost.

Students in the Shelton Challenge participate in activities aimed to promote the development of General Shelton's five cornerstones of values-based leadership: honesty, integrity, diversity, social responsibility, and compassion. As they work to understand these cornerstones, youth have opportunities to learn reflection and personal assessment; explore the

role of values within the decision-making process; and engage in goal setting, teamwork and empowerment (Shelton, 2009). Key objectives for the Shelton Challenge include identifying basic leadership skills; gaining experience with public speaking; exploring leadership styles, goals, and motivation of others; and developing interpersonal skills ("Shelton Leadership Center," 2011).

Why Study Youth Leadership Development?

Research is needed that examines how youth acquire the skills and knowledge needed for successful employment, which include self-awareness – the ability to reflect and use self-management strategies; awareness of the importance of working from personal and professional values; and the ability to work with and inspire others to achieve group goals. Many view these skill sets as integral aspects of leadership, which must be developed and nurtured in youth over time. Currently, even though most people recognize that leadership development is important for youth, young people entering the workforce demonstrate significant areas of weakness.

Arum and Roska (2011) have identified weaknesses in four facets of student development: values, critical thinking, decision-making, and reflection. They found that students entering college were "poorly prepared by prior schooling for highly demanding academic tasks"(p. 3). Balduf (2009) argues that even those students who possess significant ability and earn high grades are still inadequately prepared for the challenges of entering college; a lack of needed skills presents such a challenge that many state they are not ready for college.

Casner-Lotto and Barrington (2006) found that students lack preparation for the workforce in what they describe as both basic and applied skills. Their study, which required over 400 U.S. employers to rank employee skills by level of importance defined basic skills as proficiency with English (both spoken and written), reading comprehension, mathematics,

science, government/economics, and humanities/arts. Applied skills included critical thinking, problem solving, leadership, teamwork, and communication (both oral and written). The employers reported deficiencies in new workforce entrants at every educational level studied (these included high school diploma, two-year degree, and four-year degree), with the greatest deficiencies among workers directly out of high school. As the educational level of the workers increased, deficiencies declined. Seventy-two percent of employers reported that workforce entrants with a high school diploma fell short in writing, 53.5% reported weaknesses in math, and 38.4% reported weaknesses in reading comprehension, skill categories ranked by employers as very important. Eighty and nine-tenths percent of employers reporting deficiencies in applied skills of written communication, 70.3% reported weakness in professionalism/work ethic, and 69.6% reported weakness in critical thinking/problem solving. The Casner-Lotto and Barrington (2006) report and others like it demonstrate that the educational system alone cannot provide what prospective employers seek in terms of workplace readiness. Young people must acquire such development in alternate settings.

This lack of worker knowledge/skills is not limited to the United States. Australian employers, for example, seek workers with the skills of "literacy and numeracy, teamwork, communication, problem-solving and the ability to use equipment and technology" (Taylor, 2005, p. 204). Workforce deficiency is a global issue that companies must address to sustain competitiveness. Competitiveness within the global economy requires highly skilled employees entering the workforce. This need for skilled employees is increasing as the baby-boomer generation grows closer to retirement, producing a shortage of available skilled workers (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006).

Some researchers attribute youth attitudes and perceptions correlate with their work ethic. For example, Taylor (2005) notes a decline in the quality of youth employees, and points to a lack of company loyalty, extreme aspirations which result in youth perceptions of certain labor jobs being beneath their standards, and questionable attitudes toward work in general.

Peddle (2000), who studies workforce deficiencies, found that employer interest in training and education has increased because employee workforce deficiencies adversely affect their businesses. Instead of being able to hire employees who already possess the necessary workplace skills, businesses must create the productive employees they need, themselves.

Research has shown that opportunities for leadership training during childhood and adolescence can help prepare youth to make more effective choices by providing a foundation of values (Murphy & Johnson, 2011; Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003). Many youth programs are available that teach students new skills, avoid a mundane routine, and provide opportunities for enjoyment (Perkins, Borden, Villarruel, Carlton-Hug, Stone, & Keith, 2007). Some leadership development programs provide instruction that aims to enhance basic skills as well as leadership in youth. My study examined youth understandings of their experiences in such an alternate setting: the Shelton Leadership Challenge.

Significant within the Shelton Challenge is an emphasis on youth development and leadership that is both values-based and transformational. Transformational leadership employs the leader's capabilities of influence and empowerment to help the follower to achieve her/his goals (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Transformational leaders recognize that their actions are influential in a follower's ability to make appropriate choices. Setting an example for others is a characteristic of both values-based leadership and transformational leadership.

Theoretical Orientation

Three strands of scholarship on leadership – transformational leadership, values-based leadership, and youth leadership development – form the theoretical grounding for my research. Research on transformational leadership is plentiful and the construct is widely supported (Judge & Piccolo, 2004), however the majority of studies incorporate a comparison with transactional leadership. Studies of values-based leadership have amplified in recent years because of the number of scandals within corporate America. Scandals have led companies to seek leaders who embody positive values while at the same time are able to sustain profitability (Reilly & Ehlinger, 2007). Values-based leadership is usually studied by focusing on individual specific characteristics such as integrity, respect, and ethical issues. Research shows a gap, however, regarding studies that examine the relationships between values-based and transformational leadership (Fernandez & Hogan, 2002; Konczak, Stelly, & Trusty, 2000).

Studies of youth leadership development have provided information on the benefits to youth, as well as varied approaches to the development of leadership skills through programming for this population. Plentiful literature is available on the topic of youth leadership and residential programs designed for leadership development. According to Henderson, Thurber, Whitaker, Bialeschki, and Scanlin (2006), however, studies of youth development in a camp atmosphere that uses different assessment procedures, draw on convenience samples, lack large-scale samples, and as a result produce inconsistent information. Their study tried to create large-scale consistency of youth outcomes across accredited camps within the country. It was successful in creating a tool designed to collect information and outcomes of youth development at camp. The study's findings reiterate the importance of positive youth development through experiential learning. While my study was delimited to a small sample of 17 youth, it focused on

some of the key facets of leadership, social and thinking skills that Henderson et al. suggest should be addressed with high school age youth.

My study looked at youth experiences and perceptions in a program that emphasizes development of values, critical thinking, decision-making, and reflection within a framework of values-based and transformational leadership. The Shelton Challenge emphasizes developing the facets of decision-making, critical thinking, reflection, and values. Within this framework the Challenge also works with Shelton's five cornerstones of values-based leadership that include honesty, integrity, compassion, social responsibility, and diversity.

Purpose of the Study

My study draws on participant observation, archival materials, interviews, and power sensitive conversations with youth to document the experiences, perspectives, and learning of new participants in the Shelton Challenge, a program which had (at the time of my fieldwork in 2013) existed for 11 years, yet its outcomes had been only documented anecdotally, in ways that allowed reflection for program leaders only. Such data thus far had been used for program development only, and the search continues at the Shelton Challenge for strategies to capture more longitudinal documentation of program outcomes for participants. My research, which focuses on my field observations and the first hand perceptions of youth participants, themselves, holds promise as a first step in documenting outcomes in ways that might be more broadly useful to a wider range of youth leadership development practitioners and scholars.

The Shelton Challenge is a residential experience that provides leadership development within the construct of values based leadership. Since the program's emergence in 2003 over 1,000 youth have graduated (Shelton Leadership Center ByLaws, 2011). My study took place during the second of three 2013 Shelton Challenge camps held on the NC State campus.

Informants included first year participants and those who were returning to take on a new role within the camp as Peer Leaders and Coach/Mentor/Trainers (CMTs).

Research Questions

Ethnographic research does not necessarily begin with questions, but rather with a focus of inquiry (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009). The initial focus of my inquiry was framed by the following:

How do youth describe the impact of their participation in the Shelton Challenge?

I also knew I wanted to explore certain specific areas of participant experiences, in particular:

Do they credit participation in the Shelton Challenge for influencing their ability to employ values in decision-making? If so, what is the nature of their understanding of this influence? Do they talk about relationships between values and decision-making?

Do they credit participation in the Shelton Challenge for influencing their development as critical thinkers? Do they talk about critical thinking as contributing to their development as leaders?

Do they credit participation in the Shelton Challenge for influencing their ability to reflect on personal actions and behaviors? Do they talk about reflection on one's actions and behavior as contributing to their ability to lead?

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are used in my project.

Transformational leadership - a process that uses emotions, values, ethics, standards, to assess follower motives while influencing them to accomplish beyond their expected goals (Northouse, 2010).

Values-based leadership - influencing others through the commitment to personal integrity, professional ethics, and selfless service (Shelton, 2009).

Youth development- developmental factors that shape leader development over time (Murphy & Johnson, 2011).

Critical thinking - the ability of individuals to take charge, analyze, and assess their thinking on a consistent basis for quality improvement (Paul & Elder, 2002).

Reflection - the ability of an individual to effectively learn from their personal experiences (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985).

Contributions and Delimitations

The data collected in my study allows a view of the Shelton Challenge experience from the perspectives of a participant observer, and a group of youth participants who agreed to be informants in the study. Answers to research questions documented youth perceptions of program outcomes that were especially meaningful to them. Multiple and layered data sources, yielded common themes (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lewin, 1952) from which emerged a view of the developmental process through which youth moved during and after their Shelton Challenge experience.

The study was delimited to a purposeful sample of summer 2013 Shelton Challenge participants who were willing to serve as active informants in my research. Participants included youth who were novice program participants, as well as Peer Leaders who had been participants in previous years, and Coach/Mentor/Trainers (CMTs), who were not required to have participated in the program previously, and whose only requirement was that they had finished one year of college. The number of new peer leaders and CMTs who were able to serve in this role was limited, because half of the staff members return year after year. My study focused on

only one of multiple Shelton Challenge sites in operation throughout the summer of 2013. My informants included only first year participants, all of whom possessed a 3.0 or higher GPA, and were entering any grade from ninth to twelfth (youth who cannot afford to participate can apply for scholarships however competition is competitive); and Peer Leaders and CMTs who held those roles for the first time (CMTs were majority college students).

Organization of the Research Report

Chapter One has provided an overview of the study, which includes information about Shelton Leadership Center and its purpose, my research questions, and the implications of the study. The second chapter provides research-based knowledge to support and define the strands of values-based leadership, youth leadership development, critical thinking, reflection, and decision-making theory that undergird this research. Chapter three describes the methodology used to collect and analyze data. The chapters that follow examine four themes that emerged from the data collected, which constitute a description of the developmental process through which youth moved during their Shelton Challenge experience. A final chapter discusses implications of the study's findings for future research and practice.

CHAPTER TWO:

A Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

For Studying Youth Leadership Development

This study is grounded within the framework of transformational leadership theory, in which leaders focus on the needs of followers. Transformational leaders use a vision to inspire followers to strive beyond required expectations. Transformational leadership was developed by Burns and elaborated by Bass (Bass, 1997). Within this framework leaders transcend self-interest to focus on the needs of their followers (Bass, 1990). Transformational leaders pay attention to the unique differences of their followers, and nurture their growth and development as individuals with a purpose (Bass, 1990). The premise of the Shelton Challenge is that as youth learn about values-based decision-making, critical thinking, and reflection, and apply these to school, work and life, they are nurtured to emerge as a successful role models and potential leaders.

In this chapter, I first set out the worldview within which my research is conceptualized. Next I draw on the following strands of scholarship to complete the framework for my study: transformational leadership theory; values-based leadership; youth leadership development; and reflection, decision-making, and critical thinking. Reflection/Critical Thinking, working in a team and personal growth are fundamentals of the Shelton Challenge's experiential learning environment (Shelton Leadership Center, 2013a). My review of the literature concludes by summarizing the findings that provide support and justification for my study.

The Constructivist/Interpretivist Worldview

According to the constructivist/interpretivist worldview, researchers "gain understanding by interpreting subject perceptions" (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, p. 102). Social reality is

understood as "a construction based upon the actor's frame of reference within the setting" (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p. 80). According to Lincoln et al. (2011), "we are shaped by our lived experiences, and these will always come out in the knowledge that we generate as researchers and in the data generated by our subjects" (p. 104). Multiple realities exist, which must be documented and explored in order to gain the broadest possible picture of the phenomenon under study.

Constructivist/interpretivist researchers rely on observation in the field, interviewing, and analysis of written texts (Angen, 2000) as data sources. They create rich, thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973; 1983) of settings and people, and layer different accounts and data sources to strive for authentic representation. This way of working found a fit with my research focus, its context, my role within it, and the kind of data I collect and analyze. Next I set out the theory base that guided my work.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership (TL) is defined by its outcomes. Individuals who practice TL focus on their followers. They are the visionaries who empower followers to achieve above and beyond their expectations (Aarons, 2006). The leader influences follower attitudes and inspires innovation through the use of enthusiasm, trust, and openness (Aarons, 2006). The transformational leader motivates followers to forgo their self-interest and to see and pursue benefits for the group.

Comparisons between Transformational and Transactional Leadership

Many studies compare transformational leadership with transactional leadership. Transactional leaders view leading as a *transaction* between the leader and the follower: they use rewards and reinforcement to motivate followers to complete tasks. The transactional leader

focuses on reinforcing job task completion by using extrinsic motivation such as rewards (Aarons, 2006). It is possible for a leader to be both transactional and transformational. Bass (1999, as cited in Judge & Piccolo, 2004) argues that the "best leaders are both transformational and transactional" (p. 756). However Bass (1990) makes it clear that transformational leaders do much more: "transformational leaders inspire, energize, and intellectually stimulate their employees" (p.19).

Leadership today is understood as involving engagement between the leader and the follower. According to Bass (1990), two factors that characterize leadership behaviors include: focusing on task accomplishment, and showing consideration for employees. The transactional leader, who is task oriented, rewards job performance and sometimes uses disciplinary threats to raise performance levels; these strategies, however, can be counterproductive and ineffective (Bass, 1990).

Advantages of transformational leadership. On the other hand, four components categorize transformational leaders: idealized influence (or charisma), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1990; Bycio, Hackett, & Allen, 1995; Hater & Bass, 1988; Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). *Idealized influence*, commonly known as charisma, constitutes the vision or mission of what is important, and is transferred to the follower by instilling pride, faith and respect (Hater & Bass, 1988; Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999). Using *individualized consideration*, the leader treats the follower as an individual (Hater & Bass, 1988). *Intellectual stimulation* empowers followers to think in new ways, encourages creativity, and solicits followers' ideas (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Transformational leaders inspire and empower their employees to extend beyond their expectations to become visionaries, themselves. Bass (1990) argues that creating a

vision, inspiring and motivating others to excel, and creating positive relationships built on values and morals provides a foundation for leadership that can help an organization to thrive. Use of these facets supports effective leadership by supervisors and managers, and promotes job satisfaction in the workplace:

> A firm that is permeated with transformational leadership conveys to its personnel as well as to customers, suppliers, financial backers, and the community at large, that it has its eyes on the future; is confident; has personnel who are pulling together for the common good; and places a premium on its intellectual resources and flexibility, and on the development of its people. (Bass, 1990, p. 25)

Providing that type of atmosphere in the job site should promote positive job satisfaction.

Transformational and transactional strategies together. Studies by Howell and Hall-Merenda (1999), as well as Judge and Piccolo (2004), definitely found positive correlations between transformational leadership and follower job satisfaction. Howell and Hall-Merenda's (1999) study included 109 managers and the 317 employees who reported to these managers in a Canadian financial institution. Despite the positive correlations with job satisfaction, these studies found a negative correlation between transformational leadership and follower job performance: only contingent rewards (transactional leadership) correlated positively with follower job performance. Transformational leadership boosted job satisfaction, but lacked impact on job performance.

According to Bass (1990), transformational leadership results in better relationships between supervisors and followers, and through this unification in the vision and purpose of the organization, makes more of a contribution than transactional

leadership alone. On the other hand, stable and predictable environments that compare current activity with prior performance are likely to be lead by an effective transactional leader (Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996).

Bass and Riggio (2006) claim that a transformational leader enhances the transactional exchange by addressing the "follower's sense of self-worth" (p. 4) to employ the follower with involvement and commitment for the assignment. According to Bass and Riggio (2006), transformational leadership encompasses inspiration and commitment for shared visions of an organization, and encourages the empowerment of thinking critically to solve problems by leadership development of their followers by providing coaching and mentoring support.

Capturing Transformational Leadership Attitudes and Practices

The above body of literature provides important guidelines for my research. As a part of the Shelton Challenge procedure participants complete the Posner and Kouzes 's (1993) Leadership Practices Inventory Student (LPI) prior to their summer camp experience. The cohort of student participants from whom my informants were drawn completed the Student LPI self-version and returned it to representatives of the Shelton Challenge prior to their arrival on campus. The Shelton Leadership Center qualified the use of the self-version only and not utilizing the Student LPI Observer-version. The LPI is measured based on the Five Principles of Exemplary Leadership: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart (Posner & Kouzes, 1993). A total score for each principle can range from 1-30. The opening evening the Challenge Director introduces the Five Principles of Leadership to the large group and provides attendees the opportunity to view and analyze their personal scores for self-improvement in the areas of transformational leadership. I

was allowed to examine the resulting scores, and found that one male staff member who had been through the program in prior years, and the older high school female informants scored above average scores (23-30) in the Five Leadership Practices, whereas the younger males had low to average scores (9-19). The Student LPI measures leadership competencies by having participants reflect upon their own behavior and focus on areas for improvement. The Kouzes and Posner's Leadership Model is "a set of skills. And any skills can be strengthened, honed, and enhanced if we have the proper motivation and desire, along with practice and feedback, role models and coaching" (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, as cited in Abu-Tineh, Khasawneh, & Al-Omari, 2008, p. 657).

Empowering, inspiring, and influencing others in a compassionate and motivating manner characterizes transformational leadership best. A transformational leader acts beyond the scope of the assignment or task completion to collaborate with followers to collectively achieve the common or shared goals. Transformational leaders seek the innovation and ingenuity of their followers instead of dictating the process to complete the task at hand.

The exercise of personal leadership is important, whether or not one holds a leadership role within an organization. Being able to understand the characteristics and skills associated with being an effective leader allows youth to become aware of their own actions and increase self-awareness for their own individual development. The Shelton Challenge experience allows for youth to learn and apply skills involved in transformational leadership. My study focuses on the student perceptions of the process involved in developing the skills and experiences needed for them to function in transformational ways. The next section examines scholarship on developing values-based leadership in youth, an area of inquiry, which is sparse and much needed.

Values-Based Leadership

Values explain the direction and focus of people's actions and behavior (Fernandez & Hogan, 2002). General Hugh Shelton (2009) defines values-based leadership (VBL) as "influencing others through the commitment to personal integrity, professional ethics, and selfless service" (p. ix). Shelton's five cornerstones of VBL -- honesty, integrity, social responsibility, compassion, and diversity - are targets of activity and instruction during the Shelton Leadership Challenge experience. The curriculum and activities correlate with the cornerstone focus for the day. These include: Star Power – Diversity; Ethical Decision Making- Integrity, Community Service Project- Social Responsibility.

Integrity is critical in making the decision to do the right thing, rather than just abstaining from the wrong behavior (Parry, 2000). When followers perceive leader integrity, they report satisfaction in the workplace. These followers are more likely to become intrinsically motivated and work beyond the expected requirements (Parry, 2000). Integrity produces leadership behaviors that are relative to transformational leaders such as vision, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. Harry M. Jansen Kraemer, Jr. (2003), former chairman and CEO of Baxter International, Inc., stated in a conference address that "integrity defines the structure of everything we must do. Integrity guides our decisions and protects us with its strength. For integrity to work, we need to know what it is, how it works, and where it fits into our business lives" (p. 244).

Branson (2007), a scholar of the theory of authentic leadership, studied the leaders of seven primary school principals in Brisbane, Australia. According to Branson,

authentic leaders "act in accordance with their personal values and convictions thereby building essential credibility, respect, and trust" (p. 225). Branson argues that authentic leaders understand how their values affect their behaviors. In order to act in accordance with these values, one must have knowledge of one's own values, which can be obtained through self-reflection. Branson's study showed that principals gained an understanding of their values and how these influenced their behavior through the use of a deeply structured self-reflective process (Branson, 2007).

England and Lee (1974) identified seven ways that leaders are affected by values:

1. Values influence the perception of situations.
2. Leader's values determine the decisions for constructing solutions to a problem.
3. Values influence personal relationships.
4. Values influence the perception of success and achievement.
5. Values create boundaries for ethical or unethical behavior.
6. Values determine whether a leader accepts or rejects organizational pressure and goals.
7. Values affect leadership performance and achievement.

Russell (2001) found that the values of honesty and integrity are essential for the development of good leaders. However, good leadership also encompasses other values such as concern for others, fairness, and justice.

Values undergird the decisions and actions of leaders. Integrity, trust, and honesty are leader values which increase motivation for followers to work beyond expectations. The Shelton Challenge incorporates the five cornerstones founded by

General Shelton with activities and reflection time for youth during which they are scaffolded to examine their values and beliefs and the impact these have on their behaviors and actions. Learning to act upon values and beliefs at a young age is important in the leadership development of youth. Scholarship on youth leadership development forms another essential component of my study.

Youth Leadership Development

As youth grow and mature, many influences can affect their development in terms of how and when they begin taking on leadership roles. Some early developmental factors include genetics, temperament, parenting styles, and early learning experiences (Murphy & Johnson, 2011). As young children mature in age and grow psychologically, they being developing their individualized identities, and learn self-regulation behaviors (Murphy & Johnson, 2011). A sense of identity and the ability to self-regulate can impact the future development experiences of young people, and their effectiveness as individuals and potential leaders, into their adult life.

Fertman and Van Linden (1999) asserts that leadership skills can be learned and practiced by all adolescents. Fertman lists stages of leadership development in youth that include: awareness, interaction, and mastery. During the *awareness* stage, youths are not yet sure of their leadership potential and do not see themselves as leaders (Fertman & Van Linden, 1999). During the *interaction* stage youths strengthen their skills, build confidence, and begin to understand qualities of respect. However, they can experience frustration if they see leadership from only a positional point of view. For instance, leadership, to a student, can mean taking the role of a class officer or a team captain, which is a form of positional leadership. During the *mastery* stage youth begin to model leadership and exhibit influence over others using their leadership skills. At this stage

they have developed a range of interpersonal skills such as communication, decision-making, and stress management (Fertman & Van Linden, 1999).

When young people have opportunities to experience and practice their leadership skills and build confidence, they begin to have a voice. Being able to voice an opinion in planning, implementing and problem solving promotes self-confidence (Serido, Borden, &Perkins, 2011). At this stage youth can actively participate in school decisions and influence the activities and structures of their school (Mitra, 2007). Voicing an opinion on selection of the homecoming queen, or on a school government matter, allows youth to share opinions and possible solutions to school issues. Through the capability to lead changes within the school and collaborate with adults on vital issues such as improvements in school climate and instructional feedback, young leaders can have an impact on their peers (Mitra, 2007). Youth organizing promotes a collective decision making process, and allows for youth to make the decisions instead of all decisions being predetermined by adults (Christens & Dolan, 2011).

As youth practice skills that influence leader development, motivation, and interest in leadership (Chan & Drasgow, 2001), they are developing their role, which becomes part of their self-identity. Lord and Hall (2005), scholars in youth leadership and identity, have found that personal identities emerge and become central to young people's sense of self by learning through first hand experiences and observation of others. Skills and knowledge become incorporated in their self-concepts as leaders, while identities begin to shift from "individualistic to more collective orientations as their expertise develops" (Lord & Hall, 2005, p. 592). Self-view is key in transformational leadership; self-assessment allows the person to understand self and then use that understanding to better lead others. Roush and Atwater (1992) concur that those individuals whose perceptions of self are similar to others' perceptions of them, were

considered more successful leaders. The ratings between the self and subordinates are close when the person is considered to be more of a transformational leader, whereas, the further apart the ratings, the less transformational (Roush & Atwater, 1992).

Leadership development can be learned not only in school but also in various other experiences such as camp. According to Henderson et al. (2006), "well-designed, well-implemented, youth centered programs consciously using a youth development model result in positive outcomes for both young people and their communities" (p. 3). Camps can provide a unique intensive experience of interaction with both adults and peers while involving young people in activities that are structured and new: "Camps can be influential when they provide experiences in community living with a focus on youth development and recreation" (p. 3). The Camper Growth Index-Camper (CGI-C) is an instrument that measures the camp experience for youth ages eight to fourteen based on four dimensions: positive identity, social skills, positive values and spiritual growth, and thinking and physical skills (Henderson et al., 2006). This instrument was designed specifically to measure youth development outcomes from camp experiences.

