HOW TEENS LEARN TO WORK TOGETHER: COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES OF DEVELOPMENT AT CAMP

BY

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THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Human and Community Development in the Graduate College of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2013

Urbana, Illinois

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Abstract

This study describes an exploratory analysis into processes of teenagers learning teamwork. In qualitative interviews, the adolescent participants reflected on their work within groups at a residential summer camp. Grounded theory methods were used to provide preliminary knowledge of how teenagers learn teamwork through interactions with their peers. Three conscious processes were identified: assimilating peers’ actions, co-constructing learning with peers, and adapting peers’ advice. This study suggests a broader pattern across the three categories: first, there was an initial challenge to smooth team functioning, then the teens reflected and developed a personal understanding of the situation, and finally they determined an intended course of action.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank everyone who was involved with my project. I appreciate the ample guidance and patience of my adviser, Dr. Reed Larson. Similarly, Dr. Soo Ah Kwon was gracious enough to serve as the second reader for this thesis. I would also thank here Leann Topol and Dr. Bob Hughes for the formal processing and formatting of my thesis. Eli Cochran was instrumental in helping make my research happen in the wonderful camp setting. Becky Perry provided much-appreciated relief when I was at wit’s end transcribing. I am quite grateful to Kyle, Olivia, Jack, Jack, and Alex who volunteered to give me feedback in pilot interviews! Also, all the members of this camp program who worked together and collaborated made my study possible. And, of course, I am indebted to the 26 excellent people who sat down and endured a long interview during hot camp days when they could have otherwise been having fun.
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Chapter One: Introduction

The collaborative abilities that adolescents need as they come of age in an increasingly connected, globalized world are no simple skill set. Teamwork requires a level of mutual understanding, the coordination of viewpoints, and a dynamic responsiveness to the situation as a shared goal is pursued. Documenting how young people learn these aspects of cooperating successfully will facilitate better understanding of this essential capability among researchers and youth workers alike. Research has contributed several pieces of the puzzle, including a breakdown of what makes up “teamwork” (Stevens & Campion, 1994), a stage theory for what competencies are learned throughout development (Selman, 1980; 2003), and an exploratory model of what, how, and in what circumstances teenagers learn to cooperate (Larson, 2007). Much remains to be understood, however, about the process of youths’ development of teamwork for a more thorough conceptualization of its formation.

The broad context, moreover, shapes how collaboration unfolds. Teamwork at camp, the subject of this study, is therefore different than in laboratory experiment or at school. Youth programs more generally have been identified as particularly fertile settings where teens take an active role in directing their own learning (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Larson, 2000; Larson et al., 2004; Mahoney, Vandell, Simpkins, & Zarrett, 2009). Taking advantage of the peer-oriented environment of summer camp, this research investigated how participants embedded in authentic social context gained collaborative skills. The particular program studied here had many teenagers working on tasks with a rotating schedule of collaborating peers. This study asked these adolescents at summer camp to describe how they learn teamwork as they navigated working with their peers.

A qualitative methodology served as the basis for this exploratory study into the development of teamwork. In order to study emergent processes in conscious development, narrative data were gathered from the youths’ own reports about their actual experiences (Charmaz, 2006). I also employed grounded theory methods in this study to aid in the construction of preliminary theory about how teenagers working in groups learn teamwork. Examining teens among others of equal status in a real-world work setting allowed for insights into the processes of how youths actually learn to work
together and what roles their peers play. Investigating how teenagers contributed positively to each others’ learning provided useful information about the constructive and creative nature of peer influence. The current study focused on learning teamwork and aligned itself with the work of Larson and colleagues in producing grounded theory around the conscious developmental processes of adolescents in youth programs (Larson, 2007; Larson & Angus, 2011; Larson, Kang, Perry, & Walker, 2011; Rusk et al., in press).
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Cognition

Broad-based physical transformations in the brain, shifts in norms for interpersonal behavior, familial roles, and opportunities in society combine with other changes to contribute to adolescence as a period of “rapid and dramatic intraindividual change” (Steinberg et al., 2006). Particularly relevant to the study of learning processes are the new cognitive capabilities made possible by the physiological changes of the brain in adolescence. At a basic level, response inhibition and processing speed, efficiency, and capacity are increasing throughout the course of the second decade of life (Kuhn, 2009). Kuhn’s review goes on to list a number of other higher-level capacities that arise and develop during adolescence, including reasoning, critical thinking, and other abilities that have very real repercussions in teens’ everyday life. Recent work from Kirshner, Larson, and their colleagues makes a case for how these new aptitudes for cognition link to youths’ development of specific abilities and skills in context (Kirshner, Pozzoboni, & Jones, 2011; Larson & Angus, 2011; Rusk et al., in press). Advances in understanding and regulating one’s own emotions, conceptualizing causality in real-world systems, and reflecting upon their own thinking (i.e. metacognition) have all been posited to lay the foundation for adolescents to engage effectively in teamwork (Larson, Hansen, & Walker, 2005).

Teamwork

Teamwork has been identified as an increasingly important, although difficult, capacity among youths and adults alike (Larson et al., 2011; Parker, Ninomiya, & Cogan, 1999; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011; Stevens & Campion, 1994). Often an underdeveloped talent even among adults, the ability to work in teams calls for an assortment of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills (Larson, 2007; Selman, 2003; Stevens & Campion, 1994). One frequently-cited general account of teamwork (not specific to adolescent teams) includes conflict resolution, problem solving, communication, performance management, and task coordination--in addition to more specific requirements under each category--as the constitutive elements of collaborative skills (Stevens & Campion, 1994). While the current study focused on how teamwork is learned, I looked to the literature describing the nature of teamwork to be able to locate
and characterize the relevant skills teens reported.

Previous work lays an important foundation for research on these skills. Robert Selman proposed a five-stage model that proceeds through undifferentiated, social-informational, self-reflective, third-party, and societal perspective-taking (Selman, 1980). His theory of development of this collaborative capacity has people moving through phases, progressively taking into account more social information and entailing a greater degree of social understanding; for example, a person might advance by taking into account the sociocultural influences affecting others’ actions (Selman, 1980; 2003). In line with this work, another scholar added specific skills within Selman’s levels, based on what adolescents learn in youth programs. In an unpublished master’s thesis, Angus identified strategies (e.g. accommodation and compromise) that allow for the passage to another stage of perspective-taking (Angus, 2008). While Selman’s research generally concerns itself with the progress of individuals, though, the work stops short of examining the shared processes by which steps are taken in development. This paper set out to explore this idea that teamwork develops among adolescents by the very act of collaborating with their peers.

**Developmental Processes**

Work on the process of thinking as a collaborative endeavor in naturalistic learning has a long tradition dating back to Piaget’s and Vygotsky’s writings (Rogoff, 1998). Piaget’s ideas about internalized dialogues and Vygotsky’s theory that children incorporate their communities’ cultural tools both depicted development as happening within and among individuals (Piaget, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978). Rogoff characterizes Piaget’s view as “development through cooperation” and she herself places further emphasis on peers of roughly equal status facilitating and contributing to each others’ learning (Rogoff, 1998).

John Dewey and Lev Vygotsky--working independently of each other in the early twentieth century--also worked from the idea that learning was not confined to one individual’s internal processes. To fit a more nuanced view of social reality, Dewey and Vygotsky proposed events and children-in-activity-in-cultural-context as their unit of analysis (Dewey & Bentley, 1949; Miller, 2002). To make this sweeping concept of context more manageable to study, applied researchers in these traditions tend to
foreground particular planes (such as interpersonal- or community-level processes) that are of interest to the researcher (Rogoff, 1995).

Methods for studying developmental processes. Grounded theory methods specifically served as a tool to assist me in constructing a theory reflecting a larger whole by means of starting with the analysis of basic social processes (Charmaz, 2006). Qualitative interviewing has the advantage of being especially sensitive to process and open to detailed perspectives of research participants themselves (Patton, 1990; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). For research attempting to map out adolescents’ learning in context, self-reported developmental processes provide an important piece of the puzzle. Exploratory qualitative research, furthermore, can provide a richer “thick description” useful to grounded theory of understudied phenomena (Geertz, 1973). For less well-documented topics, such as positive peer processes, narratives with rich detail can serve as an important basis for later work, including quantitative studies. Analyses of youths’ accounts of situations for conscious processes are essential to accounts of naturalistic adolescent development.

Naturalistic study of process. Brown’s authoritative article calls specifically for attending to processes in the settings in which they naturally take place (Brown, Bakken, Ameringer, & Mahon, 2008). Sociocultural theorists in the tradition of Vygotsky, especially, have stressed the inseparability of the processes of learning from their context. Studying learning processes in vivo and within a setting in which they actually take place permits a fuller accounting of the relevant aspects of the situation. Moreover, Larson has asserted that certain life skills--teamwork included--can only be learned from experience (Larson, 2007). Youth programs, in particular, are a unique setting in adolescents’ lives where they are more likely to experience both motivation and challenge, which strengthens the opportunity’s potential for conscious processes of development (Larson, 2000). The relationships and social histories of program participants cannot be recreated in a lab for ease of examination.

Peer Influence

There have been numerous attempts to characterize the nature of how and to what extent adolescence is shaped by youths’ agemates. To correct one-dimensional notions of peer influence as “pressure,” one influential chapter by Brown and colleagues posited a
comprehensive model of peer influence based on decades of research (Brown et al., 2008). Dishion has coined the term “peer contagion” in a program of research that focuses on specifying mechanisms of negative peer influence (Dishion & Dodge, 2005; Dishion & Tipsord, 2011; Dodge, Dishion, & Lansford, 2006). Despite a general understanding of peer influence as complex, multidirectional, and multidimensional, much is left to know about the phenomenon, especially in terms of positive influence (Brown et al., 2008; Dishion & Tipsord, 2011). Particularly since peer relationships take a special prominence during adolescence, it is important to document all sides of peer influence to be able to promote the transfer of beneficial beliefs and behaviors and prevent more negative forms of influence.

**Youth Programs**

Academic interest in youth programs has increased in the last decade (Russell, Card, & Susman, 2011). As unique settings, they have been recognized as fascinating crucibles of research and practice. Organized out-of-school activities have gained respect as an environment in which adolescents can attain a broad variety of positive outcomes (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Larson et al., 2004; Mahoney et al., 2009). Particularly relevant here is the recognition of youth programs’ status as a context for authentic learning opportunities and as a very different research milieu than family interactions or classrooms in schools (Mahoney et al., 2009).

Programs of research, such of those of Larson and Kirshner and their colleagues, serve as a vanguard of studies exploring youths’ developmental processes in these contexts (Kirshner, 2008; Kirshner, Pozzoboni, & Jones, 2011; Larson & Angus, 2011; Rusk et al., in press). Recent work in an unpublished thesis takes a similar methodology to counselors at camp as they learn responsibility (Risch, 2012). With the tendency in camp research to focus on outcomes, the need for grounded theory on learning processes among teenagers becomes clear.

Larson and colleagues’ work in after-school programs includes grounded theory about youths learning teamwork including relevant features of the program setting, the role of adult leaders, and what youths learned and how (Larson, 2007; Larson, Hansen, & Walker, 2005). Their analysis yielded categories of youths’ insights into collaborative processes and broad groupings for how they came about (Larson, 2007). Further analysis
of how teenagers come to a greater comprehension of successful teamwork would permit a more thorough conceptualization of the development of the capacity for collaborative skills. Granger calls for more theory to elucidate the “black box” of mechanisms that take place within youth-serving programs (Granger, 2010).