Youth development can also take place through engagement in sports. Being a member of a sports team requires teamwork. Coaches set the atmosphere for leadership and teamwork that are learned within the team. Once youth learn to produce their own leadership experiences, they can transfer this skill to other domains (Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008). The authors analyzed outcomes within a soccer team in which the coach set the policies and guidelines for the purpose of fostering leadership development within the team. In this study 12 male athletes and the head coach were interviewed and observed over the course of a sports season in a Canadian city. The researchers did not find any specific life skills that were directly taught on

this team. Instead the head coach provided opportunities in which the student athletes could show responsibility, initiative, respect, modeling, and communication in various ways. These skills were not explicitly taught, but the team members were expected to learn them from having them demonstrated in practice and games. The coach omitted any explanation of why these skills might be important to learn, and failed to provide opportunities for players to apply them in other domains. Despite these flaws, this particular case study connects with my work with the Shelton Challenge in terms of the methodology used: observations and interviews that focus on the process of teamwork collaboration and skills, which build leadership within a group.

Development does not stop when youth graduate from high school. Models such as the Leadership Challenge (Kouzes & Posner, 2012), and the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (HERI, 1996), focus on leadership development of college age youth. Research is sparse in the area of leadership development of youth in college, which differs from that of high school youth. According to Dugan and Komives (2007) the lack of empirical studies for college students have resulted in three problems:

- A significant gap between theory and practice,
- An unclear picture of the leadership development needs of college students, and
- Uncertainty regarding the influence of the college environment on leadership development outcomes. (p.8)

Dugan and Komives (2007) used the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (HERI, 1996) as their framework because of its broad applicability and specific focus for college students. Their study evaluated categories of individual, group, and community values. Within these three categories there were seven critical values addressed: Consciousness of Self, Congruence, Commitment, Collaboration, Common Purpose, Controversy with Civility,

Citizenship, Change and Leadership Efficacy. Change among college students was most noted in the outcomes of Consciousness of Self and Leadership Efficacy. The college environment or other influences were not determined as being the result of the degree in change in the areas of Consciousness of Self and Leadership Efficacy (Dugan & Komives, 2007). The inclusion of college students in my study provided some variance in perceptions and experiences across of my informants.

The Shelton Challenge aims to provide guidance and opportunities for application in various domains within which students can learn and develop responsibility, initiative, respect, modeling, and communication. The Challenge seeks to create an environment of respect, taking risks, viewing failure as an opportunity to grow along with developing skills through and ethical lens in decision making and problem solving (Shelton Leadership Center, 2013a). Teamwork, working in a residential atmosphere for an intensive week of learning, and identifying important leadership traits and competencies, are just a few focus areas of the Shelton Challenge program. Youth participating in this experience may leave with a better understanding of skills that relate to self and team, through reflections and relating experiences to future applications (Shelton, 2011). Self-reflection is an integral part of improving and building skill as a leader.

Reflection

Effective leaders allow time for self-reflection to improve upon their actions and behaviors. Reflection has multiple definitions depending on the situation and the people involved. The definition that best fits my study comes from John Dewey (1953), a scholar in the areas of thinking and reflection: "Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends, constitutes reflective thought" (p. 7). Reflection is the process of

exploring one's own beliefs and experiences that allows for a meaningful, genuine understanding one's actions (Densten & Gray, 2001).

However a thorough examination of one's actions can result in a state of doubt, hesitation, and mental difficulty in the thought process, which according to Brookfield (1995) can lead to discomfort and dissonance in the reflection process. People instinctively resist reflection because they fear what will be discovered. Bad judgments and poor decisions are the results of the absence of reflection (Brookfield, 1995). Dewey (1953) contends that to resolve the doubt and perplexity involves searching for and finding material that resolves the doubt. Being able to reflect upon successes and failures in life experiences through the lens of reflection provides insight into capitalizing an individual's full potential in a leader role: "The main objective for integrating reflection in leadership programs is to maximize individual potential by allowing students to evaluate the significance of their experiences from a leadership perspective" (Densten & Gray, 2001).

Barnett (1995) examined a mentor program for beginning teachers in which reflection is used for building expertise. He describes a process of reflective practice that is grounded in variety of different theories and conceptual frameworks. The process includes five basic components of reflection that are used to enhance expertise. These include:

- Identify the problem.
- Respond with comparisons of other similar situations.
- Frame and reframe the problem.
- Identify possible solutions and outcomes.
- Examine of the outcomes of the situation to determine if they are desirable. (Barnett, 1995; Ross, 1989)

The above process allows individuals to develop mental connections between their thinking as experts, and their actions. Using this process they are able to expand their knowledge and improve their actions. Practice and feedback from others are factors that allow individuals to improve their reflective proficiency (Barnett, 1995). Once individuals are able to improve their reflective skills and gain more knowledge, they should be able to make better-informed decisions.

A goal of reflection is to enhance learning by encouraging individuals to explore and express their knowledge of their experience (Ash & Clayton, 2004). An approach used by Sarah Ash and Patti Clayton (2004) "pushes students beyond superficial interpretations of complex issues; and facilitates academic mastery, personal growth, civic engagement and critical thinking" (p. 140). A structure currently employed in the Shelton Challenge to refine reflective skills divides the process into three phases which include: describe, examine, and articulate learning. Shelton staff learn it as the DEAL model (Shelton Leadership Center, 2013a). According to Ash and Clayton (2004), description focuses on the details of the experience. *Examination* or analysis focuses on the personal perspective that includes "feelings, assumptions, strengths, weaknesses, traits, skills and sense of identity." (p. 140-141). Analysis continues with consideration of the short-term and long-term impact of actions on others, and consideration of alternate approaches and interpretations. The concluding phase involves *articulating* learning, in which application of the experiential learning activity is applied to other issues and future endeavors. Articulating learning into imagined futures improves the quality of learning by supporting the critical thinking skills of youth (Ash, Clayton, & Moses, 2009).

Providing rigor and structure through an analysis process such as the DEAL model (Ash & Clayton, 2004) allows leaders of all ages deeper understanding that can be applied to their

own decision-making. Understanding how and why one's feelings and interpretations can affect real-life issues and impact decisions and actions in the future is crucial to learning how to lead.

Decision Making

Knowledge is key when faced with the task of making a decision. According to Boyd (2001), experiential learning is the best way to teach skills in leadership development to youth. His study addressed a series of skills, including decision making, that are needed to carry out service projects. For fourteen weeks Boyd focused on three groups of inner-city youth participating in 4-H Youth for Community Action, a program that takes students through development activities that include five stages of experiential learning:

- Perform or experience the activity.
- Share what happened.
- Unpack the encounter to identify common themes.
- Generalize the experience to reality through principles and regulations.
- Apply what they learned to their own project or another situation.

(Boyd, 2001)

Forty-seven percent of participants completed the post survey, and initial data signified that students did indeed gain leadership knowledge and skills specific to making decisions and working with groups (Boyd, 2001).

Collaboration with others in making decisions can be a complex task for youth. Gréhaigne et al. (2001) discuss the complexities of making decisions in team sports. Players must be able to make decisions about the actions that need to be taken to achieve their goal, and work together to create a strategy and adjust their actions for effectiveness. Awareness of teammates' strengths and weaknesses helps leaders assess the situation and execute the needed

actions at a given time. As individuals work together as teams, they must take into account the motivational and cultural factors that play an important role in their choices.

As leaders become more competent in their development, their motivation gets reinforced. Within educational settings, however, if decisions are not associated with real-life contexts, decision-making can lack significance for the learning of youth (Gréhaigne et al., 2001). For example, if students are trying to decide how to solve a hypothetical math problem that has no real-life relevance or application for them, it appears far less significant to master than a math problem that is real-life applicable.

Programs that provide decision-making training can be classified by their focus and scope (Baron & Brown, 2009). Baron and Brown describe *focus* as either social or cognitive, and *scope* as general or specific. According to their classification system, general social programs provide training in the areas of interpersonal problems, assertiveness techniques, and decision-making methods; and specific social programs focus on issues with family, sexuality, health, career goals, or other more immediate foci. Baron and Brown argue that "adolescents need substantive social knowledge as well as the interpersonal skills needed to deal effectively with others, what are often called 'life skills'" (p. 24). The Shelton Challenge applies both social and cognitive foci within their curriculum for youth.

Leaders are expected to be able to explore alternatives and consequences for various decisions involving groups. Collaboration across peers from diverse cultural backgrounds makes alternative choices a complex task for youth. Gaining knowledge and practicing decisions with others builds confidence in youth leaders. Being able to successfully think about complex situations by purposefully employing various perspectives to make an informed decision, defines critical thinking.

Critical Thinking

Real life is a complex highway that people have to navigate. Our thought processes are typically simple, rely on behaviors that have become automatic over time, and require minimal application most of the time. Flores, Matkin, Burbach, Quinn, and Harding, (2012) define critical thinking as the skill of comprehensively thinking beyond a superficial level of just simple facts. Celuch and Slama (1999) define critical thinking as an "essential set of reasoning and communication skills required to operate effectively in society" (p.135). A deficiency in the ability to think critically will have an impact on the ability to lead; the resulting mistakes can be costly to overcome (Flores et al., 2012).

Cano (1993) studied the extent and levels of Bloom's Taxonomy evident in the critical thinking of a case of 384 high school students enrolled in agricultural education classes in Ohio in 1988-1989. The results of subtests of the instrument Developing Cognitive Abilities Test showed that students scored higher on the lower basic knowledge level of Bloom's Taxonomy, at 67% correct. However as the Bloom's Taxonomy levels increased to the critical thinking level, student scores decreased to 48% correct. Interestingly, in the breakdown by grade level, there was no significant change in critical thinking from ninth to twelfth grade.

Typical classroom experiences in school allow for learning of content, however, the opportunity to apply that knowledge usually comes after youth enter the job market. Students who are more prepared when they enter the job market usually have the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge/content and acquire life long skills (Thompson, Martin, Richards, & Branson, 2003). A study conducted by Thompson et al. (2003) focused on an instructional model that employs technology and inquiry-based learning in which students are able to connect academics to real-world issues. Participants in the program did not meet face-to-face, but within

a virtual exchange through an online platform. After the program, the instructors indicated improvement of participants in the areas of research skills and role-playing (Thompson et al., 2003). This program provided a safe environment for interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, and explanation, the essential skill-building needed to develop critical thinking skills (Thompson et al., 2003).

Educators at all levels share the goal of developing the complex mental operations to allow for success beyond the classroom into young people's future careers (Torres & Cano, 1995). Torres and Cano (1995) investigated the influence that learning style had on critical thinking abilities in a random sample of 196 senior students enrolled in a college of agriculture. Use of two instruments, the Group Embedded Figures Test, and the Developing Cognitive Abilities Test, revealed that 9% of the variance in critical thinking ability was accounted for by learning style. These researchers argue that learning style is valuable tool for use by educators to promote student critical thinking (Torres & Cano, 1995).

The workforce suffers because critical thinking skills remain under developed in young people who graduate from our public education system. This deficiency in critical thinking ultimately also has an impact on the ability to lead (Flores et al., 2012). The aim of public education is to prepare youth for the workforce and leadership positions. A well-prepared workforce can ultimately be a driving force within the global economy (Flores et al., 2012). Flores et al. (2012) discuss how two people with the same living experiences can construct varying interpretations. How individuals make sense of their experiences has a profound effect on their ability to think critically. Critical thinking allows an individual to construct varying interpretations of events, and leads to a constructivist view of a situation. This ability to

construct multiple interpretations of a situation has implications for an individual's quality of decisions and critical thinking skills (Flores et al., 2012).

Summary

My study focuses on participant experiences and what participants *take away with them* from their summer experience in the Shelton Challenge. It looks at the process involved in helping youth develop skills and experiences needed in order for them to begin to function in transformational ways. Transformational leadership embodies behaviors that empower and influence followers to a higher level of motivation (Aarons, 2006; Bass, 1990; Bycio et al., 1995). Central in the theoretical/conceptual framework that guides my research is the notion of the power of leadership skills learned during adolescence in the areas of critical thinking, problem-solving and reflection, to fit youth for successful employment.

The studies reviewed in this chapter point to a number of critical factors in achieving the above-listed goals: the importance of student learning style, the ability to apply knowledge to scenarios or real life situations, and incorporation of higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy to programs providing learning environments that aim to promote critical thinking. Various reliable and valid measurements were used in these studies to examine values, behaviors, and experiences to provide a construct of models and categories for both transformational and values-based leadership (Abu-Tineh, et al., 2008; Cano, 1993; Henderson et al., 2006; Posner & Kouzes, 1993).

Scholarship on transformational leadership anchors my conceptual framework. From it I take the notion that youth leadership development should be centered in the exercise of personal leadership rather than a role, per se, and that knowing self then scaffolds youth to know and be able to influence others in transformative ways. From the scholarship on values-based leadership

I employ the idea that values undergird ethical behavior and serve as a guide for decision-making.

From youth development literature I take the concept that youth are more open to learning and adapting, and more accepting of change in their behaviors (Henderson, et al., 2006; Murphy & Johnson, 2011). When leader models, coaches, and mentors who practice values-based leadership and transformational leadership surround young people, these youth are more prone to learn and practice those same behaviors to promote task/job satisfaction and motivation others in whom *they* eventually lead. Training through team sports and camps develop skills and behaviors that are tweaked per focus of the provider (Gréhaigne et al., 2001; Holt et al., 2008). Focuses of trainings that promote the selflessness, greater good of the group, and ethical choices, allow for values-based leadership to be integrated within transformational leadership.

Scholarship on reflection, decision making and critical thinking provides exemplar models for teaching how to reflect, stages in experiential learning, and support for the need for critical thinking for workforce readiness as well as leadership. In order to master the skills that go together to create leadership development, individuals must critically reflect on self by assessing their potential and performance: effective leaders maximize their potential through reflection (Densten & Gray, 2001). Seeing multiple sides of an event or issue is an invaluable skill for life and leadership.

Chapter Two has provided the theoretical/conceptual framework that guides my research. Chapter Three sets out the research methods used. The chapters that follow unpack themes emergent in the data collected, and a final chapter provides implications of my findings for research and practice.

CHAPTER THREE:

Methods For Studying Youth Leadership Development

This study plumbs the experiences and perspectives of youth participants who were new to the Shelton Challenge, and youth staff members who occupied positions as Peer Leaders or CMTs for the first time. Chapter One introduced the research focus, and Chapter Two reviewed the literature that forms its theoretical/conceptual framework. This chapter narrates the ways my research methods unfolded in the field. It opens with methodological considerations for ethnography as a writing science; sets out the study's constructivist/interpretivist case study design; introduces the researcher and the research participants; details the use of each methodological component as these were applied in the fieldwork; and unpacks how data were analyzed and conceptualized into themes that, in addition to answering the study's initial research questions, illuminate the big story of youth participation and development in the Shelton Challenge experience.

Conducting and Writing Up Good Ethnography

While for some research paradigms the description of methods may change very little from the initial plan for fieldwork to the final write-up, ethnography conducted within the constructivist/interpretivist tradition requires several things to back up its warrants, one of which is *a detailed account of how methods actually took place in the field*. Indicators of good qualitative research, in general, include that the subjectivities of the researcher and the researched are revealed and accounted for; methods are explained in detail; the most authentic data is actively sought; the findings are transferable to inform others in other locations; and the study's methods are detailed in ways that would allow them to be reproduced in another setting (O'Leary, 2005). The signature criteria for constructivist/interpretivist ethnography, in

particular, are that it is grounded in rich, thick description (Geertz, 1973; 1983), that it is written so as to be understandable and meaningful for those researched as well as other audiences (Lincoln et al., 2011); and that, above all else, it "tells a convincing story" (Sanjek, 1990, p. 385).

These requirements mean that as a researcher I must explain to the reader my subjectivities, that is, my positioning and perspectives, within the study. I must make sure that readers know my account is a product of my own interpretations. I must share my background, and at times, my thinking process, with the reader, so s/he can decide whether my claims are warranted. I do so in the section of this chapter on navigating role, and at various points in chapters that follow.

The criterion of dependability means that my research methods must be well-documented – written up in an understandable way and supported by the literature on best practices in constructivist/interpretivist ethnography; and show clearly how the subjectivities and positionings not only of myself as a researcher, but also the youth informants in my study, have been accounted for in the field and in the writing. Each of us must be revealed as living, breathing human beings who have goals and desires that influence what we do and how we think. In this chapter and throughout the document I have endeavored to make my own positionings clear to the reader, and this chapter introduces my research participants in detail. For the work to be good ethnography, my informants and I have to come off the page for the reader as socially situated individuals. This chapter and those to come, detail my methods as they happened, including the missteps and problems that I faced, and how I worked through these.

The criterion of authenticity requires me to circle back reflexively, over and over again, to question every informant account and data source, including my own interpretations. I cannot take anything at face value. As an experienced secondary school teacher, I have developed a keen sense of when I am getting an authentic account from a young person, and when what I am getting is more scripted or otherwise inauthentic response. In this research project I have had to go after answers to my questions and the construction of my story in multiple ways to get a "crystallized" view that looks at each question and theme from many angles using different data sources. Postmodern texts like mine no longer employ the metaphor of the triangle but emphasize instead the importance of many layers of evidence and a keen consideration of angles of view (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 122). This chapter sets out my data sources, and chapters to come show how I weave the data together to create a convincing story about the outcomes and process of youth participation in the Shelton Challenge.

The criterion of transferability reinforces the importance of a detailed description of methods as they took place, so that the readers can decide whether my findings are transferable to inform others in other locations. The ethnographic criteria of rich and thick description, writing for those who are researched as well as for outside audiences and telling a convincing story, largely rest on the skill of the researcher and the interpretations of readers. Ethnography is a writing science, by definition a writing of culture. While some ethnographies are guided, at least initially, by research questions, the purpose of ethnography is to craft a story of a phenomenon in ways that shed light on particular features of interest to the researcher, the researched, and other audiences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Data are usually collected from a range of sources and then the researcher steps back to look for the big story. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2009) put it, ethnography is ". . . an integration of first-hand empirical

investigation and the theoretical and comparative interpretation of social organization and culture" (p.1). While more positivist forms of research, including more positivist forms of qualitative inquiry, sometimes report data separated out by source, ethnography involves the telling of a story that illuminates some feature or features of social life. In my study, two kinds of findings emerged from the data collected: answers to my initial research questions which focused on outcomes of the Shelton Challenge experience, and a big story that illustrates the process youth went through as they moved through that experience.

Because ethnographic data are not reported out by source as in some other research methodologies, it is incumbent on the researcher to provide a deep accounting for how the meanings produced are grounded. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2009),

> The analysis of data involves interpretation of meanings, functions, and consequences of human actions and institutional practices, and how these are implicated in local, and perhaps also wider, contexts. What are produced, for the most part, are verbal descriptions, explanations, and theories; quantification and statistical analysis play a subordinate role at most. (p.3)

Clearly, constructivist/interpretivist ethnography requires a detailed account of the search itself, a sort of research biography including the stops and starts that characterize this kind of inquiry. While methods are carefully planned beforehand, live interactions in the field with informants flesh out the plans as research opportunities and insights emerge (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009), that could not have been anticipated beforehand. The length of time in the field is critical:

> Once people come to know the researcher as a person who can be trusted…, and who will honor his or her promises…, access may be granted that earlier would have been refused point blank. (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009, p. 57)

Access is far more than permission to enter a setting, examine documents, or interview. Access to an informant's more authentic representation of self comes only with time and the development of trust. The deeper the interaction, the better the chance for authenticity on the part of the informant. Also, the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations deepen over time and experience in the field:

> . . . 'it was only through a slow trial-and-error process [that] I gradually came to understand some of the patterns of behavior'. . . . the ethnographer in the field . . . attempts to maintain a self-conscious awareness of what is learned, how it has been learned, and the social transactions that inform the production of such knowledge. (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009, p. 80)

Researcher reflexivity – the ability to reflect on the three components of the interpretive process described above by Hammersley and Atkinson – takes time in the field, to test one's emerging ideas against further field experiences and avoid the danger of misleading preconceptions.

Constructivist/Interpretivist Case Study Design

Constructivism/ interpretivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1985) is the worldview within which this ethnographic case study (Flyvbjerg, 2011) is conducted. Social constructivists try to understand the world in which they work (Creswell, 2009); the intent is to make sense of the meanings that others have of their social worlds. The researcher collects data from a range of sources, usually observation and interviews, and then generates a theory, pattern of meaning, or story (Creswell, 2009; Emerson et al., 2011; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1990;). Using an ethnographic case study design (Flyvbjerg, 2011) I collected, analyzed, and crafted my report of the experiences and accounts of selected Shelton Challenge participant. Case studies are ideal for focusing on the "lived experiences" (Creswell, 2013, p. 76) of

participants. Studying the experiences of youth participants was critical to understanding the impact of program participation on their development. Case studies explore in depth a program, event, or activity, and focus on real-life contexts (Creswell, 2009; 2013). My study focused on field observations and participant interview accounts of developing leadership practices. In analyzing data I looked for facets of change in the areas of critical thinking, reflection, values-based decision-making, as well as the larger story of what was going on as youth moved through the Shelton Challenge experience. The search for program outcomes in terms of critical thinking, reflection, and values-based decision making guided my research. However the study-in-action captured what happened from my perspective as a participant observer, and the perspectives of youth who framed their accounts in very different ways and who introduced even more relevant frames of reference, as is evidenced in the themes and larger story that emerged from the data, taken as a whole. Ethnographic research and analysis is informed by researcher intuition and the literature, but not pre-determined by it (Strauss & Corbin, 1990):

> Each of us brings to the analysis of data our biases, assumptions, patterns of thinking, and knowledge gained from experience and reading. These can block our seeing what is significant in the data, or prevent us from moving from descriptive to [deeper] levels of analysis. (p.95)

The study draws on data that documents the changing attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics of a selected group of Shelton Challenge participants. Ongoing and recursive data analysis provided themes for interpreting not only answers to research about *program outcomes* per se, but also *the process experienced by youth* as they move through, and then later reflected upon, their Challenge experience. Layered evidence (Ronai, 1995) including field notes from participant observation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009); formal/informal interactions and

"power sensitive conversations" (Bhavnani, 1993; Haraway, 1988); transcripts of audio and videotaped face-to-face, teleconference or online interviews; and program-related documents and artifacts, was analyzed to gain insight into both the impact and the emerging process of the experience (Creswell, 2013).

Navigating Roles as a Situated Participant and Researcher

It is imperative for researchers to anticipate ethical issues that might arise during various stages of the research process that include defining the research problem or purpose, crafting research questions, or during data collection, analyzing, and writing (Creswell, 2009). My background and multiple roles and connections in this project made me an ideal researcher to conduct this study. Standpoint epistemology (Smith, 1987) argues that personal background, multiple roles, and embeddedness within a research context provide the researcher with a powerful *standpoint* from which to operate. Researcher standpoint constitutes an asset in conducting qualitative research, which operates to create new knowledge using sense-making. Chase (2005) argues that researcher standpoint constitutes a significant analytical lens. While researcher standpoint and critical personal narrative (Chase, 2005) provide powerful analytical tools, they must be regularly re-visited and questioned by the researcher through the practice of reflexivity (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009), and articulated to the reader so s/he can judge the validity of the warrants made.

As I conducted my research I drew on -- as well as questioned -- my own background and situatedness within my study and my multiple roles and relationships with key individuals as an interpretive lenses. To navigate these multiple roles and positionings I drew on my background as an individual deeply rooted in youth development work. Throughout my own youth I had participated in 4-H leadership development programs that were very like the Shelton Challenge.

My involvement with 4-H provided skills that set my vision for the youth with whom I now work, and helped shape me as a transformational leader who works to empower youth to excel in their endeavors. As a high school teacher and youth leader I now strive to help youth meet their needs, and do my best to influence them to grow beyond their set goals. The Shelton Challenge provides training for youth similar to what I experienced in 4-H years ago.

I entered my research project with roots in the Shelton Challenge, as well. In previous years I had participated in Challenge graduation activities where I observed indications of the kinds of impacts the experience might have had on youth participants. Prior to my fieldwork I had collaborated with Shelton Challenge staff in crafting assessment tools for their use in examining program outcomes.

As I conducted fieldwork for this current study I functioned in yet another Challenge connected positioned as an instructor for sessions in the second of three 2013 Shelton Challenge camps taking place at the NC State University campus. During my fieldwork in the role of participant observer, I served as a new instructor, and was thus re-positioned as a kind of program novice, myself, which allowed me to experience the Shelton Challenge anew through my own eyes, as well as through the perceptions of my informants.