**Current Study**

This study looked to camps to explore one small part of the machinery within the black box: processes of development among peers. This summer camp, Camp Clore¹, (and others like it) differed from after-school programs due to the intensive residential environment where participants and leaders spending all day with each other and bunking together in a common cabin. Some camp researchers have suggested that these and other “novel” features of overnight summer camp, create unique, “equalizing” conditions under which to study adolescent development (Garst & Johnson, 2003). The Clore Corps program that is studied here combined a work experience with other typical camp programming. The youths had tasks to accomplish with small groups whose membership changed randomly and several times a day—exceptional conditions for studying teamwork experiences.

The current study sought to add to the literature on adolescent development by contributing grounded theory around the learning processes of teenagers gaining teamwork skills among their peers at camp. New cognitive capacities permit complex new learning among adolescents. Qualitative interviews gave access to youths’ conscious processes of development in a naturalistic working environment. The intensive camp environment, supportive of collaboration and positive interaction, permitted repeated opportunities for various learning episodes and conscious reflection. Grounded theory methods allowed for exploration into categories of processes of how teens learn teamwork.

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¹ The names of the camp, the program, and the youths have been changed to protect the confidentiality of participants.
Chapter Three: Methodology

Research Design

The methodology for this study--including data collection and analysis--stemmed from the qualitative tradition, known for strength in considering social process in context by means of thick description and inductive reasoning (Patton, 1990). Deriving more general patterns from particular instances is an important first step for initially exploring a topic and building theory around it. I conducted semi-structured interviews and analyzed their transcripts with grounded-theory and related techniques (Charmaz, 2006). The approach allowed for methodological flexibility in interpreting the perspectives of the participants themselves. Interviewing the youths in this way enabled me to give rich commentary on patterns extracted from their experiences with teamwork. Moreover, I chose grounded theory methods to help shed light on the conscious processes associated with teenagers’ narratives of learning from their peers. Drawing from their remarks in context, I was able to probe the circumstances and understanding behind youths’ descriptions of working with their teammates in the program.

Setting

Camp Clore is run by a national nonprofit organization and is located less than an hour’s drive from a mid-sized Midwestern city. Campers range in age from 6 to 14, while teenagers can participate in various staff programs for two or so years until they become full-fledged counselors. One such transitional program, the Clore Corps program, served as the focus of this study. The program is designed for teens around 15 years of age to collaborate in service activities and be introduced to the staff community at Camp Clore. 14 year-olds are the oldest campers, while 16 year-olds serve as activity leaders on staff. The 15 year-old Clore Corps members, in contrast, are not as heavily supervised as campers, but do not have the freedoms (or responsibilities) that older staff have. They live in their own building, apart from other units’ areas and have little programming in common with the rest of the camp. Their families are asked to make a donation to cover the youths’ room and board, but are informed that the Corps members are at camp to work.

The Corps members are engaged in a peer-oriented, age-specific, work-based experience under the supervision of senior staff and without compensation for a period of
three weeks. The duties associated with the program include serving food, washing dishes, cleaning facilities (including restrooms), and assisting on construction and maintenance projects. The Clore Corps is “on duty” around 8 hours each day including during three meal times, with breaks in between. In the evenings, they participate in camp-wide recreational activities a few times a week and otherwise have their own non-work programming. In between their session weeks, they leave camp from Saturday morning until Sunday afternoon. Potential Corps persons must apply to the program and can attend an optional interview, but, typically, the only barrier to entry is the camp’s lodging capacity--38 female and 20 male participants could be accommodated per session in the Corps program.

**Participants**

The participants in this study were 26 of the 125 high-school sophomores in the Clore Corps. Maximum variation sampling was used to select a sample that drew on different experiences within the program (Patton, 1990). The dimensions for variation were determined by exploratory analysis of pilot interview data from previous participants in the Corps program (gender and camp seniority emerged from these analyses as possibly relevant to the research questions being asked).

Camp Clore assigned all the tenth graders that applied to one of the three 3-week sessions. 58 youths came to the first session, 42 to the second, and 25 to the third. Within each group, I balanced the numbers for each of the four subcategories created by combing the two levels of gender and seniority. I did this by sorting all the youths of a session into the four subcategories and cycling through interviews with randomly selected participants from within each of these, and then repeating the process with the next session.

None of the selected teens declined to participate. The youths were told that their participation was optional in informational meetings, and, once selected, given two more opportunities to decline to participate. At the beginning of the interview, they were also told that they could skip any items they wanted and cease to participate at any point of the project. None of the youths opted out of even a single question.

I achieved a final sample of 13 each of males and females, and 14 (relative) old-timers and 12 newcomers. Of these, there were six female old-timers, eight male old-
timers, seven female newcomers, and five male newcomers. The 26 teens had a mean age of 15.3 ($SD = .36$, range = 14.6-16.2). Socioeconomic data were not collected, but the camp primarily serves middle- to upper-middle class youth. 23 youths had previously attended the camp as campers. One participant was Indian-American; two African-American; and 23 European-American. None were Latino/a. There were 9, 8, and 9 teenagers from each of three 3-week program sessions conducted over the course of the summer.

Sixteen work sessions per week for three weeks produced ample opportunity for a variety of teamwork experiences for each youth. The schedules were randomly determined, so teens worked on three or four assignments in different areas of the camp with different peers throughout the course of a single day. Given that a work group size ranged from two to ten members and that each youth was sent to help another group upon completing the assigned task, each participant could realistically expect to work with every other person in their session.

**Interview Procedures**

The 26 interview transcripts along with the my memos served as the data for this study. The interview protocols were developed to elicit narratives and processual descriptions around learning and collaboration in the program (see full protocol in Appendix). I utilized written documents consisting of reflection in participants’ own words from previous years in Corps and my own indigenous knowledge of the program to inform the construction of the interview protocol around teamwork (Patton, 1990). Moreover, sensitizing concepts such as social perspective-taking (Selman, 1980) and strategic thinking (Larson & Angus, 2011) helped me generate ideas for creating questions and preparing for the interviews themselves (Charmaz, 2006). The protocol asked for stories about situations in which collaborative efforts might be salient for the youths and went on to probe around thinking and learning within these episodes. The protocol and my approach changed progressively over the course of the study to accommodate new directions and themes emerging from concurrent analysis of the data.