Working with Student Informants

Purposeful sampling (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) of first year participants, and first time in their role Peer Leaders, and Coach/Mentor/Trainers (CMTs) from the Shelton Challenge allowed for the depiction of differently-positioned informant perspectives (Creswell, 2009) regarding the impact of the experience on youth. While approximately 70 first year participants populated the universe of Shelton Challenge attendees overall, my eventual pool of informants included high school age first-time participants, and college students who were first-timers in program

leadership roles. Eleven high school age youth were located through a thoughtful collaborative process aimed to protect minor youth as well as the image and reputation of the Shelton Challenge, itself. The Shelton Challenge Director hand-selected first-time high school age participants for invitation as potential informants. She spoke directly with the parents of these youth to explain the opportunity to participate in my study, and answered their questions. She chose youth to be invited for participation in the study based on age and geographic location, in order to obtain as diverse as possible group of informants. I received a list from her of those whose families had agreed to their involvement in the study, along with their email addresses, so I could make my initial contacts.

Prior to this time I had acquired approval for my study from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. IRB clearance to proceed was provided on December 18, 2012, to expire on December 17, 2013, for all materials including the consent form, pre-Shelton Challenge interview guide, post-Shelton Challenge interview guide, and follow-up interview guide. On my first contact, I provided the youth and their parents the opportunity to read and sign an informed consent form (Appendix A) advising them of study procedures, measures in place to protect their identity and provide protection from harm, as well as to address special needs. The form stated that when a participant felt at risk, unsafe, like their identity was being compromised, or for any other reason or no reason at all, s/he could choose to withdraw without penalty of any kind.

A second group of informants consisted of youth who were participating for the first time in roles as Shelton Challenge staff members. To capture volunteers from this potential informant pool I sent an email to all staff members scheduled to work during the focal Challenge week. Prior to the first day of their training only one respondent, a Coach/Mentor/Trainer (CMT), had

responded to my invitation. On the first day of training three more youth staff members agreed to participate, and across the week two more joined my informant pool. One CMT advised me that he had tried the link for the pre- Shelton Challenge questions and it had alerted him that he had already completed the survey. Unfortunately, he had not. He did not inquire with me about the glitch until later in the Challenge week. I had the opportunity to work with the second CMT one day during the week and discussion turned to this summer being his very first year participating. I explained my study and asked if he would be interested in participating. He told me that he had been uncertain of expectations on the first day I invited him in, and then later thought it was too late to join. Once we were able to talk one-on-one he understood my expectations and agreed to participate. Youth informants from the Challenge staff included two high school students -- one Peer Leader and one high school level CMT -- and four CMTs who were college students. With first-time participants described above, this made a grand total of 17 informants. In total five consent forms were emailed to me, and the remaining were signed during registration when youth arrived on campus. Ages of my study participants ranged from 14-19. My resulting sample represents a range of gender, race, ethnicity, and age difference.

Table 1 summarizes informant demographic information about my study participants, and my contacts with each of them. I invited all of them to create their own "fake names" or pseudonyms. My participant/observer role as instructor in the Shelton Challenge allowed me to work one day each with six of the seven teams that formed the focus of my study. Column Five of Table 1 depicts the days of the week on which I had the opportunity to work closely with each study participant. The final three columns document each informant's participation with pre-, post-, and final interviews, as well as the format in which these were conducted.

Table 1

Shelton Challenge Informants

Name	Grade	Age	Race/ Ethnicity	Day On my team	Pre-interview	Post-Interview	Month After Interview
Sarah	9	14	Indian	Thursday	✓	--	--
Leigh	12	17	Caucasian	Friday	✓	✓ online	✓ facebook chat
Dave	11	16	Caucasian	None	✓	✓ online	✓ 1/1 Oovoo
Benjamin	12	16	Caucasian	None	✓	✓ online	--
Laney	9	14	Caucasian	Wednesday	✓ online	--	--
Ivey	10	15	Caucasian	Wednesday	✓ online	✓ online	✓ 1/1 Oovoo
Aleena	10	15	Asian	Tuesday	✓ online	✓ online	--
Laura	11	16	Caucasian	Friday	✓	✓ online	--
Jerry	10	16	Indian	Tuesday	✓	--	--
Winter	11	16	African American	Sunday	✓ online	✓ online	✓ Oovoo focus group
Jordan	10	15	Caucasian	Wednesday	✓ online	✓ online	--
Andrew Peer Leader	12	17	Sri Lankan	Thursday	✓	✓ online	✓ facebook chat
Stephen CMT	12	17	Caucasian	Wednesday	✓	--	✓ 1/1 skype
Anthony CMT	14	19	Sri Lankan	None	--	✓ online	✓ F2f focus group
Thomas CMT	14	19	Caucasian	Monday	--	✓ online	✓ F2f focus group
Preston CMT	14	19	Caucasian	Sunday	✓ online	✓ online	✓ Oovoo focus group
John CMT	15	19	African American	Tuesday	--	✓ online	✓ F2f

Note. Staff=shaded area; Grades above 12 = year in college; ✓= collected data; -- = no data collected; 1/1= one on one interview; F2f= face-to-face interview; Oovoo = teleconference software; skype = teleconference software.

In my writing I have chosen to set off direct quotes from conversations or interviews with informants and render these in italics to highlight and distinguish their voices from the voices of quoted literature. To keep with the authenticity of young people's patterns of speech and presentation of self, youth quotes have not been adjusted for grammar or syntax. To help the "characters" (Kondo, 1990, pp. 307-308) in my story come off the page, short portraits of each follow. My informant pool formed a veritable United Nations of talent.

First Time High School Age Participants

The following were high school age students participating in the Shelton Challenge for the first time:

Sarah. Sarah, who hailed from Atlanta and was of Indian descent, had a personality that was laid back and easy going. She was keenly inquisitive to learn about other people, provided suggestions during group decisions, and encouraged her teammates not to give up during challenging group activities. Sarah regularly broke tense moments by using lighthearted comments.

Leigh. Leigh, always had a smile on her face, was outgoing and willing to jump in and help when needed. She had been selected as captain of her high school cheerleading squad during the same summer as the Shelton Challenge. Leigh took her leadership responsibility seriously, and made sure her group arrived to activities on time. She stepped up to the test of beginning group discussions, task that was not easy for all participants.

Dave. Dave, tall and auburn haired, worked at a kennel playing with dogs. He had good rapport with his team members because he was respectful to the viewpoints and ideas of others. He listened to team members' ideas and was also willing to share his own thoughts. He worked to supported his team through encouragement.

Benjamin. Benjamin was a mature, high school student from Barcelona, Spain who regularly stepped up to lead and guide his group. He challenged his teammates to incorporate divergent thinking in their strategies and reflection. Benjamin went on to complete an internship in a rain forest in Panama during the week following the Challenge.

Laney. Laney, a petite, soft-spoken brunette, was a punctual person and made sure her group arrived on time to activities. Like Leigh, she was a cheerleader for her high school, but nevertheless was reserved within the Shelton group atmosphere. She would speak up when asked a question, or volunteer suggestions after teammates have spoken. Laney later credited her Challenge experience for helping her come out of her shell.

Ivey. Ivey, a talkative young man, enjoyed fishing and impromptu speaking in front of groups. Ivey provided suggestions during group discussions and drew on his prior experiences in Boy Scouts to aid his team in strategic planning.

Aleena. Aleena, preferred completing tasks alone for assurance of accuracy, but was open and willing to collaborate. A young lady of Asian descent, she appeared to be quiet when you saw her outside her team, but when it came to collaborative tasks she was not afraid to speak up and share her point of view. Aleena regularly encouraged respect and honesty within her team.

Laura. It took Laura, a quiet brunette, a while to warm up to people, and she was not very vocal in groups. She was the type of person to follow what her peers chose to do. Laura provided information when she was called upon, but appeared painfully nervous when she led her group.

Jerry. Jerry liked to laugh and was the jokester of the group. A jovial young man of Indian descent, he was outgoing and outspoken. Jerry had a response for most comments, but was highly organized and detailed in his planning.

Winter. Winter, a young African American female had lived in multiple places throughout the United States and the world. She discussed with me how being a military daughter was a good thing in that she had many opportunities to learn about diversity and different cultures. However, she related that this experience was negative for her in the fact that she had to leave friends behind when she moved.

Jordan. Jordan, a tall, shy young man from Eastern North Carolina, was observant in activities and captured details that teammates had missed. He was reserved in group discussions, but credited the Challenge experience with bringing him out of his shell, and stated that he planned on being more outspoken in the future.

First Time Student Staff Members

The remaining youth participants worked as staff for the Shelton Challenge:

Andrew. Andrew, a studious young man of Sri Lankan descent was the only Peer Leader who served as an informant in my study. He was a two-year veteran of the program, and admitted that his family had made him attend during his first year. Quiet and shy but ever with a smile on his face, Andrew was highly cognizant of what his team members needed in order to get the most from their learning experience in the Shelton Challenge.

Anthony. Anthony, Andrew's charming older brother, was personable and like his brother, smiled all the time. His college opportunity had taken him to South Africa to study abroad for the fall semester. As a three-year Shelton Challenge veteran, participating in his fourth year, he took his job as CMT very seriously remained focused on his team. Anthony met

regularly with instructors and Peer Leader to improve his transformational leadership skills for the benefit of his group.

Stephen. Stephen, also a three-year Shelton Challenge veteran, was active JROTC at his high school and carried a military demeanor. Stephen liked to take part in activities as well as observe them. He was personable and outspoken in his group. Stephen enjoyed having fun and encouraging to his followers to participate.

Thomas. Thomas was the quiet guy who always had a smile on his face. Even when burdened with problems, he did not show it. Witty, friendly, and supportive of others, Thomas had participated in the Shelton Challenge only one prior summer, however he attributes the type of person he is today to that experience.

Preston. Preston a skinny brunette with a "soul patch" above his chin, was serious when he focused on his job. His group provided challenges for him during the collaboration and unity phases of the experience. Because he had no prior experience with the Challenge, Preston sought guidance from a veteran instructor at every possible opportunity. When Preston's hidden talents of singing and break dancing emerged at the end of the week, his entire group was awed.

John. John, an African American youth who at first glance appeared to be quiet and shy, revealed himself as personable once you got to know him and he began to open up. John had put his leadership skills to work in founding a new departmental club at his university. John like Preston, had not experienced the Shelton Challenge in the past. However he was able to build a rapport with his group and Peer Leader to fostered unity and cohesion.

Data Collection Strategies

My data collection and analysis strategies are summarized briefly below, and then elaborated in the deeper description of methods-in-action that follows.

Pre- Shelton Challenge Online Interview

An ethnographic online interview (Briggs, 1986, Gatson, 2011; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009) was conducted with each participant prior to participation in the Shelton Challenge to provide background and baseline information about each one. The purpose of interviewing participants before the leadership experience was to gain insight into their perceptions of attitudes, strengths, and weaknesses in their leadership development at that point in time.

Participant Observation

As participant observer (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009), I worked directly with my study participants as a Shelton Challenge instructor during their week of participation in the program. I documented all observations with field notes (Emerson et al., 1995). Audio and video recordings of certain Challenge-related conversations and activities, along with social media and photo-ethnography, were used to document proceedings during the week.

Document Analysis

I conducted document analysis (Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2011) of informants' notes and other program artifacts and key materials (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009). Several participants shared with me their written goals, worksheets, evaluation forms, and notes taken throughout the week.

Post- Shelton Experience Online Interview

I used surveymonkey.com to distribute an online post- Shelton interview (Gatson, 2011) that resulted in responses from 13 study participants. This interview focused on critical thinking, values, reflection, and impact of the Shelton Challenge experience on their decision-making.

Face-to-Face, Teleconference and Focus Group Interviews One Month Later

Several face-to-face or teleconference interview and focus groups were conducted with study participants one month after the conclusion of the Shelton Challenge experience.

Transcription by the Researcher

I completed all transcription myself (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009) in order to stay as close as possible to my data. I created an index of each transcript and constantly compared raw data, transcript, my indexes and field notes from each event.

Member Checking

Member checking (Creswell, 2009) provided my study participants with access to interview transcription and written reports for purposes of verification. An email copy of the draft of write-ups was emailed to each study participant quoted so s/he could verify and/or clarify any misrepresentations.

Methods-in-Action: Power Sensitive Conversations

Ethnographic interviews and power sensitive conversations (Bhavnani, 1993; Haraway, 1988) form a major data source in my research. The term, power sensitive conversation refers to information exchanged between the researcher and participants in informal, non-interview settings that holds potential to provide key information in reaching the objectives of the research. I had the opportunity to talk individually with every study participant on Thursday or Friday of the Challenge week. Each of these conversations was audio recorded. Before we started talking I encouraged these youth to be as real with me as possible so that what they told me might help me learn from them. I explained that if they only told me what they thought I wanted to hear I might not get to learn anything important from them. I also recruited them into my purpose by making sure they knew that the information they shared with me could help other people learn

about youth leadership development in ways that could lead to better programs for the benefit of others like themselves.

Other even more informal conversations took place during events like the bus ride to or from the ropes course, or when I was just hanging out with participants in the dorm lobby. Key information from these conversations was documented in field notes. To capture such spontaneous data sources as accurately as possible in the moment I often spoke quick field notes into my iPhone while I was moving about the campus during times when there were fewer distractions. My iPhone software handily transcribed those spoken field notes into text.

Methods-In-Action: Interviews

Using surveymonkey.com I posted online pre- Shelton Challenge interview instructions and questions (Appendix B), and provided study participants with the opportunity for a dual conversation using a discussion board. Then, two weeks before the first day of the Challenge, I emailed a set of online interview questions specifically to each study participant. Six responded before the Challenge began. Knowing youth as I do, I sent two reminder emails to the non-respondents the week prior to the start of the Challenge. I then set up an open discussion board for asynchronous communication if participants chose to utilize it. I provided a link allowing access to the discussion board through email. Despite these efforts, no other participants chose to respond to the online interview. Unbeknown to me some of the email addresses that were provided to me from their applications turned out to be emails of parents, and not the participants. One participant said she didn't frequently check the email at the address that was provided.

To correct for the above lapses in communication I supplied study participants who did not respond to the online interview with a set of the questions upon their arrival as they checked

in at registration for the Shelton Challenge. Unfortunately there was no time for me to speak to them one on one during this time period, because students arrived sporadically, and my staff duties during registration kept me fully engaged. As a result these study participants answered these questions on paper and returned them to me later on.

The process put in place at this point in time for retrieving the information I was missing from any of my study participants required the assistance of fellow instructors. Station Three of the Shelton Challenge registration set-up was comprised of two instructors collecting camp forms and information. It provided the best place for attempting to get my study materials into the right students' hands as discreetly as possible. I provided a large envelope packet specifically for each study participant to be made available at Station Three. The packet included only documentation that was absent from each one. For instance, certain packets included only the parent consent form, while others held both a consent form and printed interview questions. Several sheets of blank paper were attached to the questions to encourage elaboration answers. I asked that study participants who needed to complete the written interview questions finish their Shelton Challenge registration process, and answer the questions later when they were in their dorm rooms. They could return the packet back to Station Three later on their way to the opening assembly. After registration had ended and the opening assembly began, all of the packets of completed questions and consent forms were handed back to me by the instructor at Station Three. Two of the three youth staff members completed their written interview questions and returned them to me before bedtime on the first evening.

I invited study participants to share their notes and logs from the Challenge experience, and to complete a post-Challenge experience online interview (Appendix C). Saturday following the Challenge week, I sent emails encouraging participants to complete the post-experience

online interview within a week. Then, each day during that week I sent another email reminder of the approaching deadline. Thirteen of the 17 study participants completed the post-Challenge online written interview. Eleven completed the interview within one week of returning home, eight of which were completed within the first three days. The final two were completed within 10 days of returning home.

Approximately one month after Challenge participants had returned home I requested their participation in a reflection interview (Appendix D) and provided three possible dates for a focus group teleconference using Oovoo, teleconferencing software:

- Saturday, August 17, at 10am EDT
- Sunday, August 18, at 3pm EDT
- Tuesday, August 20, at 8pm EDT

The first focus group time reaped one attendee. The second focus group online time of Sunday afternoon pulled in two. The third online focus group left me online with only myself. I had a prior notification from one study participant that he could attend, and he later apologized later that he had forgotten.

I continued to send out more email requests for participants to contact me for the follow up interview. I offered to meet people in person in Raleigh and was elated that three CMTs responded. Because one of them had a work conflict, I was not able to meet with all three at the same time. On August 22, at 7 pm, I met with Thomas and Anthony and immediately following I met one on one with John on the campus of NC State. August 24, 2013, became the most productive day. I first interviewed Stephen at noon through Skype, then Dave at 2 pm using Oovoo, and Andrew at 5:50 pm through Facebook chat. Leigh was the final interview on September 1, at 1:51 pm, conducted using Facebook chat.

Videoconference interviews were recorded using QuickTime screen recording on a Macbook Pro. During one Oovoo interview I had to take notes because for some reason the video was not recording during the interview. The face-to-face interviews were recorded using audio software. Using these methods I had 100% participation of the six youth staff members in the one-month follow-up interview. Four of the eleven first time Challenge participants engaged in the one-month reflection interview.

Data Analysis

A case involves observing a phenomenon from one particular angle or angles (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009). In my study the Shelton Challenge was examined from my perspective as a researcher situated within the program as participant observer, and the perspectives of youth participants, with the objective of uncovering patterns while at the same time never neglecting the power of anomalous finding to inform key research questions, or to elaborate on key themes. As researcher I was the one making decisions, and so I had to constantly compare one set of data against another, and pull in my study participants for member-checking as to whether I had rendered their actions and viewpoints accurately. Each study participant had the in the opportunity to clarify, adjust, and confirm transcription information and text segments containing quotes from that material (Creswell, 2009).

Creswell (2013) argues for focusing on key issues to understand the complexity of the case. Ethnographic case analysis is iterative; unlike quantitative data analysis in which the analytic process is linear, qualitative case analysis involves locating themes within the data, and continually circling back on these themes as other data is collected, to search for commonalities, conflicts, patterns, and anomalies. Case analysis an ongoing and recursive, moving sometimes one step forward, and then circling back to examine each new theme in terms of the others. As

themes accumulate, researcher reflexivity (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009) becomes more important. The researcher has to question her own decisions, examine her own background and be aware of her own proclivities and motivations that influence her perceptions of themes as these emerge from the data.

The point of ethnographic analysis is to use the data to think with:

> . . . in order to produce and ethnographic study that is equally rich in data and concepts, it is not enough to merely manage and manipulate the data. Data are materials to think with. (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2990, p. 158)
>
> One looks to see whether any interesting patterns can be identified; whether anything stands out as surprising or puzzling; how the data relate to what one might have expected on the basis of common-sense knowledge, official accounts, or previous theory; and whether there are any apparent inconsistencies or contradictions among the views of different groups or individuals, within people's expressed beliefs or attitudes, or between these and what they do. (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009, p. 163)

To think with my own data, I layered all my sources to complete the final level of analysis and write-up (Creswell 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lewin, 1952), and used the constant comparative method (Creswell, 2009) to search for themes. Using discourse analysis (Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2011; Potter & Wetherell, 1987) a process of deep, detailed and repeated readings of all sources, I created indexes for each of the ideas that seemed salient to me (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009).

Indexing can be done in several different ways, but for my case analysis I wrote field jottings (Emerson et al., 1995), deeper field notes in the field whenever I could, and used my

iPhone to record my own voice notes. As soon as I was out of the field and at my computer, I drew on these field materials to flesh out formal field notes and field tales (Hamera, 2011) that included deep descriptions as well as my own impressions and understandings of events and people. Using these materials I then created an index of the important ideas or concepts that seemed to reveal themes and that arose in the data. I used the process of indexing salient themes that seemed to be present within each set of formal field notes. My indexing at times was simply a matter of writing in the margins of my formal field notes, and other times, it took the form of writing analytic memos to myself (Emerson et al., 2011; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009). I similarly indexed program materials, including those shared with me by my study participants. Indexing also took place as I transcribed interviews and power sensitive conversations with youth participants. As I transcribed, I kept a log of key ideas as these emerged.

Finally, using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the index I created of each data document was compared to that of others – field notes to interviews, interview to interview, etc. – layering one evidence source against another to check the relevance of emerging themes against a core narrative storyline. Analysis rests on the layering of evidence from different sources (Ronai, 2011), and rich thick description (Geertz, 1973, 1983): "the main strength of the case study is depth – detail, richness, completeness, and within-case variance" (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 314). Lofland (1974, as cited in Hammersley & Atkinson, 2009) argues that

> . . . a successful ethnography involves a text that specifies constituent elements of the analytic frame, draws out implications, shows major variations, and uses all these as the means by which the qualitative data are organized and presented. Further, it should be eventful: endowed with concrete interactional events, incidents, occurrences, episodes, anecdotes, scenes and happenings someplace in the real world (p. 196)

My analytic framework explored the potential of the Shelton Challenge to scaffold the learning and use of leadership skills in the areas of critical thinking, reflection, and the use of values in problem-solving and decision-making, that might fit youth for successful employment. Transformational leadership anchored this frame. Youth leadership development should be centered in the exercise of personal leadership rather than a role, per se; knowing self scaffolds youth to know and influence others in transformative ways.

In addition to finding answers to my research questions regarding youth outcomes in terms of critical thinking, reflection, and values-based decision-making, from close narrative analysis (Chase, 2011) of indexed field materials, four themes emerged that formed a clear core storyline. Strauss and Corbin (1990) argue that

> . . . to achieve integration, it is necessary . . . to formulate and commit yourself to a story line. This is the conceptualization of a descriptive story about the central phenomenon of the study. (p.119)

Similarly, Emerson et al. (2011) state:

> In writing an ethnographic text, the writer organizes . . . themes into a coherent 'story' about life and event in the setting studied. Such a narrative requires selecting [themes] and then linking them into a coherent text representing some aspect or slice of the world studied. (p. 202)

The themes that emerged from the layering of indexes from all my data sources formed a story recounting not just youth perceptions of Shelton Challenge *outcomes*, but also of the *developmental process* they went through across the week of the experience, and their reflections several weeks later after they had re-entered their everyday worlds. Narrative analysis (Chase, 2011) of themes emerging from indexed field observations, archival documents, and transcripts

of conversations with youth, yielded the following four moments in youth experience of the Shelton Challenge: a movement from initial isolation and disequilibrium to group cohesion; breaking out of the comfort zone; learning the value of teamwork; and reflection on a life changing experience. Thus the study documents both *the process* through which the youth moved across the week in the Shelton Challenge, and also *the outcomes* of that experience.

In the next four chapters I employ narrative methods—that is storytelling (Chase, 2011)—to unpack these themes. The process of an ethnographic study begins with a research focus—for me, the perceptions of youth on take-aways from the Shelton Challenge. Ethnography is iterative, however; themes evolve in the field that were not envisioned in the original set of research foci or questions.

Also, it is important to note that as I describe Challenge week events, I am depicting only what happened within this one single Challenge time and location. The Shelton Challenge had six locations and times in summer 2013 and has taken place for eleven years. My depiction should not be understood as describing all instances of the Shelton Leadership Challenge in action, but rather this one only.

CHAPTER FOUR:

From Isolation and Disequilibrium to Building Cohesive Bonds

This chapter focuses on the first developmental moment in youth experiences of the Shelton Challenge: their movement from entering the program as isolated individuals whose sense of equilibrium was intentionally shattered at the outset, in order to help them recognize the need for building cohesive bonds with teammates in order to lead and succeed. Collaboration and the giving and earning of trust in strangers, constituted significant challenges that participants faced at the beginning of the Shelton week. Participation in activities in which total strangers were asked to complete tasks that required input and physical help from every team member, required youth to build trust in their team members as quickly as possible.

Upon arrival youth were inquisitive about aspects of the camp because they had not been provided with a schedule for the week. Full of uncertainty, they bombarded the staff with their questions. However, the Shelton culture encourages youth to utilize any and all resources provided to seek out their answers on their own. Some participants were accustomed to this type of practice, however it served as a major frustration to others.

Shelton Culture: Setting Youth Up to Find Power in Each Other

During registration, staff members positioned at various stations in the receiving area in Alexander Hall, on the NC State Campus had given every attendee a manual for their use throughout the week. This manual functioned as the primary information resource for expectations, responsibilities, goals and curriculum activities for the camp. I observed and heard first-hand how most of my study participants started out the week in frustration because whenever they asked any questions, staff responded with more questions instead of answers they wanted. Laura, a shy senior, described her feeling:

> *…it was frustrating, I realize now why they do it. But, at first it was really frustrating and aggravating and I didn't understand the point of it…. I understand it now, it still frustrates me, but it's helped.*

Equilibrating to new social contexts and experiences such as this one – asking questions and getting no answers in a strange new setting – can be daunting. Laney, a high school freshman, explained:

> *It <u>really</u> aggravated me. I kind of really didn't understand at first. I always ended up figuring out the answer, because we kind of worked together as a team to come up with an answer. Most of the questions that we asked were like stuff we needed to ask our team leader. So, I just went and asked the team leader.*

Leigh, high school senior and captain of her school's cheer squad, explained her annoyance at getting more questions instead of answers:

> *I know you do this for a reason, but it is annoying at the beginning of the week, when we are trying to figure out what we are supposed to do, and our CMT and Peer Leader are like 'I don't know, what do you think?' It's like answering a question with a question. It's a little frustrating at first, but now, I'm not going to bother asking because you are not going to get an answer. But you just end up figuring it out.*

Just about all of my study participants, as well as the Shelton attendees I observed in general, were perplexed at not receiving answers. In reflecting on her experiences on the last day of the Challenge, Laura related that:

> *. . .the staff members have taught about how to figure out stuff by yourself and it's been an eye opener because I am usually reliant on other people. But it's taught me how to answer questions by myself, and that I actually can if I work a just a little bit harder.*

The culture fostered by Shelton Challenge practices supports youth in seeking their own answers using resources provided or surrounding them. Sarah, a freshman, said she understood why staff returned questions with a question:

> *. . .it helps my thought process*.

Benjamin, on the other hand, expressed his ease with the culture that the Shelton Challenge embraces.

> *I wasn't thrown too far off my game. I took a class called Theory of Knowledge, which they kind of do the same thing to you. It was a little bit of adjustment at first, in my case; I didn't find it too different.*

Aleena similarly shared:

> *I'm not really the kind of person of that asks a lot of questions. I prefer not to take up other people's time by bothering them with questions. I did hear other people saying and asking and of course instructors did tell us they would do that. I think it is good; it does force us to learn if we were in a world by ourselves. But, I also think that we're not and that we should learn to take advantage of human resources as well. But it's a good thing.*

Encouraging and setting youth up so they have to the resources they have around them to find answers, instead of giving answers, pushes them to be more resourceful. Flores et al. (2012) argue that being able to think beyond the simple, apparent and les complex answers to a problem, and to seek one's own answers instead, forms one definition of critical thinking.

From a student staff member perspective, Thomas, one of the CMTs, discussed how the Shelton culture is a form of

> *. . .teaching by using questions and making them teach themselves. But having to lead, it was almost like holding up torches and lighting the way for them, but not giving them the exact path to follow. It's an experience they ultimately create for themselves.*

I laughed to myself during lunch on the first day, when one instructor commented that she had learned to adjust her way of thinking when she's at her full time job, so that she doesn't "Go Shelton" on someone, and respond back with a question. Critical thinkers construct varying interpretations of events, and develop to a constructivist view of a situations and experiences. The ability to construct multiple interpretations of a situation has implications for an individual's critical thinking ability in terms of the quality of decisions they are able to make when they can envision different viewpoints and outcomes (Flores et al. 2012).

Building Bonds for Survival

On Day One, Shelton Challenge staff members who had been assigned as greeters guided the incoming camp attendees from the parking lot to Station Number One, set up outside of Alexander Hall. As youth turned in completed paperwork, they and their families were directed by staff to the first of four registration tables set up along the sidewalk outside. Each registration station had a specific purpose. Some stations included the official roster check in, medical/camp forms, and collection of prescribed medicines. More stations were set up inside of the basement lobby of the dorm, where staff supplied youth with a manual, lanyard with their room key, and meal card. The final registration station consisted of tables stocked with brown paper bags, markers, stickers, and other crafty items. Here attendees could create their own mailboxes with staff assistance. They then taped their mailboxes to a wall, organized by teams. After the new attendees had completed all stations, they were directed by staff to move their luggage into their

dorm rooms, and if time permitted before the opening assembly, they could relax for a few minutes in what would be their new home for the next six days.

The opening assembly began with words of encouragement by the Director and Assistant Director of the Shelton Leadership Center, followed by a video orientation by General Hugh Shelton in which he addressed parents, youth, and staff with high insights for the upcoming week. Upon the completion of the brief orientation, attendees said their goodbyes to their families for a final break with their typical everyday worlds. They had now fully entered the world of the Shelton Leadership Challenge. During a conversation on Thursday afternoon near the end of the Challenge week, Jerry, a jovial high school junior talked about disequilibrium he'd felt at the outset of camp:

> *When we walked into Witherspoon* [NCSU Student Center], *it was really freaky because I didn't know anyone, and I hadn't been surrounded by so many people I hadn't known before. So I walked in, and the parents left and everything. When I saw General Shelton's video that kind of like gave me a little bit more confidence that I was going to enjoy this week.*

Many youth do not sign up for the Shelton Challenge; their parents sign them up. In his orientation video General Shelton asked how many attendees had, themselves, chosen to attend the camp. No one had raised a hand. Anthony and Thomas, both college students, discussed how they had felt when they first arrived and had to take on their leadership role with the younger attendees. Thomas admitted:

> *. . .that first couple days, nobody is happy about being here. Because we are putting on that 'me face' that, we are the CMTs. . . .and a lot of kids are not happy that they can't have their phone out.*

Youth attendees had expected this summer camp to be relaxed and fun, but when they arrived staff members did not fool around: they quickly told them where to go, and explained that attendees were to have their manuals with them at all times. Anthony explained the impact of the Shelton participants' entering stance on his role as a leader in the program:

> *This camp is unique, because a lot of summer camps, they have the luxury . . . that the kids want to be there. They ask to come especially sports camps, things like that. They're there to get better; they're there for a reason. Where our kids, most of them, like 98%, like General Shelton always says, they don't want to be there. So our first goal is getting them to want to be here.*

Upon their arrival, no one had given attendees an agenda, schedule, or foresight into activities for the week. Instead, in a move to begin the building of trust and cohesion within each team, all information was funneled through CMTs, Peer Leaders and eventually, fellow teammates. After registration and orientation, CMTs and Peer Leaders took charge, guiding their groups across campus to the first of three team-building activities. Winter, a high school junior, later vocalized how she had felt that first day:

> *My first day here was awkward, and I was kind of shy, and my team was all in all was pretty bad. Because we didn't know each other, we didn't trust each other, we were just complete strangers to each other. Even during the activities when you were trying to get us to be open, with the stretcher or trying to direct each other to see what we knew, we were just distant from each other*.

For the icebreaker called "First Impressions", as the instructor, I prompted the activity by articulating the instructions and monitoring the time limitations. I gave the students two minutes to talk to a new person, find out about them, and vice versa. Following a lesson plan given to me

by the Director of the Challenge, I had each attendee write one word or phrase describing their partner onto a piece of paper taped to that person's back. Then students found a new person with whom to talk, and another round of the two-minute activity commenced. The lesson plan allotted 10 minutes for the entire activity. At the end of that time period, the Director's voice resonated from the center of the gymnasium saying, "Time to process." Reflection time, usually 10 minutes, was carved within the schedule through the entire week. CMTs facilitated the reflection, with assistance from the Peer Leader, by asking questions guided by the DEAL – Describe, Examine, Articulate Learning – model (Ash et al., 2009). This structure—activity and reflection-- guided all lessons throughout the week. The activity and reflection structure is supported by the literature: Barrett (1995), in a study of the effects of mentoring on reflection, found that practice and feedback from other people are factors that allow an individual to improve in reflective proficiency.

The second activity for the afternoon, "Tangrams," was set up in three, three-minute segments. The tangram pieces for this activity – large, multi-colored geometric shapes made of fabric —were to be arranged in a particular design. Following my Shelton lesson plan, I directed the group to remain behind a taped line on the floor, and chose one team member to come over to me to be the leader for this segment. I showed her the target design to be replicated, and articulated the rules, procedures, and revealed the target design only to the leader. The first segment of the activity required the leader to direct the remainder of the group in re-creating the target design using the fabric pieces, in a space approximately 15 feet away beyond a second line. This leader asked for a volunteer instead of selecting a person. The first volunteer took a single tangram piece followed their peer's verbal directions from peers and then returned to the group –Each group member could participate only once. The leader had to view the target design

multiple times in order to direct each teammate in how to arrange their tangram piece. When a volunteer had returned to the group, the others hesitated and watched to see who would go next. The youth leader for that activity then asked for another volunteer. This process continued and the design was partially completed at the end of the three minutes.

For segment number two, I chose Winter and a young man as co-leaders. They viewed the new target design and began verbally directing their teammates. Winter, too, asked for a volunteer to begin the activity. However this time as each volunteer returned to the group, another automatically stepped up to take a turn. With the group catching on to how to move the game along, the eagerness of the teammates to participate emerged: members kept migrating beyond the start line. As instructor, it was my duty to enforce rules and keep time. When I called time, over half of this second design had been created.

The final segment was to be completed following the same guidelines as the previous two. However, this time the entire group was allowed to view and hold the target design, and there was no appointed leader. Discussion occurred among the team and members eagerly jumped in to take their turn creating the design one piece at a time. This time the group successfully re-created the target design within their three-minute time limit.

This activity facilitated students in acknowledging the importance of teamwork and how helpful it is when everyone has the same "big picture" -- in this circumstance tasks can be completed much more efficiently and the leadership process emerges. Skills and practice were not specifically taught, but team members were expected to pick them up from having the demonstrated in practice and prior attempts. My observations of the social learning going on with this activity, as well as others in which I participated and observed throughout the Shelton

week, resonated with findings by Holt et al., (2008), in their study of how skills that were not explicitly taught had been learned in context by members of a high school soccer team.

During the reflection following the Tangrams lesson, the CMT asked questions that required the students to break down the activity for analysis: What was your task? Did everyone participate? Was there a timekeeper? Who was the leader? The CMT probed with questions that required students to delve deeper, as he asked about their feelings and emotions during the game, including: How did you feel as the leader? How did you feel when you couldn't understand the directions from the leader? One attendee commented:

> *Is that a trick question? I feel like we are in therapy, I've never had therapy but this is what I think it feels like.*

Brookfield (1995), in looking at reflection and teaching, argued that thoroughly examining one's actions can result in a state of doubt, hesitation, and mental difficulty in the thought process. It is disorienting to begin unpacking the way we do things, and examining them more closely. CMTs had the job of scaffolding that process of unpacking thinking, for youth attendees. They asked questions that helped the students think about details of the activity and the interweaving of emotion, concluding with a focus on the cognition involved in completing it. The final layer of questioning, called "articulate learning", included the following: What skill did you learn from this activity? How can you apply that skill to your school, church, and community? Articulate learning questions pushed the youth to think metacognitively about how to apply their newfound knowledge to aspects of leadership within their own everyday lives. Ash and Clayton (2004), leading researcher in the field of experiential and service learning, argue that articulating learning into imagined futures supports the development of critical thinking and improves the quality and depth of learning.

Achieving Cohesion

As the Shelton week progressed, attendees got savvy to program strategies. Through participation in thought provoking activities, along with a low and high ropes course that provided physical challenges, the teams were gradually becoming more comfortable with each other. Winter, articulated this shift:

> *But since we got to know each other, through the second day and since we have been here, our team has never been stronger. We are so comfortable with each other. We trust each other. We have this bond with each other that no one who outside our team can ever understand. We could come to each other with questions and confidence that they would give us positive and honest feedback.*

Through the activities and deeper reflection discussions required at the end of each one, team members got to know each other to the point that they were no longer strangers. Several study participants commented that they felt they had known each other a lifetime, even though they had been together for only a few days. The week's shared experiences appeared to craft a cohesive unit from the group of individuals who worked together. Sarah, a member of the team constructed from most of the younger students, discussed her experience as follows:

> *At the beginning we weren't working together as a team. We didn't really know each other that well. It was just a new environment for a lot of people. But, I remember one night a couple of days ago, we just like sat in a circle and we just kept sharing funny stories and started laughing a lot. I think that brought us closer. And us girls, our rooms were next to each other and so we all congregated into one room and would listen to music, or hang out. We formed together as a team better. And with public speaking yesterday, when one person went and accidentally made a mistake. More than half of us*

encouraged that person was like 'you can keep going, you can do it'. They kept going and they didn't feel awkward or anything else after that.

A bonding time to relax and enjoy each other's company is important to the growth of a team. Bonding with members on a social level in activities that, while challenging, also incorporate group fun, generates a connection. Leadership gurus Kouzes and Posner (2012) argue that opening up with others about one's own interests and pursuits, sets a foundation for building relationships and mutual trust

The planning for bonding begins with the Shelton Center employees as they match youth staff with their team members. Teams are set up according to experience, their scores on the – Leadership Practices Inventory administered by the Shelton Challenge, and grade level (Shelton Leadership Center, 2013a). The Shelton staff avoid placing friends or relatives on the same team. The Center staff also prefer that each team's CMT and Peer Leader include a male and a female, to provide better supervision of same gender members in the dorm. Dorming together provides opportunities for staff members to bond with their group. In the dorm, females resided on the third floor, staff remained on the second floor, while males were housed on the first floor. Figure 1 depicts the locations on campus for the Shelton activities and housing. Throughout the camp week, team members were constantly together for a majority of the day. The teams sat in their groups in the Playzone, the room in which all large group gatherings took place.

Jerry, the jovial Indian student, reflected:

On the first day, Sunday evening, I was eating with just the guys because I thought that was something that they did . . .we didn't know where all the girls of the team went. Then Monday morning, we all actually started to sit together; that's when we started to talk. . . .When I came here, I don't think this is like other camps where I'm going to the have

time to make the friends or anything. And now, it's completely different. I think for me, friendship is everything in each camp. Because I've made friends now that I can keep in touch with . . . It's not even gender based. I'm friends with a lot of girls on the team as well. We've become, like [a friend's name] *likes to call us, a close family now.*

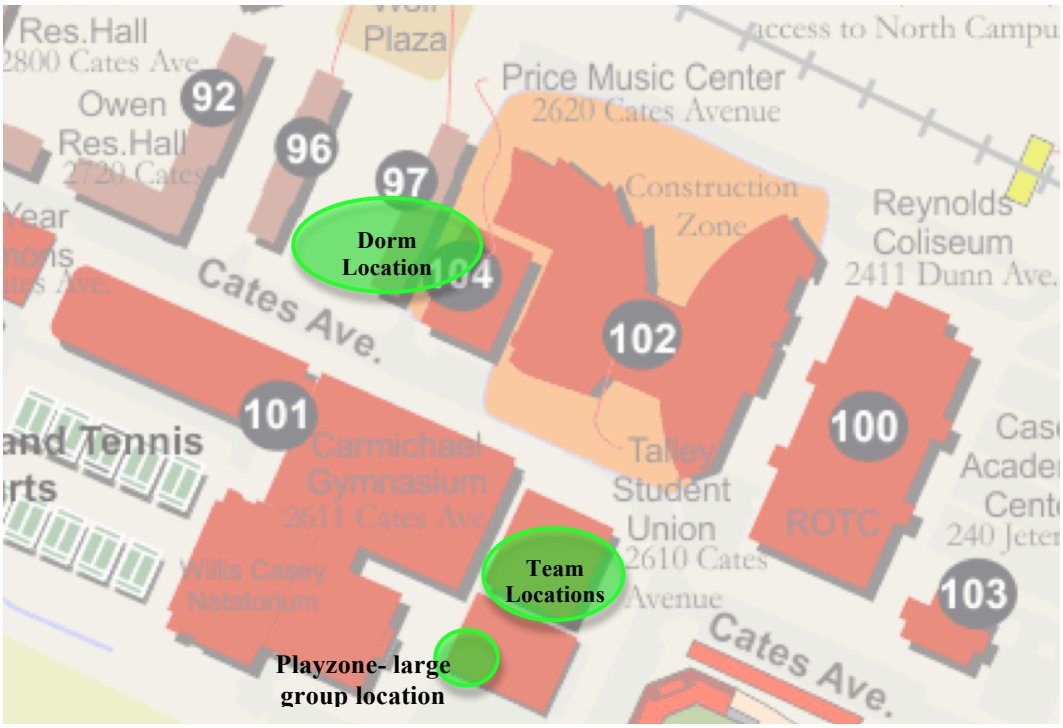

Figure 1. Shelton Campus Locations.

As a family, team members were there to support each other in time of triumph as well as tribulation. Many of us seek love and belonging from our families, and when a group of strangers can provide that love and belonging, encouragement and celebration, then a form of family bonding has taken place. A 2002 report from the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine argues that activities in which youth engage with their peers are critically important in adolescent development.

Close connection and team dynamics made groups more cohesive. Of the thirteen responses to questions by my study participants to the online written interview that immediately

followed the Challenge experience, ten referred to their team and the people they met as what they enjoyed most about the Shelton Challenge. Laura, a shy senior, recalled in a final interview with me one month after her challenge experience:

> *I really enjoyed the friendships that I made within my team and the bond we all made with each other.*

This atmosphere of unity is attributed by students to the connection and leadership provided by the CMT and Peer Leader of each group. The goal of the CMT and Peer Leader is to help create that bond that my study participants mentioned. Their attitude, personality, character, and leadership ability play an important role in developing and creating a bond within their group. Kouzes and Posner (2012) state that, "People are just more willing to follow someone with whom they have a relationship" (p. 290). Anthony, a CMT, reflected as follows:

> *One of the responsibilities obviously is to facilitate discussion but also you have to make sure the Peer Leader, you guys work together well. Especially the first day, the relationship between you and your Peer Leader sets the tone for the whole rest of the week. Then the group can realize how you work together and sometimes that cooperation reflects back on them.*

Kouzes and Posner's (2012) leadership practice of "Modeling the Way" was expected behavior with all staff members. The CMT and Peer Leader were key staff members who worked constantly with the same group all week. They set the tone and atmosphere for their group. As Anthony shared above, the CMT and Peer Leader have to create a connection first, if they expect their team to follow suit. In their study of adolescent accounts of growth experiences from group activities, Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, (2003) found that while team members have

a certain amount of responsibility, but the leader carries an even greater responsibility for promoting development.

Staff Structure That Builds Cohesion

The tiered hierarchy of Shelton staff members creates a network that supports the youth who attend the Challenge. Staff members are charged with assisting with youth leadership development in a safe, supportive atmosphere, and ensuring that youth are able to learn as much as they can. Peer Leaders and CMTs must apply and complete an interview before acceptance in staff roles. Peer Leaders are high school students who have experienced the program in a prior year. Peer Leaders are the primary communicators with youth team leaders, and ensure that the curriculum is followed, and that team leaders and followers maximize their opportunities to learn from the experience (Shelton Leadership Center, 2013a). Peer Leaders also serve to bridge the age gap between college age Coach/Mentor/Trainers (CMTs) and the student attendees. Peer Leaders, who are compatible in age with the student attendees, provide insight and assistance to the CMT. Unlike the Peer Leader, the CMT is not a required to have participated in the Shelton Challenge in a prior year. The CMTs only requirement is that they have completed at least one year in college. Their CMT experience can be their very first Shelton experience. CMTs serve as observers who evaluate the performance of the student leaders and team (Shelton Leadership Center, 2013a).

My staff-level informants who were participating in their roles for the first time during the summer of my study included one Peer Leader and five CMTs. All CMTs were college students except for Stephen, a high school senior who had participated in the Shelton Challenge for three previous years. The third tier of staff is comprised of adult professionals who volunteer their time to work as instructors. I served as a member of this tier.

Differences in Focus Across Shelton Challenge Participants and Youth Staff

During my conversations with student participants in the Shelton Challenge, I noted a striking difference in focus depending on the youth's positioning. First time youth focused on their experience and what was happening to them. A staff member's perspective on the Shelton Challenge was totally different, however. The staff member's focus was on the leader development of the youth on their team, much more so than on themselves. Staff members' concerns included the bonding and teamwork skills of their group. They concentrated on building trust among the members of their group, because trust and a sense of unity can unlock the potential of students for learning and growing. Acting in the role of what Bass and Riggio (2006) would call transformational leaders, the staff members enhanced the leadership development of their followers by providing coaching and support.

The student participants showed awkwardness at the opening of the Shelton Challenge experience. They appeared shy, hesitant, not knowing what to expect and tended not to speak up in response to questions from others, or me, during early week activities. Serido et al. (2011), who studied the importance of voice in student development, argue that being able to voice an opinion in planning, implementing and problem solving promotes self-confidence. While the Shelton Challenge participants were not vocal when they entered the program, I observed them becoming more so during discussion and planning, and growing in self-confidence as the week progressed.

Summary

Chapter Four described the first developmental moment for youth in the Shelton Challenge: the movement from isolation and disequilibrium to building cohesive bonds. Chapter Five examines their next developmental moment: stepping out of their own comfort zones in

order to grow as leaders. "Encouraging the Heart," another of Kouzes and Posner's (2012) leadership practices, urges individuals to support their fellow team members. A Shelton Challenge goal is for youth to be able to face their fears of leading, make ethical decisions that consider the effects on others, and strategize with teammates to solve problems with an ethical solution. The next chapter examines how student participants urged and supported each other to face their fears as leaders and team members.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Breaking out of the Comfort Zone

Chapter Four documented Shelton Challenge participant's first developmental moment in which they moved from initial isolation and disequilibrium to forming cohesive bonds with each other. This chapter zeroes in on the second developmental moment, within which leadership develops among youth as they learn to step outside their comfort zones and tackle unexpected new tasks.

Becoming the Leader of the Pack

Shelton staff organizes participants by ages and grades in teams of ten for the purpose of creating smaller mixed gender groups of youth who are similar in experience, Leadership Practices Inventory scores, and grade levels in school. Each day of the Challenge the CMT and Peer Leader select two students to take the reins of responsibility for the team for a 24-hour period. Once the CMT and Peer Leader choose the next set of team leaders, they communicate that information to the incumbent team leaders, who then notify their successors of when and where the next team leader meeting will take place. Each team leader's leadership rotation began by attending this important team leader meeting. Team meetings with groups of incoming team leaders commenced at seven pm each evening in the staff room in the basement of Alexander Hall. According to the team leader expectations in the student manual,

> It is not the role of the staff to inform team leaders of their exact responsibilities for the next 24 hours. The purpose/intent is to provide the team leaders and opportunity to process and make decisions about what tasks need to be accomplished within the next 24 hours in order to achieve the expectations provided by the staff. (Shelton Leadership Center, 2013a, p. 9)

During the Challenge week, team leader meetings were key for receiving pertinent information needed in order to lead. Absent team leaders had to investigate resources on their own to obtain the information they missed.

At these meetings the instructor, who was a veteran staff member, provided team leaders with the information they needed in order to assume their role the next day. This information included a detailed schedule with times and locations for the remainder of that evening and the next day's activities, and a lesson plan for an activity they were to lead with their team. At this meeting, team leaders could ask questions and get clarification on any misunderstandings regarding expectations stated in their manuals. The instructor conducting the meeting provided an overview of the team building activity lesson plan, and the new student leaders had a chance to ask questions about that, as well. The instructor also provided key tips on leadership, such as time management and adhering to the schedule, because being punctual to activities and meals was extremely important. A mistake with meal punctuality meant interrupting the university dining room's schedule of serving many others besides just Challenge participants. Late arrival to activities meant time wasted and set up a rushed atmosphere for the entire team.

During each team leader meeting the instructor counseled new team leaders to begin planning for large group functions ahead of time, instead of waiting until the day of the event. New team leaders were encouraged to consult their student manuals for team leader expectations and team responsibilities during the week, which required some extensive forethought. Team responsibilities included planning and leading a night activity, as well as a Shelton values cornerstone ceremony that accompanied the daily flag presentation each morning. Each team had to come up with quotes, definitions and skits that provided a foundation for the cornerstone value of the day. Also, three mornings that week the group participated in physical fitness. The

team responsible for the values cornerstone ceremony on those days had to plan activities for 50 minutes of games and/or fitness as well. Physical fitness activities included kickball, zumba, volleyball, football, and running.

Jerry was team leader on the day his team was required to plan and lead all three large group activities: cornerstone, physical fitness, and night activity. His account illustrates the leadership load he felt:

> *It got to mine and* [a teammate's] *day, we were blown away at how much we had to plan. It started off Tuesday night, like everyone from the team left. It was just team four's leaders and team five's leaders. And we were just sitting there and talking. And it was so much to plan, like physical activity, where is it going to be, specifically where. We have to figure out an instructor for each thing* [fitness activity]. *Make sure we have all the sports planned out. Plus cornerstone, getting both the teams to actually work together. Then talent show, which is even more work of signing up acts, making sure we have all the props. So, it was really stressful. I was constantly told, ok, be less stressful, but I can't. For me, I need everything to go as great as it can. If not perfect, it needs to be to the best of my ability or I'm not going to be happy with the event. It was extremely stressful, but I enjoyed the experience.*

The Shelton Challenge designates an evaluation time during which CMTs and Peer Leaders furnish feedback to the team leader of the day on her/his observed performance, using a rating of 1-10. The Challenge experience is designed to provide youth with the opportunity to lead and embrace mistakes, while supporting their learning and skill improvement before the next situation arises. Dworkin et al. (2003), who studied adolescent reports of growth

experiences in youth activities, found that young people recognize the value of feedback, even though they may respond differently.