The one-on-one interviews ranged from about 15 to 45 minutes and averaged around one half hour in length. The youths were interviewed during their “work hours” so as not to intrude upon their off-time, but also at a time in which their Corps leader
approved their absence. I, the sole researcher, conducted the interviews on the campgrounds—in visible places, but out of earshot of others. I made an audio recording of each interview and later transcribed 19 of the 26 according to conventions adapted from Poland’s (2002) guidelines. I trained a research assistant in the same guidelines to transcribe the remaining seven interviews, after which I verified each of these transcripts. I also paraphrased the final 15 minutes of dialogue from one interview immediately afterwards when I realized the recorder’s batteries had died mid-interview. 

After each interview, I wrote a reflexive memo about the interaction, the content of youths’ responses, and the interview questions themselves (see the end of the interview protocol in Appendix for specific memo questions). Periodically, I revised the protocol as a whole—in conjunction with my memos and ongoing analysis—to make changes based on emerging themes.

Data Analysis

From the beginning, I built the analysis up from basic social processes evident in the youths’ narratives (Charmaz, 2006). I focused especially on how these processes contributed to learning as the youths engaged in teamwork. Maintaining a careful balance with this emphasis and an interest in related questions, I employed grounded theory methods of analysis to better keep any abstraction from participants’ words grounded in their own experiences. I established an analytic process of constant comparison, cycling back and forth between the data and the developing theory (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Similarly, the practice of memo-writing—both descriptive, to detail how the analysis proceeded, and theoretical, to engage with the emergent themes and ideas and advance the analysis—undergirded every stage of the research process (Charmaz, 2006). My daily writing, moreover, incorporated advice from Lincoln and Guba (1999) to include project logistics and a methodological record—including, for example, information about ideal conditions for interviewing at camp and details about specific sampling procedures—in addition to more typical analytical sketches. I also consulted regularly with a qualitative researcher and expert in the field who helped both expand and refine my thinking with regard to conceptualization of the data.

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2 This interview did not end up as one of the focal youths for the findings of this paper.
Even during the early stages of the project, I engaged reflexively with the data, memoing about sensitizing documents and pilot interviews months before data collection. Not only concerning myself with the content of our discussions, I also would address my stance as a researcher/interactant and my role in the construction of data. As a result, early interviews (in addition to informal pilots) influenced how I asked questions and followed up on responses in later ones. As interviews were transcribed, I began open-coding them, attempting to extract the basic social processes (Charmaz, 2006). As these initial codes accumulated, I noted patterns and specifically sought them out with techniques such as axial coding and diagramming (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). These strategies generated different perspectives about the data by allowing for visual representations and the mapping out of important relationships among ideas. Through the constant comparative process, I continued similar analytical methods iteratively for the duration of the project.

Later in the process I allowed an open question within the discipline to help select among the many directions the data were leading. I began to focus exclusively on passages involving youths and their peers. Within this subset, I re-examined the data—continuing the comparative analysis—and discerned two especially strong patterns of responses that recurred often: descriptions of the teamwork skills being learned and narratives of the processes of how these skills were being learned. I chose to pursue as a topic the processes regarding how teens learned from collaborating in their program experiences. I perceived this as having been studied less than details about what elements of teamwork the youths learned. As a result, I paid more attention to how the episodes of learning that the teens described unfolded over the course of their narrative, rather than to what qualities or strategies they were explaining. I conceived of these learning “events” as any story the teens related that conveyed any sort of growth or learning and centered my investigation on vignettes of this type.

Within this narrower focus on the process of learning, the analysis suggested a division into different roles peers could play in each others’ learning. The categories were identified by sorting all of the peer learning passages with an eye toward how the peers were relating to each other. The (unofficial) stance these teenagers were taking in accordance with a friend’s actions showed variety: mediator, cajoler, observer, teacher,
etc. Within categories, each learning event was analyzed and recoded for process and key quotes were extracted with the intent of representing key ideas. Codes from previous stages were also incorporated to make sense of the categories. As I began writing drafts of findings, I continued comparing the basic social processes within each category to better delineate what merited inclusion or could constitute a coherent grouping. Further analysis linked together a broader core of stories for each category by shifting focus from relative roles among peers to the actual interpersonal processes between participants. Three coherent categories stood out, having the most strong examples of the process with the richest detail. In the next section, I provide in-depth development of the most cogent examples to illuminate the focal processes in these categories.
Chapter Four: Findings

The findings section describes each of the three process categories that emerged. I introduce each process and then provide several in-depth examples, organized by participant. The examples include direct quotations and paraphrases explained by my own commentary to synthesize the information. A concluding paragraph for each process revisits how all the examples relate.

Process One: Assimilating Peers’ Actions

The first process included youths learning from observing each other: from assessing co-workers’ actions in reference to themselves, to assimilating what they learned from a certain episode. These teenagers reported watching their peers work together as if they were role models--both positive and negative--but they did not imitate directly. The four youths whose stories follow learned by carefully analyzing their peers' actions and synthesizing what they discerned to form new ideas about teamwork.

Laura. In the course of her time in the program, Laura learned from seeing both positive and negative examples of teamwork. Laura described a group of other teens that she observed early in the program and that excelled at teamwork; she said, “they'll all work together because they already know [how to do so].” She explained how people saw them as models for teamwork, “if you just watch them you're like, … that looks cool. I'll try that. Like it's easier to picture. ‘OK, I can do that’ or ‘I can work like that.’” Laura had linked together the sequence of observing and positively appraising the actions with understanding the behavior, seeing oneself as capable of it, and finally with the intention to try it and use it herself. For Laura, a good example of her peers working together led her to contemplate the act of working together and to strive to do likewise.

Interestingly, Laura’s experience of observing noncooperation had a comparable effect. Laura expressed disapproval when she encountered certain ways of interacting that she considered not to be productive: “you just watch people argue, like, ‘OK, you should stop. It's only wasting time.’” Even though she was not involved with the argument to which she referred, Laura recognized the detriment to the team that the dispute posed. Based on this, she further decided that, in general, one should not continue “arguing back and forth.” Subsequently, Laura shifted her thinking to what one should do instead.
Reflecting during her interview, she presented an insight into how she felt she ought to react: “even if they don't accept your way, just try to go with their way” or, alternatively, to “have the other person realize that, ‘OK, I can stop arguing now. Maybe I should listen sometimes.’” Upon reflecting in the interview, Laura gave general advice to no one in particular, recommending that one concede or cajole, rather than engage in an antagonistic quarrel. Having thought carefully about watching her peers bicker and having seen other group members who cooperated, Laura readily produced more favorable counter-scenarios to the situations she saw that were not ostensibly conducive to teamwork. Along with this, she stated her personal opposition to contentious attitudes, “You watch people argue, [thinking], ‘Okay. You should stop.’” Her first piece of advice for people to work well on a team, based on what she had seen, was to “communicate to cooperate.” Both prosocial and antisocial behavior that she observed built up her perspective with regard to working with her peers. Watching role models--including the negative ones--led her to evaluate these interactions and develop her own course of action. She actively built on what she was learning through assessing her peers’ action to form a more nuanced view of teamwork.

**Trent.** Trent described learning from contrasting three of his peers’ abilities to work with the team and linked this to his own development as a contributing group member. He made the connection of a friend named Helen being “nice to everyone and so people like working with her.” Trent saw in Helen this positive quality and realized the effect it had on her teammates. In contrast, he told of an unnamed young man who “thinks he's somewhat better than other people… so that makes people not want to work with him.” As he garnered more experiences working with a team, Trent was identifying aspects of personality that corresponded with relations among group members. Trent also told of a comparison of different approaches to working well with other people in the program, describing Helen as “always in a good mood and just cheers everyone up … [whereas Carly is] just a really hard worker.” Based on the examples he saw, Trent said if he could do it over he “would always try to ask what I can do to help.”

Trent’s process of learning--from both models of affability and of condescension that he witnessed--was also evident in another aspect of his personal philosophy: “I just kind of put on a happy face just so I wouldn't have to be arguing.” Trent cited this as a
strategy he had adopted to work well with all the different people in the program. He found himself acting positive (“put on a happy face”) even when he did not feel like doing so in more than one story that he related.

Trent suggested that comparison and evaluation, in which certain observant persons might engage during collaboration, could teach people about teamwork:

Some people might actually see and change the way that they are … You have to like go through it and see for yourself. Like see from other people's faults or your faults. Just the mistakes that are made and how to improve it next time.

This outline for learning from mistakes allowed for vicarious experience followed by a determination of alternative behavior for the future. Trent took a step back from within his own learning from observation to see the bigger picture of how that process of carefully attending to others’ actions could contribute to one’s understanding.

In the end, Trent sorted through and selectively absorbed his experiences to help inform the type of teammate he endeavored to be. “I’ve improved my attitude and that’s what I tried to do.” Trent’s sentiments—in support of some sorts of interpersonal behavior and in opposition to others—tied back to the models he compared and helped integrate the ways he thought about and made sense of teamwork in action.

Jesse. Another youth, Jesse, watched and critically examined a conflict among other teenagers in his program. Jesse looked on as a few of his co-workers got increasingly angry at a peer who would repeatedly do what they were asking him to stop doing. Jesse saw them get “pissed off” and—even though Jesse considered the behavior “just a nuisance”—he recognized the perspective that “there's some people that just don't know when to stop.” Besides simply viewing the aggravating peer as an example of how not to act, though, Jesse also evaluated how the situation unfolded as his peers reacted. “It's not good to have open conflicts,” Jesse reflected. Looking back in an interview, he posed advice to “just back off,” but qualified this with more nuanced thinking about how to properly respond:

But, that's how I would do it [by just backing off]. But then again, I'm guilty of this. I guess I back off too much. You still need to voice your opinion. Each voice your opinion so you're not stuck doing something you don't really want to do.
As should be clear, Jesse moved beyond the single incident and into how he was abstracting from that particular situation. He saw his peers act; he imagined his own tendencies; he projected possible net results; and he summarized with generalized advice (“you...need to...”). This thinking entailed his synthesizing the relevant information from the initial event and addressing it in a multi-step fashion. He observed his peers interacting and then his learning about teamwork consisted of intermediate steps in his head.

**Daniel.** Daniel also revealed how he was thinking about teamwork as he kept an eye on what was going on around him. He explained his thought process at a time when he determined that a peer's behavior was such that he ought to consciously avoid it: “you're like, ‘I don't want to be that person, so I'm gonna work harder to be a team. I don't want to be the anchor to everyone else's success.'” Not wanting to hold back the group from being successful, Daniel resolved to endeavor to “be a team.” Daniel showed that he considered his own identity in relation to others as a factor that influenced his own cooperative mindset. Daniel went on to tell of a friend who he admired: he's very hardworking and things. So I try to like be more like him 'cause he worked hard for everyone but also worked toward the goal and not get distracted by the means of getting towards the goal. … like he has good balance of both … he was a very teamwork person.

The quote revealed some of how Daniel was thinking about teamwork: he strove to imitate characteristics of “a very teamwork person” because of how they reflected the collaborative skills that Daniel valued. He also asserted that much of what he was learning “can't be taught, it has to be shown through experience.” Daniel recognized the importance of encountering team situations *in vivo*. Having seen both a negative and a positive role model of teamwork strategies, Daniel utilized each to refine his thinking about what it means to collaborate successfully.