In my study, youth team leaders observed and interviewed who held this role early in the Shelton Challenge week displayed uncertainty and sometimes fear of leading their team. The first team leader for team three was Winter, who came to me nervous sharing her worry that she was not capable of serving in that leader role. She said she wanted to quit. I did my best to reassure her of her capability to lead, and reminded her that she would be working with the other team leader, and that they would be depending on each other to get through the day. Later in the week as Winter discussed her 24-hour leadership experience, she reflected on how controlling, demanding, and stressed out she had been at first, and how her partner had helped her to see things a little differently:

> *I was the first team leader, and that scared me. They partnered me up with this boy, who was very laid back, always wanted to be funny. Didn't take things as serious. All I thought about, why did you partner me up, a demanding, controlling, stressful person, with this silly, non-serious, nonchalant person? As the day went on, as I got to know him, as we went on and on through the day as team leaders, I learned that I understand why you partnered me up with this guy. I understand because he's my other half. He completed me. Because I was stressful: I was serious. But he was the one always telling me, 'Winter relax, let things happen.' Once he made me step back He said 'Winter, step back'. He wasn't telling me, he MADE me. He was like, 'Winter, you need to step back and let things happen.' And once that happened, everything came out smoothly . . . But at the end, I was so grateful, and I was so happy that they partnered me up with him…. Honestly, I don't think I could have been with anyone better than that one boy.*

Winter's ability to self-assess her own leadership predispositions allowed her to make adjustments from her original mode of hyper-control, to leading with less stress when mistakes happened. It took a laid back partner, the opposite of Winter, with a go with the flow kind of attitude, to balance her out. In the end the two leaders complemented each other. His characteristics appeared to lift her out of her stress and illustrated to her that she could lead with confidence. Fertman and Van Linden (1999), who studied character education for building youth leaders, found that as young people lead in teams they strengthen their skills, build confidence, and gain respect for each other's abilities.

For Leigh, the cheerleading captain, the team leader experience was not as pleasant as Winter's, because of the partner with whom she was paired. On Thursday evening in the dorm Leigh talked about her experience, and how she came to be paired with her partner. In a prior team building activity, Leigh had joked around with a certain young man, encouraged him to participate, and gave the perception to her CMT and Peer Leader that she was able to motivate him. Leigh's CMT and Peer Leader took her cajoling of the young man as good collaboration, and paired Leigh with him for the team leadership experience:

> *They paired me with a guy in our group that doesn't want to be here. Because he says that his parents made him go. He told me the day before, after we found out. He told me to go ask so-and-so a question. I was like you're a team leader too. Why don't you go ask them?* [He said] *No trust me, you're going to be the only team leader. That's all week, he's just been pessimistic . . . I was the only one that was keeping track of the time, and saying where we needed to go and where we needed to leave. He didn't try to take any responsibility . . . He apologized to me later on that night for being such a bad leader.*

Some students come to the Shelton Challenge because their parents sign them up and make them attend. In this case it is up to the student to choose whether to take advantage of this learning opportunity. According to Dworkin et al. (2003), "Learning in youth activities is a product of working with others who are just as invested in the activity as you are" (p. 23). In real life, however, we are sometimes paired with others such that we have to pull our own weight and theirs, too, to complete a task. In Leigh's example the entire burden fell on one person instead of being shared equally.

Benjamin, a high school senior and the only international attendee that week, talked about learning from mistakes during his team leader experience:

> *Sometimes it was hard keeping the group together. I have a pretty independent group, but none the less . . . was late once to an activity with* [a veteran instructor]. *But, besides that I think it went really well. A mistake is a learning opportunity. I didn't let it happen again.*

The Shelton Challenge establishes a schedule of time allotments for curriculum, use of university facilities, transportation, and time from walking from one location to the next. The curriculum time allowance is divided for instruction, the activity itself, and reflection. If a team arrives late at their designated location, their instructional time is foreshortened.

In every team leader meeting, the instructor, a Shelton veteran and one of the lead Challenge instructors, provided a tip to team leaders about punctuality. He would remind new team leaders of the Army's expression for punctuality:

> *"If you are early, you are on time; if you are on time, you are late; and if you are late, you are fired!"*

The team leaders shared the responsibility of assuring that their team arrived where they were supposed to be, and on time. The Challenge Director could adjust the schedule by 10 or 15 minutes if needed. This happened once because of over crowding in the dining hall, and once physical fitness was canceled because nearby construction had terminated the water supply to the dorm.

Lord and Hall (2005), who studied the role of identity in leadership, found that first hand experiences as well as observation of others are essential in the ongoing development of a leader. Within the Shelton Challenge experience when different youth are selected as team leader each day, observation and evaluation become powerful tools for learning when for those who end up following these predecessors. Jordan, a reserved young man, confirmed the benefit of getting chosen to lead on the last day:

> *I've learned that you need to think about more about what motivates other people. I hadn't really given that much thought of before. You need to be a little more inspiring and compassionate when you are leading. I had not really had that explained to me before this. That was a good thing to learn that was valuable.*

Team Leaders conducted a team builder activity each day which focused on one of the five leadership practices developed by Kouzes and Posner (2012): Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enabling Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. In the team leader meetings on the night before each pair took responsibility for their group, new team leaders were provided a lesson plan for leading their team building activity. Preparation for the activity encouraged teamwork and planning.

The team building plans incorporated discussion and engagement to persuade youth attendees to think and organize themselves and others in new ways. One activity required the

group to try to break old habits related to common everyday actions. The group worked in pairs on such tasks as tying their shoe using one hand from each partner, or writing something on paper with their less dominant hand. Mitra (2007), whose research focused on student voice in school reform, found that youth collaboration can have a powerful impact on others. I observed how Shelton Challenge tasks which increased youth awareness of things we do out of habit, and coached them to consider doing things in new ways, led youth attendees to a discussion about situations in which team members could learn from each other. Creativity and innovative thinking allow a person to improve both personal and cooperative skills. During the team building activity on the leadership practice of "Inspire a Shared Vision", team leaders chatted about not shortchanging themselves as leaders, or their team. The purpose of the game, as stated in the lesson plan provided to the team leaders was,

> . . . to teach your team that they must never short change themselves of additional opportunities to better themselves or the team. Thinking outside the box for added benefits and value can create huge upside potential . . . (Shelton Leadership Center, 2013b).

Team leaders held far more responsibility than just making certain their team arrived to locations on time. They served as timekeepers, resources for group members' questions, and role models for their teammates. According to Shelton materials (Shelton Leadership Center, 2013b), the goals of team building activities include: participation in activities, empowerment of followers without directing them, and the opportunity to instruct the group in a learning atmosphere.

Each day with different groups I witnessed team leaders learning to provide guidance and direction for their team through making decisions and leading discussions. They learned to offer

encouragement while at the same time redirecting sidebar conversations back to the task at hand. On a bus ride back to campus, Winter, who had been a team leader that day, chatted about how she had learned that as a leader you have to encourage and support your group members, and make sure they have a voice in team decisions. Teamwork and trust are high priorities that leaders construct within their members (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

Along with taking on the ambiguities and chance of failure inherent in accepting the risk to lead, the Shelton Challenge pushes youth out of their comfort zones in terms of coming up with novel solutions to problems, and having the humility to recognize individual limitations and the power of shared leadership. The next section of the chapter focuses on Shelton Challenge experiences that lead youth in these directions for change.

Learning the Power of Shared Ideas and Leadership

Kouzes and Posner (2012) write about how leaders envision the future by creating new ideas, altering current ways of thinking, and imagining new possibilities. Most education of youth, however, pushes them in the opposite direction, to find the one "right" answer. During one of my observations in a Shelton Challenge team location that was a classroom, team five struggled with a task that involved taking a common object and creating a use for it other than its intended purpose. Team leaders were standing at the front of the room, and had explained the instructions to team members who were sitting at tables in a U formation. The group was having a hard time brainstorming a new purpose for objects. A team leader asked if group members understood what they were supposed to do. The group agreed that they understood the objective of their task. Different people threw out ideas: a band-aid could be used as an eye patch, a watch as a pendulum, shampoo as sunscreen, and a shoelace as a lasso. One team member suggested that everyone look in their manuals at the "Five Steps of Principled Reasoning" (Josephson

Institute of Ethics, 1999) to aid in their decision-making. Jerry the jovial Indian student, argued that this task shouldn't be this hard, while another asked for time to think it over.

A few students scanned the room looking for objects for which a new purpose and function could be discerned. One suggested that a t-shirt could be used as a towel. Group members discussed the benefits of this idea, and what a good towel an old t-shirt would make for wiping up spills and cleaning jobs. One benefit of their newly-discovered product included cost effectiveness. As time dwindled, group members settled on the idea of using a shirt for the dual purpose of shirt and towel, and named their creation the "Showel".

Team leaders then reiterated the instructions from the provided lesson plan, including the stipulation that the group present a two-minute commercial for the repurposed item. Group member Jerry, the jovial Indian student, conducted the commercial while the remainder of the team watched. Jerry mimed exiting the shower and not being able to find a towel, then drying off using his shirt, and then putting it on to wear. He announced his product calling it his Showel. His audience, however, let Jerry know that his commercial, had failed to provide some needed information. Jerry asked his team leaders for a chance to try acting out the commercial for a second time. This time he conducted his commercial in a more serious manner and provided the needed information about the newly repurposed product. At the conclusion of the activity, Jerry reflected:

> *We should believe and continue to agree with each other. We started throwing ideas out. But, didn't listen to each others' voices. We had to go through and challenge the process and we settled with our idea of the Showel.*

Willingness to listen to other people's ideas with respect and sincerity allows for the big picture or vision to be shared among all members. Judge and Piccolo (2004) whose research compared

transformational and transactional leadership, found that empowering others to think in new ways, encouraging creativity, and soliciting followers' ideas, provides the intellectual stimulation necessary for thoughtful, well-rounded leadership.

Two days later, I witnessed a team building activity with a different group, this one focusing on the Kouzes and Posner (2012) practice of "Enabling Others to Act". This activity called for group members to write down their hidden talents along with three words that best described these talents. Upon completion, the written talent papers collected were assigned a number and displayed on the table. Students were then directed to write every team member's name on another sheet of paper, and rip the names into single strips. The group then strolled along the table's edge matching paper strips with suspected talents. The activity concluded with teammates revealing their actual talents and sharing personal attributes with the others.

During reflection on this activity, discussion focused on the styles of leadership displayed by the team leader. The leader of this activity had led in a dominant manner: he informed the group exactly what to do without allowing his co-leader to assist, directed his co-leader to collect the papers and assign them numbers, and never gave the co-leader a chance to lead. Dominant leaders control situations and seldom seek assistance. This group's reflection time discussion spotlighted the characteristic of domination that can happen when the role is shared with a colleague, and how to become aware of one's own actions in order to share the leadership role.

Mistakes Are Learning Opportunities

The Shelton Challenge allows students to experience leadership problems and challenges in a safe environment that simulates real world situations. The design of the camp creates an atmosphere that allows for mistakes and the opportunity to reflect and learn from them. Reflection is the key to being able to make a learning opportunity from a mistake. Ash and

Clayton's (2004) DEAL model (describe, examine, and articulate learning) is the research-based method that CMTs use in all reflections. As a new instructor, I had participated when the Shelton Challenge staff had a full day of in a one-day training in the spring, and then again on the day prior to the arrival of attendees. Staff members collaborated to learn and practice asking questions following the DEAL model. We participated with instructional strategies such as "think, pair, share", and creating a questions and matching them to the appropriate D, E, and AL posters located around the room. Staff Trainers led the staff members in completing the same icebreaker activities that we would conduct the first day of camp with youth attendees. In the simulations, staff participated as students and a volunteer took the role of CMT. The CMT's responsibility is to observe the activity and actively take notes of actions and behaviors of student attendees. When each training activity ended, the CMT facilitated the reflection process using the DEAL model. Then the staff trainer led a post-reflection activity to scrutinize the how the DEAL model unfolded during the reflection. The object of training with DEAL was to help us as staff members become more facile in enhancing the critical thinking process of youth.

As a CMT or Peer Leader, it takes advanced critical thinking skills to think quickly and ask non-leading questions that follow the direction of discussion within the group. Non-leading questions are important for the development of critical thinking skills, because they compel youth to break down the activity into the parts and roles that had actually been evidenced by the group. Ricketts and Rudd (2005) who studied the development of critical thinking skills in youth leaders, contend that "analysis can effectively identify the relationship between statements, questions, concepts or descriptions in order to express beliefs, judgments or reasons" (p. 33). During reflection, attendees are guided to dig deeper into the components of strategies they used during the activities. Then they extract the important components they used and consider how to

incorporate these into real life situations. Benjamin, the international student discussed the real-life incorporation as the most valuable aspect of his Challenge experience:

> *The CMTs always tried to relate it to a real world situation, in almost all the cases. And I think that's the most valid part of the experience, you do all the activities in a simulated environment and when you relate it to the real world, you start to get it*.

When a real life connection can take place, the understanding of the idea or concept becomes both valid and memorable in the mind of the student. Rollins' (1990) study of critical thinking in secondary agriculture students confirmed that when new knowledge is combined with prior knowledge, this combination influences the meaning and application for the individual.

Shelton Challenge first year attendees are not actually trained in executing the DEAL model per se. They are provided with a copy of the DEAL model strategy in their student manuals and understood this strategy as reflection. Through reflection after every activity, CMTs and Peer Leaders exposed the youth participants to thought-probing questions until these became familiar to them. The youth thought of how to respond to the questions and these guided their discussion for critical feedback, improvements and alternative strategies in ways that is transferable to new activities. On Thursday of the Challenge week Benjamin talked about the value of having time to think things through:

> *At first I thought it was a bit strange… I think it helps to take more out of the activity than you do. . .it can get a little old at some points, but, I think it an important part of what you guys do here. I've done stuff like this where you just do activities and go onto the next one without really having that time to sit back and think about it. I think that is really important. I went to this thing called the National Youth Leadership Conference a couple of years ago. We did some of the similar activities that gave us a chance to plan out,*

> *work as a team, and try to lead. But we didn't have this reflection time; I think reflection is a good thing.*

Upon completion of an activity, if there is no review or reflection, then the participants may miss the purpose of the activity, or lack retention of its meanings. Using DEAL, the student participants reflected on what happened, how it happened, and what could be done with the knowledge learned from the activity. Transferring learned knowledge from one activity and applying it a real life situation demonstrates cognitive growth. Anthony, the charming college student, stated in his final face-to-face interview that:

> *You really don't learn about it* [DEAL model] *until you become a staff member. I remember in my first year as a Peer Leader, when I figured out what the DEAL method was it was pretty significant for me. Because now, I sometimes randomly when something goes wrong or some people don't get along, you think about like, I remember back at camp, [pause] what did we do? I feel like sometimes the questions you ask you find out that they fit in the DEAL model….you'll ask someone 'Why did you do that?', that automatically falls into the E it just falls into place…..obviously the DEAL model is something that works that's why we use it. I remember* [an instructor] *who told me, the goal is for it to be second nature. You don't have to think about D-E-AL. It just falls into place when you are leading your reflection.*

Repetition of an action becomes a habit. When one constantly acts or repeats a process, it will eventually become automatic. One of the objectives of the Shelton Challenge was for attendees to take home one or more strategies taught during the week and implement these in their daily lives. Reflection occurred after every event and activity during the camp week. Groups reflected on large group activities, such as the night activity or the cornerstone presentation, even if they

did not plan the activity. They discussed components that went well and possible improvements. Planned reflection that was geared to stimulate students into automatically reflecting on a personal basis seemed to work. Personal reflection surfaced as an integral part of the entire week. Laura, a shy high school junior shared that:

> *It was helpful to think about what went on and what it was trying to teach us and stuff. I've caught myself reflecting stuff, that not even stuff we do. Stuff that I do personally. When I was team leader, I was thinking about questions and trying to answer them for myself.*

Laura was quiet and did not show any signs of assertiveness. She appeared to be one who followed the crowd. The Shelton Challenge teaches youth to evaluate their actions whether they are working independently or with a group. Ideally, the Challenge aspires for youth to make self-evaluation an automatic part of their lives and their development. Dave, a quiet, blonde young man summed up reflection the best:

> *Once you are doing the activity, you have no idea what is going on. It's just like reading a book once. You read a book once you get pretty much half the stuff, and you read it again you're like, Oh! There it is. During the process, you never really connect all the different pieces…. but, having your mind on a different level that you've never thought of before. When they ask the questions, you're like Oh, now I see the connection.*

The initial experience of an activity causes the mind to search for rhyme or reason, the goal or objective, and how to succeed. During the reflection process one is focused on actions that had just taken place. A goal of reflection is to enhance learning by encouraging individuals to explore and express their knowledge of their experience (Ash & Clayton, 2004). A teammate may have perceived the activity differently, shedding light onto a perspective that had not previously been

considered. Looking in retrospect at an action or behavior and deciding how to use that information in life is a Shelton goal (Shelton, 2011).

I observed as Preston and John, two CMTs experiencing the Challenge for the first time, took the DEAL model to a new level. Preston was a contentious college sophomore, and John, a reserved, African American college junior. They both activated the DEAL model with their forward thinking process when making decisions. When they made decisions, they contemplated what they would have to do and all aspects involved, how they might feel about facets of the decision, and finally imagined possible scenarios of consequences and successes. John described his decision making process as follows:

> *I definitely use the DEAL model. I think about what's going on, and try to think about everything happening around me. And then I examine, how can this help me? And then go into the articulate learning and how can I apply this somewhere else or something like that.*

Learning takes place on one level when youth are challenged to apply a strategy with the intended purpose of recalling what has happened. In contrast, a much higher level of learning occurs when youth to take the strategy in a 180-degree direction and use the model in a forward thinking process to make decisions. Doing that shows innovation.

Re-Defining the Meaning of Success

On Monday of the Challenge week student attendees engaged in a low ropes course challenge. On that very first day every individual had to step outside their comfort zones for 12 minutes to lead, and communicate the directions for a low ropes activity, with the remainder of their group. Teams participated in ten different activities with a time limit of 12 minutes each, 10 minutes more time allotted to process that experience, and five minutes to rotate to the next

activity. Subsequently, student attendees had the opportunity to reflect on failures from one activity, and incorporate improvements or a different strategy into the next course element.

I observed that first day as my group struggled to complete some of the low ropes activities. Even though the goal was to focus on the process of learning team building, strategy, and reflection, my group felt that success was measured only by completing the activity. The CMT and Peer Leader asked questions following the DEAL model, which provoked the group's thought around teamwork and the process they had used in the activity. After about the fifth element of the low ropes course, the group finally began to strategize and create a plan before they actually started their low ropes activity. Throughout the morning, I listened to members of my group, analyze their mistakes and success for elements of the low ropes course, then those mistakes into strategies for the next activity. In the low ropes activity called "All Aboard" all ten team members had to stand on a square two-foot by two-foot stationary board for 10 seconds with the goal of no one falling or stepping off the board. Only one attempt to execute their plan was allowed, and if it failed, group members would have to use a different strategy during the next try. The students used as their strategy to pair people according to approximate weight. To achieve the goal they would be pulled against each other to balance each other out and remain on the board. Some people had to balance on one foot because the boar was not large enough for everyone to stand on it with both feet. This time the group succeeded in completing the activity.

During the final low ropes activity, called "Whale Watch". a raft-like board, made of connected wood beams, was placed on a log fulcrum at its center, like a large teeter-totter. The goal of the activity was for the entire team to stand on the balanced raft for ten seconds. Some of the rules included: people had to enter at the center, above the fulcrum, of the raft by two's and could only remain there six seconds. One of the students commented that because they had been

successful balancing by weight before, that they should use the same partners to enter the board. They began to strategize about the placement of each of the pairs on the raft so that the board remained balanced as youth joined by pairs. Before anyone physically stepped on the board, everyone knew exactly how to enter, their placement on the raft, and how to carefully move to prevent the raft from tipping and hitting the ground. This time, too, group was successful on the first attempt. During their reflection on the Whale Watch activity, group members discussed their understanding that being able to set up a strategy and communicating that strategy to others before any attempt is made can make the group more successful.

Setting Up the Strategy: The Devil Is in the Details

Celuch & Slama, (1999) whose case study research examined the perspectives of advertising principals, found that critical thinking can be understood as a central component in practical problem solving. Critical thinking skills are necessary when planning events and envisioning a successful outcome. Reflection enhances critical thinking skills by guiding individuals to consider different perspectives on a situation. In the Shelton Challenge these different perspectives are then incorporated into team strategies. Thinking and strategizing within the planning stages supports groups to be successful in executing their plans and enjoying the event. Being detailed about all the steps in the process is key for success in leading an event.

Each team is responsible for planning and implementing one night activity for the entire population. Each night is designated: outdoor games/ice cream social, indoor games, talent show, and dance. The group decides what will take place, along with the requirements and resources needed to implement the event. Submission of the list of all resources needed to implement the event is the responsibility of the team leader. Strict deadlines are imposed for this process to provide ample time to acquire any items needed.

Divergent thinking, allowing and encouraging students to think for themselves and work out their own strategies, which Kouzes and Posner (2012) call the "Challenging the Process" component of leadership practice is a goal of the Shelton Challenge. Anthony, the Chapel Hill college student, reflected in his final interview:

> *When you challenge the process, people think outside the box. I feel like if one person thinks outside the box, then it can spark everyone else to think about other ways to do things. And all of a sudden you have this huge light box that opens up that people are going 'I've never thought about that' and then they've started thinking of different ways and going different paths. You can really see how people think differently. I can remember them doing an activity; it was the minefield actually. You know one person is blindfolded and you had to lead them across* [the minefield]. *One of our group members said 'Hey, let's pair up with our roommate, if we talked last night, so that we would recognize their voice.' So I would never have thought about that. I remember when we did it; we just did our friends. Like whomever we had talked with the most. 'Alright, you want to be my partner?' So, he was like, be partners with your roommate, you know their voice. You can pick it out. So I was like, just like already I was already thinking of different things. Oh we never thought about that. What's going to change now?*

When someone sparked an idea, other group members began to chime in. My observations resonated with Judge and Piccolo's (2004) findings in comparing the outcomes of transactional and transformational leadership styles. They found that when transformational leaders provide intellectual stimulation, encourage creativity, and solicit followers' ideas, they empower their followers to think in new ways. Novel solutions to personal, business, or even societal problems come when we can think in new ways.

Critical thinking is a major facet of the cognitive aspect of the DEAL model. Thinking critically, people can rethink a situation, explore alternatives, and learn from prior experience. Reflection, coupled with the Shelton culture of guiding students to use resources and think through their own questions, builds a solid foundation for youth leader development. The growth shown by students in the planning stages of an activity when they have learned from their own, or the mistakes of others, illustrates the importance of reflecting and thinking critically in making decisions. Youth begin to model leadership and exhibit influence over others through communication, decision-making, and stress management (see also, Fertman & Van Linden, 1999).

A powerful example came on Tuesday evening of the Shelton Challenge when Groups Two and Three were in charge of indoor games. Group One had set the tone for the rest of the groups on Monday night with their activity running relatively smooth. However, the most valuable mistake/learning opportunity for groups took place the next night when Groups Two and Three chose to conduct outdoor games instead, and provided watermelon, cookies, chips, and drinks for snacks. During the night activity, members of the two groups were scattered in various places by teams in the courtyard, each playing a different game. I monitored the charades game for a limited time, myself. The problem came, however, with the snacks for that evening. I walked over to the table that was set up for refreshments and noticed watermelons that had been split in halves, with no napkins, or plates: nothing but watermelons on a blank table. Leaning in to take a closer look I realized that the watermelons looked as if they had been broken apart rather than sliced. The chunks were not nice and smooth like I was used to seeing.

I walked around taking photos and entered the basement of the dorm. Some of the team members were handing out cookies and chips, but without napkins or plates – people were eating

chips and cookies out of their hands. I could see two-liter bottles in the kitchen, but no one was drinking anything. After talking to some fellow instructors, I learned that the groups in charge had not asked for everything they needed on their list. The list the group turned in did not include cups, plates, napkins, or a knife for cutting the watermelon. The youth participating in this night activity appeared not to be having as much fun they'd had the prior evening. As time crept by, activity engagement dwindled.