Whereas the idea of a “role model” might evoke a very specific idea for the reader, one can see that the experiences of each youth described here had a particular manner in which they learned from observing their peers. Different processes made up the observational learning for a particular youth, from evaluating to sorting to contrasting. Particularly salient were processes involving attentive observation and the subsequent
critique of how that had an impact on other members of the group. There were also contrasts among positive and negative examples of behavior followed by an implicit comparison to the youth’s own actions. All four youths went on to create further guidelines based on their experiences. Clearly, learning was not a simple transmission of actions by imitation or renunciation, rather the connection between seeing others’ behavior and acting oneself was more complicated. The teens encountered dozens of scenarios involving teamwork, good and bad, each day, but only focused on certain peers in certain situations before assessing actions and assimilating that experience into their knowledge and self.

Process Two: Co-Constructing Learning

This section highlights processes involving youths co-constructing their learning around teamwork. These instances may be described as learning with rather than learning from peers. Initially, exemplars of co-learning were identified by their relative emphasis on a shared experience (“we,” “together,” etc.) and a further pattern of joint learning processes yielded other candidates for inclusion. The resulting stories recall horizontal learning as rooted in the work of theorists from Dewey to Piaget to Vygotsky (Dewey, 1916; Piaget, 1926; Vygotsky, 1978), rather than more traditionally conceptualized learning relationships that are often characterized by asymmetry. The following teens gave descriptions of what a reciprocal learning situation might look like among teenagers, citing a variety of constitutive processes to learning teamwork.

Molly. Molly stated the idea of co-constructing learning very simply, saying that “we would all learn, like, how to do [our jobs at camp] together.” Molly affirmed that she learned about teamwork by watching others in the program, but endeavored to qualify that it was not a one-way process of receiving knowledge. With this and the next quotation, the reader can see that the teens started on a level playing field and progressed cooperatively: “we kind of like just developed a system of who would do what and taking turns.” Everyone negotiated the precise nature of their teamwork as part of the process of collaboration. Moreover, Molly explicitly pointed out that when they were working, she was not thinking, “Oh, I learned about teamwork … it just kind of happened.” She was not endeavoring to “learn” nor was she conscious of advancing in skill at the moment. These were not situations where learning to work together was the ostensible intention of
youth, nor would many necessarily have conceptualized working together better as “learning.” Thus, one can interpret the negotiating and collaborating illustrated here as a dynamic interfacing of minds and as teens building a system of teamwork together.

**Natalie.** Natalie worked out teamwork with a peer by means of both of them conceding and aligning their way of working. Natalie spoke of how she dealt with a situation where a peer used a “different strategy” than she would have, Natalie mentioned that

We just eventually merged into each other's [way of working], like every other time. It just sort of happened [that we alternated]. …we just kept switching on and off, not thinking about it. Just sort of ended up coming together sort of, I guess.

And agreeing.

Whereas they started working in different ways, their learning of each other’s style made how they were working compatible. The change was gradual, but brought together the pair’s incongruent approaches to the task.

Natalie had another detailed example of negotiating teamwork:

me and Chris, we split up. And it's just- it's like a game plan. Right when they were walking in, we were like, ‘Okay you got those, you got those and we'll pick up each other's slack if we need help or something.’ And it was like kind of compromise thing. And 'cause we both like talked about it, we [didn’t compete].

This collaborative labor was more obviously intentional than the last, but reflected the same cooperation to bring their efforts into alignment. Natalie also recognized that discussing how they would work helped them both avoid conflict and be responsive to each other’s needs. In summing up everything she had learned from her experience, Natalie expanded on this theme of communication by recommending that her peers listen to learn: “be open-minded and non-judging ... you can’t just be close-minded and say no because they’re not your friend and not even listen to their idea.” Having learned to smooth the way for working together, Natalie further developed her comprehension of strategies of collaboration. The foundation of knowing how to work with all the people in the program, though, came from the co-construction of teamwork by Natalie and her peers.
**Fritz.** In similar fashion, Fritz described a sort of co-learning as mutually progressing in team functioning:

I mean, once after the very first meal, things started clicking all around. And I feel like it kinda all happened at the same time. So, I don't feel like there was that much learned by observation of others, but when you're working together with yourself and someone else.

I speculate as to what precisely Fritz may have meant in saying they hadn't “learned by observation,” but it seems clear that he was referring to a process wherein he and his peers worked out their collaboration. He was not “learning from” someone who had it figured out, rather, with his peers, Fritz was co-constructing their practice. Clarifying that “communication” was one aspect of what he and his peers were co-learning, Fritz pointed out that “you have to be able to tell them what you think needs to be done and able to accept their ideas.” The flow of information and of accommodation had to go both ways, with group members consenting to cooperate. In this way, the youths were able to co-construct how they learned teamwork.

**Blair.** Blair's co-construction could be seen when she successfully engaged in mutual accommodation with her co-workers. Blair described how--by agreeing to split up undesirable tasks--she could get “close to fair” even “if I don't see eye-to-eye with someone.” This was a particularly salient example for Blair, because she reported compromising as helping her negotiate duties in the least-loved job at camp: cleaning the bathrooms. She encouraged others to “meet each other in the middle” and called it “my philosophy in life [to do so]” and also said, “It’s all about, like- What’s the word? Compromise.” The particular action of coming to an agreement was useful for Blair in this instance, but she also took it as a broader strategy in her social relationships. For her to develop the foundational idea, though, Blair had to experience it in action, working out the process with her equals.

The teens relate in the stories how they improved at doing teamwork by engaging with their peers and utilizing a variety of strategies including compromising, accommodating, communicating, negotiating, and cooperating. They did not make one-sided changes to the working relationship, but rather partnered with co-workers to enact change in their teamwork. Their development of collaborative skills comprised co-
constructing adjustments to the way they worked together. In each of these examples could be seen a lack of emphasis on a single individual as the agent in the initial co-learning, but, rather, a more distributed dyad or group changing in the experience. Their stories echoed a collective, processual learning about teamwork that derives from the dynamics of working together itself.

**Process Three: Adapting Peers’ Advice**

Several of the youths described experiences in which they adapted advice from their peers. I try to trace out what happened after the words left peers’ mouths, when a youth took in the advice, cognitively engaged the advice, and integrated it to their own understanding of teamwork. The stories below show how three adolescents were learning about teamwork within an adviser-advisee stance with a peer. Each reported benefiting from co-workers’ input and told how it spurred further thought.