All teams reflected on the night activity by discussing what happened, what went wrong, and how the activity could be improved. I was not privy to these reflections myself, but overhearing random conversations later in the evening, the word was out to make sure you take care of the small details. The reflection time for Teams Two and Three – the groups in charge for the evening – lasted over a couple hours until curfew. On Thursday evening Dave, a member of Team Two, admitted:

> *I didn't know you had to be very, very specific. But, when the team before got cups, bowls, spoons, and it was all downstairs just sitting there. I was like ok, they're right there. I don't have to search for them; people don't have to go buy new ones. We'll just use those. So we put everything else we needed. And then when time comes to roll around to get the stuff, they* [staff] *were like, 'was it on your list? 'no ma'am, ok you can't use it.' I just don't think it was fair to the rest of the people. Because we had soda and all sorts of food but it couldn't even be handed out, or nobody really got a drink. I know it's supposed to be, your supposed to be really responsible. I just think that should be a learning experience. They should tell you, I don't think they should have punished the other campers . . .You always have to be down to the finest detail in life, especially in a job situation. Ok, I think he's free to help me on this project. But, you have to make*

sure he's free, ask him, check his schedule, and stuff like that. I think all the small things we do here, transfers into such big life situations. I think that is really cool. But, when you are here, and you do something like that, you get mad because, it's right there. But then reflections help you see like everything you guys are trying to teach us. Just how, that small little thing of not writing down spoons, then nobody gets any food. I really like that aspect of it.

If the Shelton staff had given in and provided paper towels or a knife at the last minute, just for the sake of the other students, then that outcome would not have been felt by attendees. In reality, if someone does not take care of the minor details for a business deal, the company could be at a loss. If a person does not take into account the minor details when loading a cargo airplane with heavy equipment, the cargo shifts, the plane becomes uncontrollable and the situation can cost people their lives. When mistakes end up in second chances or getting bailed out at the last minute, there is no learning for how to do a better job in the future.

The mistake Dave just described constituted a major learning opportunity for the other groups. The next night, the two groups in charge had all the amenities needed for ice cream sundaes to accompany their talent show. I observed that they asked people to get their ice cream at the beginning of the talent show, before it melted. During a break, they issued a last call for ice cream, so they could return it to the freezer.

The final night activity featured a dance. The group in charge asked for popcorn and a popcorn popper, and they, too provided ice cream and toppings. However, based on their reflection from the prior night's group struggle to keep the ice cream from melting, the final night group requested containers large enough to surround the ice cream buckets with ice to keep it from melting for the entire evening.

Questioning Self: Am I Making the Right Decision?

Tores and Cano (1995) studied the relationship between learning styles and critical thinking. They argue that educators at all levels share the goal of developing the complex mental operations that allow for success beyond the classroom into young people's future careers. Ethical decision-making forms a significant aspect of critical thinking for leaders, and it debuted as a new part of the Shelton Challenge curriculum in the year of my study at all camp sites. The "Five Steps of Principled Reasoning" by Josephson Institute of Ethics (1999) is the research-based strategy that guides the Shelton ethical decision-making curriculum. Its five steps include: Clarify, Evaluate, Decide, Implement, Monitor and Modify. In ethical decision-making, students to use critical thinking skills in following the steps involved in solving a problem in which the outcome would not only affect themselves, but others as well.

Laney, a shy young freshman, discussed at dinner her experience of ethical decision-making:

> *We all threw ideas around and we couldn't come up with one thing at first. And it wasted a lot of time. I think that helped us a lot with time management, because that we need to get ourselves together more quickly and come up with a decision*.

Christens and Dolan (2011), who studied youth development in the context of community development and social change, found that youth need opportunities to organize activities for themselves, to make the decisions instead of all decisions being predetermined by adults, in order to learn how to activate the collective decision-making process that is needed for successful leadership development. Youth tend to show difficulty in getting started and staying focused when completing a task. When a group finally gets ideas flowing they are able to create ideas informed decisions together. Leigh, the senior cheerleader, observed this about ethical decision-making:

It was a good process to learn.

She compared it to a process she learned in her AP English classes called the Appeals with Ethos, Pathos, and Logos:

> *We'll be given a passage, and we'll have to highlight the entire thing, because each sentence is either Ethos, Pathos, or Logos. Logos deals with facts, stuff that's like real. Pathos deals with feelings, and Ethos deals with stuff that is ethical, of what is right and wrong. So, I had already knew a basis of what ethics was, so it was just nice to broaden my horizon, when it comes to making decisions*.

Because Leigh was able to construct a prior knowledge connection in academics, she easily took the foundation of ethics and applied it to her decision-making process. Winter's comments below illustrate how diversity in decision-making will allow for each of her group members' strengths to prevail when it came to making decisions and carrying out a group task. Winter emphasized trust as key to being able to do so. She said her group was

> *. . . trusting of each other and we knew each other's strengths and each other's weaknesses. We came up with three different ideas . . . and when we came up with one, we all had a different opinion of course. We had to split it up. The people doing the drawing and doing the presentation, they did not like standing up in front of people and presenting. While the other people, they were not drawers; they didn't know how to speak. But they knew how to entertain and be in part of the commercial. It was great that we could all work it out and everyone was part of the project. We didn't leave anybody out. Everybody did something. I think that was the best thing about the presentation.*

When I asked Winter during the final focus group interview about decision-making, she reflected:

> *I learned that you need to listen to everyone's ideas. You can't exclude-which we did sometimes, which was wrong, we realize that now. Because when we went back and listened to that person, it was actually a good idea. I learned that you need to listen to all ideas. You need to include everyone, you can't exclude them.*

Kouzes & Posner's (2012) "Inspiring a Shared Vision" implies not following a leader's vision, but creating a blended vision of all parties involved. Sharing various perspectives, ideas and experiences when making decisions allows for a richer knowledge base in which to make those decisions.

Making the Most of Mutual Decision-Making

Several Shelton Challenge groups seemed to have difficulty in starting the process to make a mutual decision. I observed as some students used the Shelton Challenge's recent adoption of the "Five Steps of Principled Reasoning" to design a new environmental product that would purify water. Youth had twenty minutes to come up with the product itself, a two-minute commercial to present their product, a sketch, materials needed, and a target audience for the product.

The group I observed struggled at the beginning with brainstorming ideas. They tossed around several ideas including flavored iodine packs that can be poured into water to purify it, and a solar powered water bottle. They settled on a water bottle that encased a small iodine filter inside which could be replaceable to provide a long life use of the bottle. The group shared their creativity by deciding what the commercial would be like. However, they became so wrapped

up in the presentation of the commercial that they forgot to present the cost, materials needed, and other necessary information.

To support them I asked some guided questions based on the Five Steps of Principled Reasoning. Each question stimulated the group's thought process relating to the product they designed. The questions focused on risks, benefits, environmental friendliness, endorsements, and other aspects of ethical product development that the group had failed to consider. When asked about collaboration, they brainstormed ideas and decided on their iodine-packed water bottle product. They described separating into smaller groups, to work on each task, such as sketch, commercial, and logistics. They verified that everyone contributed to the group with their own experience and knowledge.

Discussion pointed to the need to think about supply and demand, and creating a small market. When a question arose for the production of the product, the group mentioned a factory. One student commented that with the factory comes other expense. The group began to discuss wages, benefits, electric bill, water bill, and one commented:

Man, it would be hard running a business!

Experiences with this activity varied by team. Team collaboration and compromise on a single product became difficult for the members, and wasted valuable time to create and market their product. After seeing my team struggle creating their product, I found out by chatting with study participants that other teams experienced struggles of their own.

When analyzing field notes of this observation, including students' actions, discussion, and collaboration, I noticed that their thought process had consisted of basic ideas and superficial information during brainstorming and product creation. Critical thinking –self questioning and considering the bigger picture and multiple perspectives – did not become salient to the group

until guiding questions triggered them to think of the consequences and outcomes of their decisions. I also was able to figure out who had experience or background in water filtration and marketing. Brookfield (1995), who wrote about becoming a critically reflective teacher, argues that students can make informed choices about what they are asked to explore if their knowledge and understanding of content is present. Because the members of this team largely lacked knowledge about the product they were trying to come up with, they had less to draw on in making decisions. The youth did not consider any of the specific outcomes of their product, method, or choices until asked.

The curriculum implemented throughout the Shelton Challenge aims to help students to build and apply their critical thinking skills. Throughout my observations, conversations and interviews, I had ample evidence to show that the youth participants in the Shelton Challenge could voice their perspectives, and think on a deeper level, but did not realize that they were thinking critically about their topic. Throughout the many scenarios and activities in the Shelton experience, student attendees reflected on a critical level to face their failures and improve. Team members strategized by thinking critically to complete each next low ropes course as a group. Critical thinking skills were definitely being developed but the terminology of "critical thinking" was not used enough with the youth for them to adopt that language in describing their own thinking process.

Aarons (2006), who studied the implications of attitudes in transformational and transactional leadership, argues that transformational leaders inspire followers through enthusiasm, trust, and openness while empowering them to achieve beyond their expectations. Leadership, critical thinking, and reflection were not being taught through just one Shelton Challenge activity or class. These skills were redundantly present in everything that was

presented and provided. It is a daunting task for anyone, including instructors to employ Kouzes and Posner's (2012) "Challenge the Process" to think quickly and critically. However, being able to witness growth from Sunday until Friday among a group of strangers gives everyone a sense of accomplishment.

The Shelton curriculum is geared to stimulate the participants to allow divergent thinking to challenge their own and other people's ideas, and to take a stand for what is right and ethical. Throughout the week, youth learned to lead their peers, and make mistakes and learn from these. Youth this age naturally tend to remain in their own comfort zones. Challenging them to step out and participate in activities in which they feel a little fear, yields growth. Preston, a college sophomore, reflected in his final teleconference interview, that the aspect of the Shelton Challenge that he valued the most was being

> *. . . forced to fail and having to discuss why you failed, why you feel like you failed, and then being forced to learn from it. Because I think in 'real life' it's a lot easier to come to a situation where you think you might fail and walk away from it. Or fail and just wallow and be sad about it and not learn anything from it. But, at the Shelton Challenge, you are forced into situations, which will likely cause you to fail in some regard. You are forced to learn from it. And now I see them as mistakes. I think that is really valuable because not a lot of people get that anymore.*

If a person attempts something new and don't succeed, s/he usually learns from it. Kouzes and Posner's (2012) component of "Leaders Challenge the Process" suggests that when individuals test their abilities through challenging opportunities, they are able to exceed their self-perceived limits. People have tendencies to back down from challenges because of the fear of failing. The Shelton Challenge provides for the exploration of new avenues of skills, and

opportunities to practice them. The atmosphere supports youth when they fail by not making them feel like a failure. The encouragement and support received from teammates permits students to get back up and try again without shame or despair.

Summary

This chapter has explored the developmental moment for youth of stepping outside their comfort zones in order to realize new potentials as leaders. Chapter Six focuses on youth learning the power of collaboration and as they work together to accomplish a task. Shelton Challenge teams work closely with each other from early morning until late in the evening. The closeness and camaraderie created contributes to the team solidarity and success. The next chapter focuses on leader development within the diversity of team dynamics.

CHAPTER SIX:

Learning the Value of Teamwork

Chapter Four looked at the first developmental moment in participants' experiences of the Shelton Challenge: the movement from initial isolation and disequilibrium to building cohesive bonds. Chapter Five examined the second moment: stepping outside one's comfort zone. Chapter Six focuses on the third developmental moment: how the Shelton Challenge participants began to define, recognize and support the value of teamwork. This chapter documents how strangers came together to function as a cohesive unit within a six-day intensive challenge experience.

From Outsiders to Insiders

Upon arrival at the Shelton Challenge, attendees participated in activities that helped them build trust in their teammates almost immediately. On the first day, within thirty minutes of meeting each other as a group, youth participated in the Litter Rescue activity. As instructor, I facilitated the activity by setting the scene for a tragic simulation episode, in which injured two team members were "injured". The simulation was as follows: a group of people were singing and dancing at a concert when they felt a speaker explode and suddenly all of the people in the immediate area needed medical attention leaving too many injured people for the medical professionals to help all at once. The group was instructed to move their injured teammates to the medical tent, but unfortunately, they were not able to carry them in their arms or on their backs. Instead they were given two rolls of duct tape and instructed to create a gurney. They only had 20 minutes to construct the gurney and move their teammates. For the team members who had to be carried, trust was immediate.

I observed as the more outspoken and dominant leaders emerged in my group. In planning their strategy, group members decided that because there were two victims, it would be best to have two gurneys. They immediately separated into two different groups to build their gurneys. Some of the more quiet students either stood back or followed instructions issued by the more dominant leaders. As an instructor, I was able to alter the scenario to disable a member of the team. After a period of time, I blindfolded Winter, a student, who had jumped in to take charge of making one gurney. Winter became a blind teammate. One male student, who did not physically assist in any hands-on aspect of the actual creation, was very vocal in giving directions. He told Winter that as a blind person she was no longer able to help, and would have to sit down. He guided her over to a safe spot and had her to sit there.

A more reserved student stepped up and took the lead that Winter had started. Then I rendered one of the more vocal leaders in the second sub-group mute. He was no longer able to talk or give any directions. I observed the same process as before when someone could not take the lead, there would be someone else willing to step up. When I was able to catch a glimpse of other groups in the gym, I realized that mine was the only team that had divided itself into two groups to complete the task. The objective of this activity was to work together as a team to achieve the goal. Working as two sub-groups, my team was able to complete one gurney, and carry only one teammate to the medical area approximately 30 feet away.

My speculation is that the forwardness of the very assertive one male student caused my group to decide to create two gurneys. He was demanding and forward in speaking his opinion, but not willing to physically jump in and take part in the actual work. His attitude created a discourse within the group from the beginning. He appeared to be a loner and came off as reluctant to collaborate with others. Chan and Drasgow (2001), who studied individual

differences in motivation and leadership, found that as youth practice skills that influence their motivation and interest in leadership, they are developing their leadership role, which becomes part of their self-identity. However, individual differences in identity remain at the core of the individual. As the Shelton Challenge week progressed, I observed as this assertive and loner-style male student gradually became more active and participated and worked better with his fellow team members. However, there were still signs of his lack of cohesion within the group.

My group for the low ropes course was Team Four. I observed as this group completed the activities on the ropes course as single individuals. The first activity that this group completed was called "Nitro". There was a cable attached between two trees and in the middle of that cable, a rope dangled in the center. Two pieces of rope lying on the ground were arranged to represent a riverbank. The team members were all on one side of the imaginary "river" and had to swing on the rope from one side of it to the other. Once the leader explained the directions, there was no strategy discussed. One person stepped up, and reached out and seized the rope using a stick, and swung across. He tossed the rope back across the imaginary river to the next person. The process continued until almost everyone was across. Each person completed the task without giving or receiving help, until one person needed help. After the example of that student who needed help from teammates in letting go of the rope without falling, team members began to assist others, too.

This team included many athletic students who able to complete the task quickly. They were then told to return to the beginning side, and this time carry a cup of uncovered water with them as they swung on the rope to the other side of the river without spilling any water. Several of the more dominant members of the group discussed how to accomplish this task. In their first attempt they spilled some of the water. A few more members suggested an amended strategy of

one person traveling to the other side first, then the second person would carry the water and hand it off to the first person. That method was ultimately successful. As the remainder of the group swung across, they provided help to their less confident team members quickly and naturally.

Throughout the remaining eight activities, I watched Team Four as they worked together more, and depended on each other more to complete the tasks. Team members learned each other's strengths and weaknesses, and using reflection, they discussed strategies and ways to improve. I observed as they gradually stopped attempting a new activity without first planning a strategy. Out of the ten ropes activities, my group's strategies after the fifth activity started to become more in-depth. Team members discussed their options and chose the best approach to implement for each one. By the final activity, the group used strategies from prior successful actions, and communicated the rules explicitly so that members knew what to do and where they were to stand before any attempt to complete the task. The critical thinking skills of the group were being challenged and improved as they participated in each of the activities.

On a bus ride between activity locations, Winter, a bubbly, high school junior, talked with me about how she had learned during the ropes course the importance of having a plan in order to be successful as a team. The leaders needed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their members. Winter stated, in leading successfully, you cannot always be someone's friend. Anthony, a college student, reflected a similar perspective in his final face-to-face interview:

> *It's hard to lead people your own age sometimes….just leading those group of kids and my peer leader as well, we were all about the same age. I'm just a little older, but just knowing the boundary between being a friend and being a leader. They know its time to do work now; where there are other times we can goof off and have a little bit of fun.*

If a person in authority tries to lead a group acting as if they are just wanting to be someone's friend, and show no authority, the followers will not respect or value the leadership of that person. Leading peers and obtaining respect from them is difficult if you lack experience at being in charge. It is difficult for leaders to draw the line between friendships and providing guidance and authority, because the approach to a situation affects how followers perceive one's leadership.

Speak Up!

Boyd (2001), in writing about leadership experiences with inner-city youth, argued that experiential learning was the best way to teach skills in leadership development to this age group. According to the majority of my study participants, during Shelton Challenge activities they learned that the key to teamwork was communication. In the previously-described low ropes course scenario, I observed less communication within my group during the first five activities, and more communication within last five. In the beginning, students did not utilize the time allotted for planning strategies. Team members just jumped in and started the task without talking to each other at all. By the last activity, more members were adding their opinions, and discussion became more in-depth in the strategic planning process with each person sharing ideas Then, once the discussion has set out the options, the team leader would reiterate the group's decision and what steps would take place. As a result, everyone was able to envision the big picture, just as they had the first day in the Tangrams activity. Communication increased with students beginning to speak up and share their ideas, feelings, and evaluations of activities.

During our chat as we rode on the bus between the Shelton Challenge activity sites, Winter mentioned that working together with a plan was important. She said that in her group's discussions, one person venture an idea, and the remainder of the group would follow with more

ideas. She also talked about how her group had started with very basic plans, but as they progressed through various Shelton Challenge activities, they began to understand their teammates and to formulate more detailed plans, which allowed them more success.

When attendees scaled cargo nets to platforms suspended 35 feet in the air, with only two harness ropes and a harness between them and the ground, communication was mandatory, particularly when they worked in partner pairs. They had to communicate during transferring of elements, because their bodies were only secured by one of the two harness ropes. One person had to watch their partner as they unhooked each rope and re-attached it on the next cable. The youth also had to face their fear of heights while they walked on cables and ropes that were approximately an inch in diameter. Aleena, a petite, high school sophomore, wrote about the high rope experience in her winning essay:

> *There is no footage, but imagine thirty-five feet of air, and on top is a small platform of wood. Add ropes, more platforms at the same height. Add a couple of pillars connecting the pillars to the ground. And now imagine a short girls stuck, on a wooden beam swinging back and forth in the wind, help by four skinny ropes and teetering. Someone takes her hand, and there is almost no response. Then she leaps. And a chorus of encouragement pushes her forward and her feet strike the next beam, which jerks beneath her weight.*
>
> *Have you ever felt fear? The world spinning, spiraling inward as the height overwhelms you. The panic and rush when you miss, and are suspended above death by a rope? The joy and relief of clutching a solid platform firm and secure. The rush of heat when someone calls your name from ropes away. The thrill of leaping chasms in races against your friends.*

Words of encouragement from team members gave comfort and confidence to the ones conquering their fears. Watching above me that day, I noticed that one young lady who was crossing the swinging beams had stopped halfway point between platforms. She had begun to panic, and words of encouragement from fellow team members echoed from platforms all around her to encourage her to reach her destination. About four minutes had passed when a staff member swung over to her beam and encouraged her to continue. The staff member persuading the young lady to put trust in herself that she would reach the platform. The staff member travelled alongside her as she continued to the platform.

Andrew spoke to me late Thursday evening about the change he observed in his group from participating in the high ropes course:

> *I think one of the most amazing things I've seen since this week was the change in my group before high ropes, being thirty-five feet in the air versus what they were like afterwards. Because we did an activity before and an activity afterwards and the activity before they were completely off topic for more than half the time. They ended up presenting it on the fly and adlibbing it. Just making stuff up as they went. They were just off task, goofing off, and not serious. Then they went to the high ropes where actually about half of our team revealed they had mild to severe fear of heights. And something about that just pulled us closer together. We had two students who just, once they got up there had to sit down because it was so uncomfortable. They were just not feeling themselves. We had one student that just student after a while, just said, 'You know what, I'm going for it.' Just stood up and hustled his way through the elements and swung off the zip line and came down. And another student who tried his best, and felt it was best that he just step down. He definitely put forth that effort. I think afterwards when we*

> *talked about the high ropes, people talked about respecting each other's fears and getting to know each other better. With so many people with a fear of heights, you either experience fighting through that fear or dealing with that fear or having to motivate or having to deal with someone that had that fear because you had to go in partners. I think that whole thing brought us closer together. In the activity after high ropes, they even brought up the activity from that morning and said that we were goofing off, and we were doing this and that. Let's try to focus this time and let's work. They had roles assigned, students volunteering to do stuff like writing, reading the task, and keeping time. The ideas just flowed, the boys and girls participating, contributing equally, and they were voting on ideas and just communicating a whole lot better.*

Students glow with confidence when they conquer something they have never experienced, especially activities as death-defying as a high ropes course. Attendees recognized fear in their team members, and showed compassion, encouragement and support. Andrew's group, which was one of the younger age student groups, learned how they could support each other and recognize the fears and accomplishments of their peers. Knowing the team's strengths and needs makes leadership much more successful. Gréhaigne et al. (2001), who studied the teaching and learning of decision making in team sports, argue that awareness of teammates' strengths and weaknesses helps leaders make informed decisions.

Dig into Diversity

One activity that seemed to be a turning point for teammates was "Star Power" (Shirts, 1969), which took place on the Shelton Challenge cornerstone day devoted to diversity. Star Power is a simulation game that everyone, including new staff, experiences cold, for the first time during the camp week. Its focus is the ethical use of power and how to use your power in an

appropriate manner. When people ask about diversity, most people refer to diversity in the context of race and ethnicity. The Star Power simulation evokes emotion and feeling, which provides a deeper understanding about right and wrong in the treatment of other people.

When I walked into the Star Power room for the first time I was encouraged to sit at any table, in any chair. Two youth staff members were at each table, standing there waiting on everyone to enter. They were not talking to anyone. The Challenge Director led the activity and explained the directions to everyone: there would be no talking, and everyone would draw five chips. There were colored chips: gold, red, green, blue, and white. Each color represented a point value. The Director demonstrated how to trade chips using a handshake with a potential client, how to tabulate points.

In order to conduct a trade, two people must be in a handshake formation to talk or use any negotiation skills. If you wished not to negotiate, you were to cross your arms over your chest. No one should see your chips at any time: they should be completely covered at all times, even during the trade. The three people with the highest scores win the game. Each trading round was limited to eight minutes. The points chart posted on the wall was strategically placed to benefit the youth sitting at the front table. Trading began and I sought out students with whom I wanted to trade. I found one who was willing. We stood in the trading position, and began negotiating. We had to come to a trade before we could move on to someone else. Then time was called by the Challenge Director and everyone began writing down their scores and turning them in at the front of the room to the assisting instructors.

While everyone waited for tabulation and organizing of scores, the CMT and Peer Leaders who were serving in the role of guards at each table had already begun to treat people differently. The people at the front table were being asked if they needed water, candy,

massages, etc. Those at the other tables were gawking at the people sitting at the front table, trying to figure out what was happening. The facilitators called names according to scores and told players which table they were to move to and sit. Players with the highest scores were sitting at the square table with the special treatment; they were given buttons to wear printed with a colored square. Players with the next highest sets of scores were placed in the center of the room, where they were not permitted to smile or talk. The people at this table were called the Circles and were given buttons to wear that had circles on them. Those at the table at the back of the room were being treated badly: if anyone smiled, their chair was taken and they had to stand up. This table was known as the Triangles. As the each round of the game ensued, people had the opportunity to earn more points and advance to another table. During trading time I witnessed some students not trading with anyone because they were wearing a triangle button. Benjamin, the international student, discussed his Star Power experience:

> *Being from Spain, diversity is a big part of what I have learned over there, and it was nice to have that reinforced, and to feel like the minority as a circle and to feel the effects of unfair treatment.*

Being able to feel and walk in the shoes of others can be a powerful tool to help youth understand about the treatment and behaviors to other human beings. Kraemer (2003), who studied values-based leadership in corporate America argues that an understanding of integrity – how it works, and where it fits in our everyday lives – is necessary in order for integrity to emerge with people.

Dave, a high school junior, reflected similarly to Benjamin:

> *I talked to somebody who was one of the squares. 'We were having so much fun eating candy, we didn't even notice you guys in squalor over there.' It's so true about life. A*

small little game, you let them talk, you let them have candy. They don't even notice the people who are standing in corners, their chairs getting taken away, and their chips being not worth as much. I liked it in the long run. In it, I was so mad!

This simulation portrayed how people with a higher wealth, social or ego status may tend not to see the circumstances of anyone but those around them in their inner circle. They live it up with the best of amenities and view others as beneath them, because they think that the amount of money they make somehow distinguishes them from others. The Star Power game gave participants a look at and feeling for unfair treatment.