**Phillip.** A young man named Phillip benefited from the intervention of his friends, Laura and Danielle. Phillip described how the two coached him regarding his temper, since, in his own words, he was someone who “get[s] angry easily.” The two gave Phillip guidance—when he was angered—on how to act in order to calm himself. Phillip found himself “actually cooling down quicker, just by doing it their way,” that is, by acquiescing to a peer’s counterintuitive method of approaching the task in place of arguing or insisting on his way in response. He indicated surprise at their advice and suggested that it made him think, indicating an internal comparison between the advised course of action and his customary reaction. He counted this event as helping him to deal with the demands of interacting with the many different people he encountered in the program. In our interview, Philip summed up his eventual attitude and ideas about teamwork as a result of his experiences in the program,

Like, I still have issues with different people every now and then, but, I’ve actually figured out that if you, like, talk to ‘em and be nice to ‘em that you figure out their background and stuff like that. So, you learn how to actually work with them the way that they’re used to working instead of making them work your own thing.

In conjunction with the previous coaching episode from Phillip, one can think of his “figuring out” as a result of the experience with Laura and Danielle. Phillip took
ownership of this learning, but the whole story showed the contribution made by his peers. Besides simply going along and “doing it their way,” Phillip here added effective communication and genuine interpersonal interest to his repertoire of strategies for collaborating. With Laura and Danielle’s coaching, Phillip got better at keeping his cool and avoiding conflict, but his reflection in the interview showed how he went on to have more insights than he reported learning from them. The coaching episode can be viewed as an important stage within the learning process of “figuring out” that Phillip described having done in the course of the program.

Phillip tried out Laura and Danielle’s advice and discovered the effectiveness of their suggestion. As a result of initially “just doing it their way,” Phillip eventually saw others’ different ways of working more sympathetically: he expressed an interest in understanding peers’ work habits. The contrast between earlier attitude and later outlook as demonstrated in Phillip’s professions about how he “figured out … how to work with [others]” spoke strongly to the strides Phillip made in collaborating. Phillip’s retrospective summary about teamwork showed how he considered the initial advice to have helped him, how he learned from that and used it to make sense of situations, and how he made inroads in comprehending the workings of successful teamwork.

Brad. Brad, another contemplative youth, learned from an incident in which many of his peers urged him to reconsider how he was acting. He described a journey from “I was terrible…[and] not able to work with anybody,” through “fix[ing] that ground … [in order] to get along,” and finally to being able to mediate his peers disputes and “find common grounds with them.” When asked about what had changed, Brad recollected an incident in which he “was being defiant and just making a big mess” in stubborn opposition to his co-workers’ entreaties that he change his problematic manner of working. When again they equably called attention to his behavior, Brad said “it just sort of hit me and I started conforming and listening.” Apparently unmoved by the first round of advice, Brad recounted a realization upon repetition. Looking back during our interview, he especially appreciated his peers’ patience:

Other people helped me realize that I need to work better with other people--because those other people were like really accepting and nice they slowly pointed it out and helped me get there.
Brad indicated that *how* his peers gave advice was an important factor for his cooperation and the consequent step forward in his understanding. This experience of learning by listening to others perhaps contributed to his confidence in an ability to help others. Despite the fact that he found his own words to sometimes “come out rather harsh,” Brad noted that “when other people are arguing, I usually can find a consensus between the two.” Brad recognized the sensitivity demonstrated by those that advised him and integrated that style into his own approach of finding “a consensus between the two.” Brad eventually took the advice given him, later came to comprehend the situation, and learned as a result of his interpretation of what happened.

**Kevin.** Kevin and one of his peers were arguing about how to continue their work one day when another peer intervened with some advice. She proposed a solution where Kevin and his co-worker could both get to do some of what they wanted. Kevin cited this as an example of “compromise … that makes us feel that it's still our way” and said that this mediator was someone who had “help[ed] me get along with the other person.” He recognized the proposal as astute, since it catered to both parties and helped resolve the issue amicably. Drawing from this episode (and his general experience in the program), Kevin distilled his own recommendations during our interview for other teens at camp to consider: “be ready to take everyone's advice and try and use it at least once.” Having received, accepted, and benefited from another's help--“we both got our ways [when we did what she recommended]”--Kevin affirmed his openness to others' assistance and would encourage friends to do likewise. By paying attention to how a friend accommodated his dispute, Kevin was able to draw conclusions about how to better handle similar challenges more generally. From the responses in his interview, one sees how Kevin has generalized knowledge and his outlook based on that successful experience of accepting and integrating advice into his own working style.

After getting advice--and it sometimes took several repetitions--the youths tried it out and later gave thought to and made sense of their experience. With an appreciation of what happened and how, they were able to generalize to rules for behavior, whether for themselves or for others. Looking back during the interview, they related how their conclusions guided further actions and thoughts. Their encounters with their peers led
them to consider and revisit ideas about working with others and eventually to come to new understandings and strategies.
Chapter Five: Discussion

The goal of this study was to explore processes among teenagers learning teamwork. The immediate context of the study was a program that provided many opportunities for collaboration among tenth graders and took place in a residential summer camp in the Midwest. The grounded theory methods facilitated construction of the following preliminary theory about young camp staff members’ conscious processes of development. In-depth qualitative interviews with 26 youths provided windows into the adolescents’ own perspectives of how they were learning as they worked together. Three categories of processes emerged from the analysis: 1) assimilating peers’ actions 2) co-constructing learning with peers and 3) adapting peers’ advice. Below I analyze each of these and discuss the broader implications of the data.

Assimilating Peers’ Actions

The first category of processes included teenagers observing, assessing, and assimilating the actions of their peers. The stories that these youths recounted reflected a sequence in which they evaluated something they saw co-workers do and then strove to integrate this into their understanding of teamwork. They used the learning episode, including the advice itself, to alter their idea of what teamwork is and their personal conception of how to approach collaborating.