My study participants said that they did not know what to expect at first from Star Power. As the game continued and they observed the treatments of people at different tables, they began to realize what the game was about. Some caught on earlier than others. Sarah, a freshman high school student, stated:

I was put in the bottom; they treated us really bad. We couldn't talk at all. If we did talked, we had a question we had to raise our hand and we had to be called on. Some people were sitting there with our hands up for a really long time. If we did talk or laugh, we would have our chairs taken from us and we would have to stand up or would be sent to the corner of the room. I figured out after the second round, that the squares got higher chips. They had like golds, greens, and reds. The circles had greens, reds, and whites. We only had whites and blues and a few reds. It was unfair. It taught me that not everything in the world is equal. Some things that are given to us are not equal to what other people get.

Simulations of real life practical experiences form a key component of Shelton Challenge curriculum. For youth participants, ending up on the receiving end of negative treatment can

alter the way they view those who impose the unfair treatment. Being unable to talk or express an opinion, forced to stand, having possessions taken away, is reminiscent of the Nazi regime during World War II. Those framed as others were forced to wear a star on their clothing, just as the Triangles players had to do in the Star Power game. Parry (2000), who writes about integrity, makes the point that merely abstaining from wrong behavior is not enough; we have to be able to making decisions based on the right behavior if we are to ever achieve integrity.

Aleena, in reflecting on her experience in Star Power, said that she

> *...found it real interesting. I sat the front table where the squares were going to be. They already were treating that table as higher up. I looked at the other tables and I started to get a feel that there is something going on. I really wanted to figure it out. So, when she talked about the game, it was like business strategy and money and stuff. I don't know when I exactly worked everything out, but it was a high wealth, medium and low wealth stuff.*

The players were able to figure out, quickly sometimes, that people want to cater people with money, and how doing so in the game mirrors larger society. One of the few staff members who participated in Star Power, Preston, had a different experience with the activity:

> *I had never done Star Power before or wasn't familiar with it. So, when I came into the room and was offered a set of chips and was told I was going to play a bargaining game. I looked at the rules, found out they were easily abuse-able and found out ways I could cheat the system. I was still put in the lowest level group and I was treated very poorly as the game requires. I felt bad; it wasn't fun to be in the 'poor category.' I knew that something going on. I really started to get the game when one of the tables had candy and got water, when everyone else had to be quiet and sit there and stare solemnly into*

the distance. So, I decided I would cheat my way up to the top table. I lied about how many points I had in the bonus round so they would give me all the bonus chips. I ended up going to the square table. I ended up losing it anyways. I still don't really know why. Apparently, the staff gets to choose, I didn't get chosen, so I became a circle. It was an interesting experience. I caught onto it quicker than I think most did. I was really surprised at how intense it made me feel. I didn't expect it to make me feel so resentful. I knew it was a game. But I still felt a lot of resentment toward the squares when I wasn't a square.

Discussions following Star Power raised the following points from students. Some people today try manipulating the system to achieve success. Their actions do not exemplify integrity or honesty in their negotiations with others. For awhile, one may be able to cheat the system to get ahead but those decisions or persuasions of others will eventually catch up with them.

Winter argued that honesty was a big issue with this game. She shared her experience with someone who was dishonest:

I didn't understand what was going on. We're tricking each other; we're gambling. Negotiating. When I realized one group is not being treated like the other. My first thought is okay this is a Martin Luther King thing. This is like Martin Luther King and Hitler. This is what they are trying to teach us. I understand it now. What I learned out of that was discrimination. It showed us that discrimination is kind of big here in the USA. A lot of people get a lot of leeway. The leaders that were playing that game, we lost touch with one of the cornerstones, which was honesty.

You need to be honest, and you shouldn't judge someone just by their appearance. You should be open to all their differences and shouldn't exclude one thing from that person…..That parallels with society. When you think about government, if you are really rich, you can get away with anything because you have money. If you are the middle class, you don't get away with it like the rich people, like the upper class. But you don't get as much trouble as the lower class. But if you are the lower class, you have no good things, the way you're treated, and you get in trouble within heartbeats.

Students were intense as they shared points of view during the discussion about how society treats people differently because of the clothes or shoes they wear, the amount of money they make, the friends they hang out with. This treatment has spilled into social media with news feeds on Facebook or tweets posted on Twitter.

Returning staff participants were not allowed to participate as players in Star Power, but were assigned roles to guard the tables in the room. Anthony gave me a staff perspective:

I think Star Power is the one of the best activities that we have. When you talk about discussion wise, I remember a couple of years, this is actually my fourth year. So every year, I've seen the discussion happen. For most of the kids, you see what we are doing in the challenge apply to real world. That's when they start to make the connection. Oh! You actually see this in real life. People during the game think like, especially the triangles; that never happens in real life, that doesn't happen to anyone. Then they start thinking and once people start spitting out answers, they realize this is a real thing. Some people because of how much money they make are treated a certain way. I think, especially for most of the kids who haven't been exposed to that it's a big thing. My high school is extremely diverse. The area is socioeconomically low. I was exposed to some of

those things. Where my parents are from, the people that are poor there have absolutely nothing. It's interesting after Star Power, that discussion to see people talk. People say 'have you seen people treated like this.' Some people are like, no, I haven't seen that. But then, one or two people, yes, I have seen that. People just because they don't have any money and living on the streets. People treat them like dirt. You can see people they are surprised that this actually happens in real life. That's why I have always really liked Star Power. Even though we exaggerate it by making you stand in the corner and taking away the chips. I think the real world application, from that kind of perspective. That's where they start realizing that everything we do is for a reason. They can actually apply this in real life. It's not something they are going to use for just a week and then forget about. Whether they do it internally or not, the behaviors and actions it will happen out of habit because just because they did it that week. That's why I really like Star Power.

Murphy and Johnson (2011), who studied leadership development across time from its seeds in childhood, contend that as children mature and develop, their identities are shaped by learning experiences and their surrounding environment. The Star Power simulation is not in a book that a student reads; it is not taught to them. They actually experience and feel the effects of unfair treatment. This feeling causes them to react differently by bringing it close to the heart, to one's emotional side.

Immediately after discussion of Star Power, students participated in a Dominance/Oppression activity that was meant to show the general feelings of the group relating to dominance and oppression in society. They answered questions by stepping forward in the circle if the answer was "yes". There was no talking during this activity. Some of the questions were sensitive personal ones: Have you ever been on welfare? Were you bullied in school? Have

you ever been abused? The objective of this activity was to show how each person's life experiences are vastly different, and how difference can contribute to leadership and teamwork.

The diversity focus of the Shelton Challenge looks beyond race and ethnicity to a person's experience, tacit socialization, and background, to help shape group dynamics. Sarah, a quiet Indian student, said,

> *…some of the questions on there kind of shocked me. And it kind of shocked me with some of the answers that I thought people, I guess I assumed some things from people, and it turned out to be completely different….I think some people were shocked at some of my answers. As a leader you need to get to know your followers or teammates better. I think the more you get to know them the more you're open to suggestions.*

Being able to recognize the differences in team members, empathize with their struggles, and capitalize on their strengths and experience builds a tighter knit group.

Dave had a similar reaction to this activity:

> *It's not daily questions. Not a lot of people talk about that in everyday life. I think it's important that people know that happens. The people around you, who you have no idea is like….he was on welfare at one point. She was bullied as a child, even though she looks really happy. I think it's something that everyone should realize, you don't know about his or her life. Always be thinking about what you are saying. If you make like a racy joke, and that person is actually a part of that and you didn't know, you really offended that person. I took that to heart.*

The diversity questions are not the ones people want to talk about. Being able to share with people who have become close friends allows participants to open up and embrace their past as a unique characteristic that can be a benefit to a team, rather than a skeleton in the closet.

Kouzes & Posner (2012) argue that diversity is important to leaders; being able to understand the backgrounds and past experiences of followers enables more powerful and compassionate leadership. The diversity of team members is a powerful asset for team dynamics. When someone feels mistreated, their anger, frustration, and mistrust will emerge within the group. When there is discord within a team, success will be harder to achieve.

Summary

This chapter examined the third developmental moment for youth moving through the Shelton Challenge experience: the building of trust, recognition of strength in diversity, and the overall power of teamwork. Chapter Seven looks at the final developmental moment, when youth reflection on how they have changed as a result of their Shelton Challenge experiences.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

Life Changing Challenge

Chapter Seven examines the final developmental moment of participant experience within the Shelton Challenge, in which, from the perspective of several weeks later, they reflect on what they deemed to be a life changing experience. When participants signed up to attend the Shelton Challenge they thought it would be like any other summer camp. Laura, a high school junior, stated in an online interview:

> *My first impression was I thought it was going to more fun than serious, but it was actually the other way around.*

Thomas, a college sophomore, discussed his prior student experience in a final face-to face interview with me:

> *Before I got to Leadership Camp the first time, I was like, what is there to teach? Leadership camp? How are you going to teach that? I really would have guessed that was something you are either born with or you aren't. The way that they've outlined it and made it a tangible, teachable curriculum is also something that is pretty extraordinary. Why doesn't every school across the county do something like that the first week of high school? You realize all those kids back at school are not getting this. This is big stuff. These are really like core fundamental principals, pertaining to the dynamics of human interaction that people need to know. I can't imagine myself now without it. I think its exceptional the way they made it work, curriculum something that's studiable, learnable, and attainable. That IS the Shelton Challenge.*

The curriculum, structure of expectations, and the opportunity to grow and attain goals, appeared to make the Shelton Challenge a life changing opportunity for the youth who participated in my study.

When attendees arrived the first day they engaged in activities followed by reflection, and were required to work with strangers. Each student's thinking process was challenged immediately upon arrival, and that confrontation with self continued as they progressed through the week. One goal of the Challenge is to make higher-order thinking an automatic life process. The theme of life changing experience resonated from the culmination of activities and curriculum that began at a foundational level and continued to build, one experience on each other, from collaboration on the first day to learning the background and personal experiences of teammates during the week. Sarah, a high school freshman, commented on the last day:

> *As a leader you need to get to know your followers or teammates better. I think the more you get to know them the more you're open to suggestions.*

Supporting Self-Confidence

The phrase commonly heard from my study participants was, "I have come out of my shell." Laney, Jordan, Sarah, and Thomas all expressed that having to lead, voicing an opinion, and application of what they learned to real life, as features of the Shelton Challenge that built their self-confidence to come out of their shell. Jordan explained as follows:

> *I've come out of my shell a little bit more. I'm somewhat, I wouldn't say introvert, but borderline, I guess. I'm a little bit more reserved than other people. I think this camp has helped me come out a little bit more and be a little bit more outspoken*.

Laney, the reserved freshman cheerleader, noted:

I've always been more quiet. But I feel like I've come out of my shell a little bit. I'm still not completely outgoing, but I've come out of my shell. I feel more comfortable expressing my opinions to people.

Andrew, a quiet young man and younger brother of Anthony stated that:

I was a little more quiet and reserved.

Eccles et al. (2003), who examined the role of extracurricular activities in adolescent development, state that when self-confidence is built up in youth, they will be able to step beyond their comfort zone and begin to grow developmentally. By the end of the Shelton Challenge experience, my study participants explained that they were more comfortable in vocalizing their ideas, and felt secure in their place on their teams. Serido et al. (2011), who studied the development of youth voice, state that though the progress may be slow, it happens as youth begin to take more responsibility in their school, church, and community as steps in the right direction toward their life journeys.

Building self-confidence through public speaking is one avenue the Challenge uses to promote growth. Students are taught the PROPP method (Shelton Leadership Center, 2013a) for writing a speech. PROPP stands for:

- State your POSITION
- What is the RATIONALE
- Share an OCCASION
- Review your POSITION
- PRACTICE presenting your speech

This strategy provides an easy tool for youth to use in creating the flow of their speech. Students had time to practice the PROPP method by writing two commercials on Wednesday afternoon.

For this activity attendees speak in front of team members by drawing an object out of a bag and presenting a one minute commercial for it. They may choose to either to create a commercial on the object itself, or innovate a new purpose for the object. I facilitated for a team in which one student pulled out a single playing card. Her commercial sold the card as a self-defense object for women. It was compact enough to carry in a small purse but would cut the attacker so she could escape.

Students received feedback on their commercial presentations concerning whether they had made eye contact, demonstrated voice, given a convincing presentation, and in general rendered their speech according to the PROPP method. They then wrote a second speech to the prompt: "Based on your experience, why would you encourage your peers to attend the Shelton Challenge?" Students organized their thoughts, wrote, and practiced their speech within a 20 minute time frame.

Participants could use their speech to enter an essay contest. Each Challenge site offers an essay contest and the winner participates as the Master/Mistress of Ceremonies during graduation. The essay contest is not a requirement but highly encouraged. Aleena's essay was the winner and as a result, she presided as Mistress of Ceremonies during graduation. Thomas, who had won the essay contest two years prior, shared this excerpt from his winning essay:

> *It's never too late to dig deeper, to start fresh. It is often times easy to lose sight of your own potential amidst peer pressure, emotional attachments and the struggles that we face. But all of these can be overcome, and a weakness exchanged for confidence, for strength. Beneath everyone who wants to be heard, but feels they never are; beneath every shy face with innovative ideas, lacking the courage to share them, is a leader, able*

to influence others with their voice, as well as their actions, and able to stand with integrity for principles which guide their life.

When I first checked in to the Shelton Challenge, I was counting the minutes until Friday evening. After a short introduction, my team was tasked with the rearranging ourselves in a mirror-like fashion on a single row of tiles, without touching the ground. Our instructors were very intent on pointing out every single mistake. I tried to communicate with strange faces, but we all had our own ideas for success. I can honestly say I believe that game to be impossible. The whole thing was a confusing mess. But as the day went on, I picked up on the fact that the fierce scrutiny was not an arbitrary element of bossiness, but rather an urging on to be the best we can be. And as the week went on, our team became much more role oriented, with different people stepping up at different times. I realized our 'leaders' were not leaders, but guides. And amazingly enough, I watched as every single person on my team grew and learned at rapid rates. I wouldn't have guessed that two people, not too much older than me, could enable such a cohesive unit, as willing to listen and follow as to lead. So I stopped counting the minutes. The days become enjoyable and intriguing, and my team continued to grow. I also watched other team's progress in a manner similar to mine. We were all completing challenges I would have never thought possible on day one. The loud, jumbled cacophony of voices became a determined, decisive unit with clear motives and objectives. The shy faces waiting to be heard indeed were, and it turns out usually everyone has something valuable to contribute. Whether it be the last minute decision making which leads to the successful completion of a task, or the strategy formed in a think tank fashion in which everyone is head, or the times when one camper stepped up to direct their team to

victory, it became easy to see the thrill and excitement our instructors feel when they make a difference in our lives, as well as the passion which fuels this somewhat grueling, but always fun curriculum. This passion was contagious, and every team fought hard for Hughie, a makeshift trophy mascot, which was up for grabs several times this week.

If you asked me about this camp a week ago, I would have told you it's a nice addition to your resume, or maybe even a group of middle-aged people who Goggled 'leadership' and printed out the first ten pages they found. It turns out I was completely wrong. Leadership is not a predictable science but a multi-dimensional, multi-faceted art, which can be inspired but never forces practiced but never perfected. We campers have begun the process of shedding the uncooperative layers of our youth and with the help of the Shelton Challenge, we have begun our journey of isolating our true inner strands of leadership of integrity, of diversity, of honesty and most importantly of ourselves.

The Shelton Challenge chisels in the minds of youth an image of the person they want to become. It provides the tools and the equipment for youth to build themselves in a manner that represents the five cornerstones of values based leadership. At the end of each jam-packed day, a team reflection was conducted to assess their development as a group. At the beginning of the week participants set both personal and group goals. Throughout the week group members had a chance to share their goals and what they learned through Challenge activities in a large group reflection.

On the final day, a "Changing Behaviors" activity helps the student campers to formulate their plans for personal growth. Attendees completed activities in their Shelton Challenge manual to plan their personal short-term goals for their return to their own worlds. They also selected an accountability buddy committed to sharing growth and celebrating the successes of

their goals. The accountability piece aids the student to continue growth and not *forget* the goals they created. The Shelton Challenge attributes youth leader development to building and nurturing friendships, collaborative skills, developing bonds of safety and encouragement, within an atmosphere that emphasizes cognitive skills.

The Shelton Secret

My informants found it difficult to put their Shelton Challenge experience into a few words or a phrase. Thomas tried:

> *You cannot capture the essence of this Challenge in a phrase or couple words or sentences because it truly is a glimpse of the whole entire week. And nothing less than that, that is necessary to understand what is going on here. And, it's like this little secret that you can't put a word to it. But, It's more than a state of mind, it's just a state of being in taking on roles and things that need to be done, for the sake of humanity and putting that on your own shoulders. Because you are in fact a member of team humanity and you need to being doing stuff to help.* [That is the] *Shelton Challenge.*

The roles in which students are placed, the connection and cohesiveness of the teams, the challenging curriculum, and the Shelton culture are factors that drive the program to change the behaviors of its graduates. When youth come with an open mind they leave with a larger heart and a special connection to their newfound family. As Dave described in his post- Challenge interview:

> *My overall impression was that this was a life changing experience. Nothing in regular life challenges so many aspects of your life like this camp did.*

The Shelton Challenge appeared to engage youth at a much deeper level than just providing exposure to interesting events. Attendees participated in discussion to learn new

concepts, and gained strategies for understanding the concepts. Students were then engaged in activities that reinforce these concepts, and which are made applicable to real life situations. Reflection provides the seal on the learning. Youth participants have no choice but to be affected.

Thomas, a soft spoken young man, shared through his tears:

You know like, it's not one person here, it's not one of the instructors, it's the whole, it's everybody. From [Shelton Challenge Director] *down to the one camper that freaking hates everybody and doesn't want to be here. They are all creating this and just the fact that even though there is a curriculum, which there has to be, there has to be a groundwork to go by, just by the way the human element is able to impact the challenge. It is what makes it such a unique, refreshing, and life-changing experience for almost everybody that comes. And being here this week, one of my kids did the public speaking. I had kept hearing things like life changing, and reiterating that it's the Shelton Challenge and it's a course not a summer camp. It's a course. Just hearing about that and the fact that I was their CMT, they're looking up to me like I did* [former CMT's name] *two years ago. And like I was able to draw that out of these kids like someone drew it out of me.*

Once youth experience the Shelton Challenge, some feel compelled to come back to help develop more young people to become better leaders, followers, and citizens. Many return to create a new experience in the Take II program, or as staff Peer Leaders or CMTs. Thomas spoke about coming back to draw out the leaders in his group, just as someone had taken the time to draw the leader out in him.

Summary

This chapter focused on the final developmental moment in youth development within the Shelton Challenge summer camp that formed the locus of my study: reflection on a life-changing experience. A final chapter discusses the implications of my study's findings for practice and research.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

Discussion and Recommendations

Chapters Four through Seven set out the four developmental moments experienced by Shelton Challenge participants as they moved from Day One isolation and disequilibrium to building cohesive group bonds, stepping out of their comfort zones, and recognizing the power of teamwork, through to several weeks later as they reflected on what they deemed as their life-changing experiences. This chapter provides a summary of all findings, including those that directly relate to my original research questions that focused on youth perceptions of program outcomes, as well as the developmental moments that describe the process youth underwent as they moved through the Shelton Challenge experience. The chapter then sets out my own learning as a researcher; implications of my study's findings for the Shelton Leadership Challenge program; implications for youth leadership development programs in general; and implications for research with youth in general.

Learning How to Look for Answers

Analysis of pre-, post-, and follow up interview data yielded some information, however in retrospect I realized that the online interview questions I had asked failed to reveal the kinds of things for which I was searching. If I were conducting this study over again, I would employ an online interview, but would work hard to avoid the language of social science constructs such as "critical thinking" and instead word the interview questions in ways that give youth respondents a much larger range of response. As a secondary school teacher I know well that they kind of task assigned to students sets limits on the amount of intelligence and knowledge they can reveal for you – they more open the task, the more the teacher is able to know about the learner. I now realize that the same thing holds true for interviewing. The kind of question and

wording of the question sets limits on how much information a researcher can gain. For example, some of the online interview questions that I hoped would get at youth notions of critical thinking included a definition about thinking that had to do with examining different perspectives in a situation. Youth focus on what is salient to them, and can be quite literal in their understandings. Several participants responded that they considered or did not consider different perspectives when making decisions, rather than framing their response to the question in terms of the critical thinking construct, per se. As a result of my inadvertent use of questions with wording that took my respondents in an unexpected direction, some of the information provided within the online interview format was less useful than I had anticipated. Valuable, however, was the lesson to me as a researcher that online interview questions presented to youth without someone present to explain or re-group when misunderstandings or unexpected responses occurred, could result in data that was not very accurate or useful.

My study's aims would have been very difficult to accomplish without the opportunity to talk with youth using the method of power sensitive conversations (Bhavnani, 1993; Haraway, 1988). Being able to converse with every study participant at the end of the Shelton Challenge week provided depth of the experience as they lived it. I asked each one to recount through prompted recall their unique and situated understandings, and to talk about what they had enjoyed. A relaxed atmosphere provided a comforting setting in which my study participants could relive the events of the week. In this venue youth had the opportunity to express their frustrations, emotions, and celebrations by detailing their participation within the various activities that took place through the week.

Data from these conversations provided a connection and a youth perspective that enriched my own perceptions as a participant for the week. As participant observer, my

observations for each particular day were limited to the group in which I had worked with that day. Observing, however, did make it possible for me to recognize when youth were evidencing their ability to apply critical thinking, reflection, and values-based decision-making, even when they same study participants did not otherwise report doing so. Being able to hear the struggles and successes of my study participants recounted in animated conversation provided a rich database.

Compared to the answers to most pre-Shelton Challenge online interview questions, the answers to post- Challenge questions were beneficial in that they provided insight into youth perceptions of the immediate effects of the program in the topic areas of most interest to me: reflection, critical thinking, and values-based decision making. Despite the unevenness of findings from the pre- Shelton Challenge online interviews mentioned above, I was able to draw some useful comparisons with the post- Shelton Challenge interview data concerning youth utilization of reflection and values in decision-making, and youth perceptions of critical thinking, before and after participation. These comparisons revealed that youth understood themselves as users of reflection and values in their decision-making both before, and after, their participation in the Shelton Challenge.

Face-to-face follow-up interviews conducted one month after participation provided youth with an opportunity to elaborate on their Shelton Challenge experiences, as well as to talk through how they thought the experience was influencing their actions and thoughts in the ensuing days as they re-entered their daily lives after the program ended. The information provided in these final interviews were in some ways similar to data from the post- Shelton Challenge online interview, however face-to-face interaction provided for a much richer elaboration of responses. For example, while in the post- Challenge online interview Anthony

shared a few brief sentences on how his critical thinking skills had changed as a result of his participation as a staff member, in the face-to-face reflection interview held one month later, he thoroughly detailed his account with numbers of concrete examples.

As a researcher my take-aways from this work in terms of methodology are fourfold. First and foremost, face-to-face conversations are a far superior method to surveys or online interviewing, particularly when working with you. Second, participant observation yields data that may not be reported by and informant, per se. Third, when using written questions in an online format, the wording has to be carefully designed to provide the widest possible range of response without routing responses in any unwanted directions – no simple task and doubly important when working with youth informants. Finally, I have learned the value of checking in with participants of an experience after a period of time has elapsed in order to capture their reflections on its value as they re-enter their everyday lives.

Answers to Research Questions

My research questions focused largely on youth perceptions of Shelton Challenge outcomes in terms of critical thinking, reflection, and use of values in decision-making. My intentions were to observe and learn what knowledge and skills the youth perceived that they gained in these various areas from participation. Briefly below I re-examine the questions that guided my project.

How do youth describe the impact of their participation in the Shelton Challenge?

On the first day of the Challenge when youth were asked how many actually wanted to be there, not a single hand hovered above the heads of the crowd. On the final day, General Shelton addressed the same question. How many youth wanted to be here? A sea of hands filled the room. During the week youth were given opportunities to lead, collaborate with teammates, face

their fears, and learn better communication skills. Through these experiences, the youth boasted of outcomes such as increased self-confidence and coming out of their shell. They described their experience as life-changing. Dave put it this way:

> *My overall impression was that this was a life changing experience. Nothing in regular life challenges so many aspects of your life like this camp did.*

My study participants talked about how the Shelton Challenge had provided them with opportunities to build self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment. Thomas recounted:

> *I enjoyed watching everybody truly have a changed perspective because of the experience. Me, watching it unfold and feeling like I was literally being a part in creating and shaping the experience for my campers was really reassuring to me. It made me a lot prouder and more assured of who I am because of who I am . . . I really did feel like a leader after that week.*

Through supporting their team and leaders, and learning to be a follower through teamwork activities and strategies, youth learned that followership is just as important to learn as leadership. On returning home, youth could put their newly improved skills to work in the workplace, school and through volunteering in their communities. Ivey discussed his volunteer work and how, in the decisions he is required to make, he now includes others in the decision process, unlike before when he solely made decisions on his own. Because the Challenge experience is only six days long, as participant observer I could directly observe only the immediate impacts for participants. Youth with whom I spoke one month afterward had taken with them the pieces of the Challenge that were essential to them.

Do youth credit participation in the Shelton Challenge for influencing their ability to employ values in decision-making? If so, what is the nature of their understanding of this influence? Do they refer to relationships between values and decision-making?

My study participants appeared adapt to a new way of making decisions and employing values that may, or may not, -- depending upon the individual – have been a foundation to their decisions before attending. Of the five Shelton cornerstones, honesty and integrity were the two that my study participants remembered and reported employing in their decisions after returning home. Some youth stated that the opportunity to make big life altering decisions would come for them later on at a time when they returned to school.

Anthony talked about how the use of values in decision-making is more impacted by a person's upbringing and the values instilled by parents, rather than the Shelton Challenge. However, he speculated that the reason the five cornerstones of honesty, integrity, diversity, social responsibility, and compassion, were chosen by the Challenge for emphasis is that, in his view, most decisions made come down to these five. Thomas talked about values the human factor of how people treat each other, and that values play a key role in humanity's ability to survive and get along in the world.

Preston and John had adopted a new way of making decisions and considering consequences, and forward thinking using the DEAL model. I observed that college age youth found the Shelton Challenge's emphasis on decision making more applicable to their lives at this point in their development, than did high school age youth. Age and maturity level clearly affect the kinds of decisions youth need to make, as well as their process of doing so.

The Shelton Challenge's five cornerstones of values-based leadership did not come across as to youth to be as pivotal as expected. My study participants said they were now more

aware of these ideas, but that the upbringing of morals and values from their families had a more direct influence on their decision-making.

Leigh expressed how her decision-making had changed:

> *I think of the more ethical side now.*

Anthony shared the values that now guide him:

> *There are numerous values that guide me when I make decisions. But being selfless, honest, compassionate, and morally sound have to be some of my most important ones. I personally believe these are the values a leader cannot abandon if they want to be respected and successful.*

Preston was the only participant who had stated in his pre-Challenge online interview that he did not consider himself a values-oriented person:

> *I find value-based categorizations to be quite restrictive of behavior and lacking in granularity.*

Preston later credited the Shelton Challenge for changing how he understood the role of values in decision-making:

> *The Shelton Challenge has helped me to understand the great importance of the values of Honesty and Integrity. I have more respect for including these values in my decision making process now then I did before attending the Challenge.*

Do youth credit participation in the Shelton Challenge for influencing their development as critical thinkers? Do they refer to critical thinking as contributing to their development as leaders?

My study participants did not credit the Shelton Challenge with influencing their development as critical thinkers. Many stated that they entered possessing strong critical thinking

skills and were already able to consider various perspectives. While less than half of the participants who considered their critical thinking skills as adequate or weak when they arrived, credited the Challenge with improvement in their critical thinking skills. I consistently observed as they put their emerging critical thinking skills to work through Shelton Challenge activities and reflection. Observations from CMT staff attest to how group members were thinking critically about activities, problems, and solutions. Anthony noted that his critical thinking skills had changed:

> *I have been able to figure out ways to not only critically think for myself, but how to influence critical thinking in other people. Challenging the process is a big way in my opinion to critically think, as it forces one to think outside the realm of easy, reachable solutions. Challenging the process also may spark ideas in the people around you, which starts an endless chain reaction.*

My study participants did state that they viewed critical thinking skills as important in leadership for making decisions. According to Winter, critical thinking skills are

> *. . . very important because you have to be able to look at situations from all lenses and perspectives. By doing this you are likely to come to a decision that covers all the bases and others are willing to accept and follow.*

Andrew shared his view after the Challenge:

> *I think critical thinking skills are absolutely necessary to leaders if you want to understand your followers and have them respect you and follow you as a leader because critical thinking skills can help you better understand your followers as well as improve yourself as a leader by questioning yourself.*

Do youth credit participation in the Shelton Challenge for influencing their ability to reflect on personal actions and behaviors? Do they refer to reflection on one's actions and behavior as contributing to their ability to lead?

The Shelton Challenge utilized the DEAL method (Ash, Clayton, and Moses, 2009) to guide reflection after every activity during the camp week. Participants noted that the frequent use of reflection became automated in their actions, even when they were not specifically asked to reflect. Two students reported that they began to think differently and deeply about their actions. Two students arrived reporting that they already used reflection on a regular basis these two did not credit the Shelton Challenge for influencing their ability to reflect on personal actions and behaviors. The Shelton Challenge requires both its participants and staff to reflect throughout the entire week and as Laura said,

I've caught myself reflecting stuff, that is not even stuff we do.

When I asked Sarah her thoughts about why the Shelton Challenge had required participants to answer so many reflective questions, she analyzed out loud that

It's to improve our thought process.

Anthony shared the following regarding the Challenge's impact on his use of reflection:

Using reflection as often as we do during the Shelton Challenge has increased my use of reflection in my daily activities. A task so simple as going to the grocery store has me thinking about why and how the best way to travel is.

Thomas mentioned how he had changed regarding reflection:

It's crazy how a simple "DEAL" model and implementing that in the Challenge can impact the way I think. I do not follow it every time when I am reflecting about my day, but it's definitely a help as far as how meaning and application can extend from the

> *objective elements of what I am reflecting upon. In short, asking questions like 'and then what? or 'what was the task' end up contributing a lot more to my on private reflection than I would have guessed.*

Even though youth participants are not trained in using the DEAL model in the ways that the staff are, they became savvy to using a line of questioning to be able to think for themselves. They had completed it multiple times, and to some, it became annoyingly redundant.

Regardless of the overkill perception of some participants regarding the Shelton Challenge emphasis on reflection, overall my study participants perceived its importance in leadership. In order to improve, a leader must analyze what happened and what needs to change. Some participants referred to making mistakes as the opportunity to learn and grow, so you don't make the same mistakes again. Thomas expressed:

> *A lack of reflection is the presence of recklessness. A leader should constantly evaluate how their decisions impact other people.*

Preston put it this way:

> *Reflection is quite important in leadership. This week has helped me realize that one can only articulate and implement their own leadership style by first reflecting on what individual aspects of leadership 'work' for them. Those who didn't reflect during the challenge seemed to be very confused as to why their team was acting a certain way and why they were unresponsive to any motivation.*

The accounts and experiences of the youth who attended the Shelton Challenge for the first time expressed that early on they felt frustrated, did not want to be there, and were not having the fun they had expected to have. However, they were open to what the Challenge had to offer and willing to take part.

Answers to my original research questions provided insight into youth perceptions of outcomes of the Shelton Challenge experience. Thematic analysis provided insight into the developmental process youth participants moved through from entering the experience to reflecting on its meanings from the vantage point of one month later. Both sets of findings, as well as the methodological ones set out previously in this chapter, hold power to inform how youth programs might be conceptualized and studied.

So What?

The Shelton Challenge aims to nurture youth in the areas of teamwork, critical thinking, reflection, and provide a foundation for incorporating values in decision making. Ideally, participation in this experience could generate a model leader, practicing all the skills learned once the student participant returned home. My interest was not so much in finding that ideal post- Shelton Challenge youth. My experiences with young people these ages have taught me that they grown and learn in fits and starts, and some of the deepest thinkers may appear completely latent for a long period of time before blossoming into their fullness. I was far more interested in what the youth might actually demonstrate and verbalize in terms of the program components they chose to retain and utilize as essential to them. Across the pre-, post-, and follow-up interviews, my study participants credited the Shelton Challenge for their improvement or change in a number of areas. Some stated that they were competent in various areas before attending, and that the Challenge did not improve or affect their learning in a particular area. In her post-Shelton Challenge interview Aleena, talked about her critical thinking skills:

> *My way of thinking hasn't really changed, but I have learned of new perspectives-the perspective and opinion of each camper.*

Jordan said that his critical thinking skills had not changed, either, since participating in the Shelton Challenge. However, he noted that he thought his reflection skills had changed:

> *I do use reflection now in a slightly different way, now that I've been through the Shelton Challenge. When I reflect now, I think about different alternatives that I could have used that would have helped me to more efficiently solve whatever problem I was dealing with.*

In a final Oovoo interview, Winter argued that while her decision making process had not changed, her critical thinking skills had:

> *My critical thinking skills have changed. I see the bigger picture instead of focusing on one part.*

Differences in Perceptions Across Informant Age and Positionings

The Shelton Challenge appeared to impact the college age youth differently from their younger counterparts. College age youth seemed to grasp and apply more of the Shelton Challenge concepts. Preston, a college sophomore who had not attended the Challenge in prior years, said he had been using reflection in unique ways:

> *It was unusual, I have been reflective for things that I wasn't alive for. I have been going through all of our family photos and how our family is the way they are. And basically where we all come from.*

Anthony communicated in his final interview that his critical thinking skills had improved:

> *When you think about critical thinking, most people think about what you think and how you approach a situation. But, I think critical thinking also has a lot to do with the people you are around. And for me, that observation perspective is like really, really improved. I was able to see how everyone else was thinking. I think the one thing that's hard about the DEAL model too, when you are asking questions, you have to think of these on the*

spot based on their answers. It's not a perfect science. There's so many things you can ask and so many things you can not ask. So when they start giving you answers, you have to go with them. So, ok, what is another question I can ask that I can get them to build on what they just said? I can remember that in the beginning of the week, that was really tough for me. Especially the first day because I was trying to think of, ok how am I going to think on the fly like this. . .

College age staff members are required to observe the thought process of their group members and encourage thinking beyond basic knowledge. Thomas mentioned that his personal critical thinking skills did not improve, but:

. . . my ability to observe other people's critical thinking, just how the whole process works, in catching it all in a glimpse.

Analyzing my interview data and actively listening to study participants during conversations, I found that the high school age students held varying understandings of what critical thinking entails. Ricketts and Rudd (2005), who also studied this phenomenon, found that age, gender and GPA can collectively account for variance in youth attainment of critical thinking skills. Throughout all of the dialogue around team experiences and the reflections, Challenge participants demonstrated on a daily basis their growth in critical thinking. However, when asked specifically about critical thinking skills, they expressed different views, perhaps not fully understanding their own thought processes, or maybe just not using that particular term for the phenomenon.

Recommendations

Youth development programs, secondary education, higher education, and corporate training entities are concentrating on strategies to raise deficiencies of applied skills. Can a one-

week summer camp experience have an impact on youth leadership development? My study found that youth do credit the Shelton Challenge for influencing their ability in values-based decision-making, and reflection. Implications of my findings for how the Shelton Leadership Challenge is conducted, as well as for other youth leadership development include the following:

- Explore strategies for more explicit connection and instruction in the DEAL model for reflection to occur, as youth become accustomed to employing reflection as a process. Doing so may allow for a clearer understanding of how reflection works and its everyday applicability.
- Explore strategies to help youth better understand, retain, and apply values that involve diversity and social responsibility. Youth may have difficulty connecting Shelton Challenge activities that focus on values involving diversity and social responsibility with leadership development per se.
- Explore opportunities to incorporate the terminology for critical thinking, so that youth have a language to use to describe what they are doing when they use reflection to unpack and event or situation in order to make better decisions.
- Explore incorporating the use of guiding questions for use in ethical decision-making simulations, to cue youth to plumb all ramifications of a given situation, before finalizing a decision or plan.
- Recognize and maximize the impact of the *process* youth are moving through – coming into a program as isolated individuals who are experiencing disequilibrium, to building cohesive bonds, to gaining the courage to step outside their comfort zones, to recognizing the power of the team, to reflecting from a lapsed-time remove.

- Use program evaluation strategies that are diverse, including surveys, conversations, observation and field notes done by experienced educators and program leaders, and talking with participants at touchpoints at least a month after the end of the program.

Implications of my findings for future research on outcomes of the Shelton Challenge include the following suggestions:

- Create a longitudinal database by collecting data on participant perceptions of the Challenge after six months, and at touchpoints one and two years later.
- Explore perceptions of the impact of participation in multiple Shelton Challenge camps (or other youth leadership development programs), as compared to the impact of maturity, by looking at Peer Leaders who had to have been a program participant in the past, and/or Coach/Mentor/Trainers (CMT) who did not, and whose only requirement was that they had finished at least one year of college.
- Explore perceptions of the impact of the Shelton Challenge experience from the adult perspective of new instructors.
- Explore variations in findings from Peer Leaders and Take II participants, who are youth who have returned for a second year.

Implications of my research for future inquiry involving high school and college age youth in general include:

- Utilize terminology of explanations and directions that is clear and understandable by youth. Contextualize terminology within concrete experience
- Explore experiences that provide first-hand engagement in an activity. Experiential learning fosters deep understanding of concepts.

Implications for using ethnography with high school and college age youth in general include:

- Explore opportunities to build rapport with informants prior to interviews. Youth are trained to provide answers that adults are seeking. Building rapport may provide researchers with more authentic data.
- Explore opportunities that allow youth to freely verbalize their experiences in their own way. Youth can recount their feelings, emotions, and learning easily through conversation.
- Create a relaxed atmosphere for interviews that is not bound by time and free of distractions. Movement and sound easily distract youth. Minimal answers and lack of elaboration can happen when time is a factor.
- Explore avenues of technological advantages that allow for youth to collect and elaborate on data, themselves.

Research needs to continue exploring youth leadership, values based leadership, and transformational leadership, collectively. Implications for future research within youth leadership include examining outcomes of other youth camps, strategies used to enhance youth use of reflection, and youth programs that focus on leadership and identity development.

Educational systems in secondary and higher education utilize models and strategies needed to inspire, motivate, and empower youth including development of courses in areas of leadership development that focus on critical thinking, decision making, and reflection. One implication for secondary teachers is creating an atmosphere of experiential engagement in the classroom coupled with in-depth reflection to promote clearer understanding and learning of subject matter.

Corporate training entities can utilize the findings from my study to enhance training programs that teach and develop applied skills. Significant ideas include the following:

- Employ strategic teamwork for completing a job or task.
- Capitalize on the ways youth appear more adaptable to new ways of making decisions and employing values.
- Utilize reflection for evaluating mistakes and improvements of self and team.
- Use leadership training to build confidence in leading a task or group.
- Teach effective communication skills.

Researcher Transformation

As a result of conducting this study, I am now far more likely to view the world through multiple lenses to gain diverse perspectives on work, education and life, from my friends, colleagues and supervisors. I have improved my skills in making decisions, and dealing with cultural diversity, especially globally cultural diversity. I am comforted that I, like my Shelton Challenge study participants, can continue to make mistakes, learn from them, and improve to become a better person, leader, and learner. As a scholar I have changed in the following ways:

- I am more cognizant of diversity within a group extending beyond the ethnicity generalizations.
- I have become more flexible to adapt to changes. Youth need to be willing participants if a researcher is to obtain authentic information. Flexibility is important when gathering data, because if the time and situation are not conducive for informants, the data gathered may be compromised.
- I have become more detailed in my explanations, verbal and written.

- I have incorporated strategies of the Shelton Culture and the DEAL model in my own classroom.

In my future as a researcher, I hope to draw on what I have learned to continue to study and craft strategies and programs that advance the leadership development of youth. I am now eager to conduct a follow-up study to see how my Shelton Challenge study participants might reflect on their application of their learning in real life situations, one year after their camp experience.

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APPENDIX A

NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL AND TECHNICAL STATE UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Study Title: Impact of Participation in the Shelton Leadership Challenge on Youth Leadership Development
Principal Investigator: Kimberly Ingold
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Elizabeth Barber

Purpose of the Research
I am asking you to allow me to work with you, observe you and interview you in a research study about your experience as a participant in the Shelton Leadership Challenge. This research examines the impact of the Shelton Leadership Challenge on the development of leadership practices. You have been asked because you are participating in the Shelton Leadership Challenge.

Procedures
If you decide to volunteer, you will be asked to participate in an online pre-interview which will take approximately 15 minutes to complete prior to attending the Shelton Challenge. You will be asked several questions about your purpose for attending, skills, and knowledge of leadership.

I will be working with the Shelton Challenge in an instructor role. In this role, I will work with you during your week at the challenge. I will take field notes of my observations, and ask if I can see your notes, as well.

The follow up online interview will take approximately 25-30 minutes at the conclusion of the challenge week. The follow up interview questions will be concerning your experiences with the Shelton Challenge and how you will use your new knowledge.

I may request a follow up, face-to-face interview approximately one month after you return home from the Shelton Challenge. This may be conducted using teleconference software online. With your permission, I will audio record the face-to-face/teleconference interviews in order to accurately capture what is said. The recordings will be transcribed, and you will be able to create a “fake name” to keep your identity confidential. Reports of study findings will not include any identifying information. You will also be invited to look over everything I write based on information from you. The information will be kept on a password-protected computer.

Risks
We do not anticipate any risks from your participation in this research.

Benefits
There are no direct benefits to participants in this research. We hope to learn more about how youth are able to apply critical thinking, reflection, and values in decision-making to leadership practices.

Confidentiality
Information collected in this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law.

Your responses to interview questions and other data you give me will be used for a dissertation, and the Shelton Leadership Center may use it for improvements in the program. It may also be used as the basis for articles or presentations in the future.

At no time will your name be revealed, however it is always possible that someone might recognize you through photographs, video clips, or descriptions used in publications or presentations.

Participation/Withdrawal
Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You may choose which materials to share with me, as well as, which questions to talk about during the interview, and still continue to participate in the rest of the study.

Contact
If you have questions or concerns about this research, please contact Kimberly Ingold, 704.982.4300, keingold@ncat.edu. You may also contact the faculty member supervising this project: Dr. Elizabeth Barber, Associate Professor, NCAT, (540) 330-3162, eabarber@ncat.edu.

If you have any study-related concerns or any questions about your rights as a research study participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance and Ethics at North Carolina A&T State University at (336) 334-7995.

Statement of Consent
I have read the above information and have received answers to all my questions. I am at least 18 years old and voluntarily consent to take part in this research study and to have this interview audio recorded.

Participant's Name (Printed): _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Statement of Minor Consent (if applicable)
I have read the above information and have received answers to all my questions. My child/ward is under 18 years old and will voluntarily allow consent for my child/ward to take part in this research study and to have his/her interview audio recorded.

Parent/Guardian's Name (Printed): _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Minor (under 18 years of age)
Participant's
Signature_____

Statement of Principal Investigator

Principal Investigator (Printed):

_____

Principal Investigator Signature: _____

Date:_____

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide
Pre-Shelton Leadership Challenge Online Interview Questions
(complete before Shelton Challenge begins)

1. Is this your first time attending the Shelton Leadership Challenge?

2. How did you hear about the Shelton Leadership Challenge?

3. What prompted you to take part in the Shelton Challenge?

4. What would you say are some of your areas of strength when it comes to leadership?

5. What would you say are some areas in which you want to grow, in terms of leadership skill?

6. How do you think this week will help you develop as a leader?

7. Some people say that reflection -- being able to think back over things -- is a key component to leadership development. Do you use reflection now? If so, in what ways does reflection help you to lead?

8. How important would you say reflection is to leadership?

9. In terms of your critical thinking skills – being able to think about things from different perspectives, and to question yourself -- would you say you are good at this? If so, what are some of your strengths as a critical thinker? What are some areas where you'd like to grow as a critical thinker?

10. How important would you say critical thinking skills are to leaders?

11. When you are faced with big decisions, what process do you use for making your decisions?

12. How did you learn this process?

13. How important are values in the ways you lead now? What values would you say guide you as you lead others?

14. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about how you lead now?

APPENDIX C

Post-Shelton Leadership Challenge Online Interview Questions (complete at the close of the Shelton Challenge)

1. Was this your first time attending the Shelton Leadership Challenge? If present this summer as a peer leader, coach/mentor/trainer (CMT), how would you compare your experiences? Was your learning different this time? If so, in what ways?

2. What did you enjoy most about the Shelton Leadership Challenge experience?

3. Would you say the information that you received before the Shelton Challenge gives an accurate representation of what you experienced?

4. Did the Shelton Challenge help you develop as leader? If so, in what ways?

5. Do you use reflection -- being able to think back over things – differently now that you've been through the Shelton Challenge?

6. As of right now, how important do you think reflection is in leadership?

7. Has using reflection during the Shelton Challenge affected your use of reflection now? If so, in what ways?

8. Would you say your critical thinking skills -- being able to think about things from different perspectives, and to question yourself -- have changed since participating in the Shelton Challenge? If so, how?

9. As of right now, how important do you think critical thinking skills are to leaders?

10. When you are faced with big decisions, what process do you now use for making your decisions?

11. How did you learn this process?

12. Has your decision-making process changed since the Shelton Challenge? If so, in what ways?

13. What values <u>now</u> guide you when you make decisions?

14. Did learning about values in the Shelton Challenge affect how you think when you are making decisions? If so, in what ways?

15. What was your overall impression of the Shelton Leadership Challenge?

16. What would be your most valuable aspect of the challenge you will take away?

17. How do you think you will you use what you learned in your everyday life?

18. What surprised you about this challenge? In what ways?

19. Is there anything else you would like to say about the Shelton Challenge that I did not ask?

APPENDIX D

Post-Shelton Leadership Challenge Interview Questions
(One-month later/ face-to-face follow up)

1. What did you enjoy most about the Shelton Leadership Challenge experience?

2. You said in our first interview that your leadership strengths included:

Would you say your strengths have changed? If so, how?

3. You said these were the leadership areas in which you wanted to grow:

Would you say your areas for needed growth have changed? If so, how?

4. Did the Shelton Challenge help you develop as leader? If so, in what ways?

5. What values now guide you when you make decisions?

6. When you are faced with big decisions, what process do you now use for making your decisions?

7. Are you using reflection in your leadership development? If yes, in what ways?

8. As of right now, how important do you think reflection is in leadership?

9. How have you used what you learned in your everyday life?

10. What values now guide you when you make decisions?

11. Would you say your critical thinking skills -- being able to think about things from different perspectives, and to question yourself -- have changed since participating in the Shelton Challenge? If so, how?

12. Being back at home, what would you say now is the most valuable aspect of the challenge?

APPENDIX E

NC A&T DIVISION OF RESEARCH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
1601 East Market Street
Greensboro, NC 27411
(336) 334-7314
Web site: http://www.ncat.edu/~divofres/compliance/irb/index.php
Federalwide Assurance (FWA) #00000013

To: Kimberly Ingold

From: Behavioral IRB

Cat Collins
Authorized signature on behalf of IRB

Approval Date: 12/18/2012
Expiration Date of Approval: 12/17/2013

RE: Notice of IRB Approval by Expedited Review (under 45 CFR 46.110)
Submission Type: Initial
Expedited Category: 7.Surveys/interviews/focus groups,6.Voice/image research recordings
Study #: 12-0079

Study Title: Impact of Participation in the Shelton Leadership Challenge on Youth Leadership Development

This submission has been approved by the above IRB for the period indicated. It has been determined that the risk involved in this research is no more than minimal.

Study Description:

This study examines the impact of the Shelton Leadership Challenge, a leadership development program for high school age youth, on the development of their leadership practices.

Regulatory and other findings:

This research, which involves children, meets criteria at 45 CFR 46.404 (research involving no greater than minimal risk). Permission of one parent or guardian is sufficient.

Investigator's Responsibilities:

Federal regulations require that all research be reviewed at least annually. It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to submit for renewal and obtain approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without IRB approval. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in automatic termination of the approval for this study on the expiration date.

When applicable, enclosed are stamped copies of approved consent documents and other recruitment materials. You must copy the stamped consent forms for use with subjects unless you have approval to do otherwise.

You are required to obtain IRB approval for any changes to any aspect of this study before they can be implemented. (Use the modification form at ohre.unc.edu/forms.) Should any adverse event or unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects or others occur it must be reported immediately to the IRB using the adverse event form at the same web site. **If you are conducting research in a location other than North Carolina A&T State University, such as an agency, organization, or school, you must provide written approval from an authorized representative (for example, the superintendent's office for research conducted in a public school) prior to conducting your research.**

This study was reviewed in accordance with federal regulations governing human subjects research, including those found at 45 CFR 46 (Common Rule), 45 CFR 164 (HIPAA), 21 CFR 50 & 56 (FDA), and 40 CFR 26 (EPA), where applicable.

CC: Elizabeth Barber, Leadership Studies