One further pattern that can be discerned from looking across the exemplars of this process was the emphasis of what I’ll call “we-ness.” That is, each youth conveyed a perspective that foregrounded the group. The teens spoke of “cheering everyone up,” “all having a common interest,” and declaring of their program, “[there’s] a responsibility to everyone else.” Trent and Daniel evaluated peers’ actions with the team functioning in mind: “people like working with her” and “he worked hard for everyone.” Laura’s and Jesse’s references to the team were more implicit, but still conveyed their inclination to appraise what they saw in terms of the social impact of actions. Laura recalled thinking “you [all] should stop [arguing]. It’s a waste of time” and Jesse recognized that “some people don’t know when to stop [bothering others].” The we-ness that characterized the youths’ considerations was an important component of their learning. When they were assessing actions and assimilating them to how they enacted teamwork, they were not egocentrically focused on their own interests, but rather the common good. The teens’
contemplation of individual actions affecting others may have been indicative of the
cognitive capacity for systems thinking. Indeed, these adolescents were at an age where,
under supportive circumstances, they could develop the ability to comprehend systems
and to coordinate their own actions to be effectual within complex human ecologies
(Larson & Angus, 2011; Larson & Hansen, 2005). Laura, Trent, Jesse, and Daniel
demonstrated a capacity for conceptualizing relations within systems and they based their
learning about teamwork on this understanding.

In many respects, this process of assimilating is comparable to Bandura’s social
cognitive process of abstract modeling (Bandura, 1986; 1989). Bandura contends that
when “observers extract the rules underlying specific performances,” they can surpass the
limits of their experience and generate behavior beyond that to which they have been
exposed (Bandura, 1986, p. 100). The observational learning he describes involves
discriminating among relevant stimuli—as was seen here as the teens selected and
reported certain instances—and “symbolic transformation” of the youths’ cognitive
representation of a particular behavior (Bandura, 1989). Trent characterized a coworker’s
attitude as “thinking he’s better than other people,” an abstraction based on observed
interactions. In contrast with this negative example, Trent characterized his friend Helen
as a desirable workmate due to her “being nice to everyone,” contributing to Trent’s
incipient model of desirability. From this unique personal understanding based on
observed social exemplars, Trent adopted a custom of “putting on a happy face” to ease
his practice of teamwork; he extracted rules for behavior based on the model he was
developing. With the aid of abstract modeling, Trent was able to generate novel behavior
in similar, but not identical, settings that involved applying collaborative skills.

One salient difference between Bandura’s theory and what I observed is the
conscious evaluation that the Clore Corps youths undertook. They actively discriminated
among positive and negative contributions to their models, a more complex cognitive
procedure than Bandura’s posited “extracting [of] relevant attributes” (Bandura, 1986).
Laura, Daniel, and Trent each engaged in this act of distinguishing, which allowed them
to more purposefully sculpt their models. While Bandura’s theoretical construct provides
a framework for understanding the cognitive aspect of these youths’ learning, their
reports of conscious processes added depth to how abstract modeling actually occurs.
Co-Constructing Learning with Peers

Co-constructing learning with peers described another broad process reported by the youths as they worked together. Far from learning as an observer, this process was experienced as a thoroughly social interaction. The youths reported their thoughts and actions as joint and not separate. This mutual and collaborative account of process evokes sociocultural approaches to learning. Pioneered by early theorists such as Vygotsky and Dewey, sociocultural theory emphasizes the fundamentally social nature of learning, differing from “social influence” approaches that propose isolated individuals as units of analysis (Rogoff, 1998).

The teenagers whose accounts constituted this category emphasized the collective efforts that composed the learning experience. Molly summarized such a notion saying, “we would all learn together.” More recent socioculturalists have stipulated the co-construction of meaning and knowledge as an essential feature of learning situated in its context (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Giving an example of this process, Natalie related how she and a partner initially approached a task with “different strategies.” Upon getting to work, however, they began “switching on and off,” giving and taking as they worked out a compatible procedure, and “eventually merged.” Similarly, Britney overcame mutual distrust and lack of intent to cooperate by “just talking and cleaning at the same time.” Britney also takes care to stress the success of their combined tactics: “We actually got it done really fast. It was pretty great.” Despite an initial hesitancy, Britney and the other young woman overlooked their misgivings by working on the task together and chatting about what they were doing. By ignoring her initial feelings and getting to work, Britney noticed that she did not have to be friends with someone to work with them and even get along well while doing so. The progress in this knowledge of how to collaborate successfully resulted from the continual negotiating of work and aligning of action. This collective agency in directing the youths’ learning differs from the “we-ness” of assimilating above, which emphasized how teens considered the team as a whole in their evaluations of others’ actions.

Also distinctive about this category was the incremental way in which learning proceeded. Mutual concessions and compromises were reported in the narratives, but the youths reported them in aggregate. The social minutiae of the back and forth were
described as “taking turns,” “things clicking all around,” “switching on and off,” “talking and [working] at the same time,” and “both [speaking up].” While there was some variety to these conscious representations, they all pointed to an iterative process of change constituting growth.

Also clear from these characterizations was the prevalence and importance of speech, itself inherently incremental, to the process of co-construction. Conversation—with its turn-taking and reliance on some level of cooperation—can be posited as fundamental for the co-construction of learning. The act of discussing the work and the youths’ relationship to each other, as part of the social fabric of the situation, played a part in enabling the change that occurs. The youths related to each other differently and, as theorized by scholars, saw transformation in their roles in reference to each other (Rogoff, 1997). These changes were not limited to a single person and evolved through participation and collaboration.

**Adapting Peers’ Advice**

As the third learning process, teens were adapting and incorporating their peers’ advice to their own viewpoints. An interesting aspect of this process was that each of the teens came to value the input they received. While the three advice-takers initially expressed reluctance or were dubious about the advice’s effectiveness, each of them eventually appreciated their peers’ contribution. Kevin and Phillip found the advice they received counterintuitive, while Brad outright ignored his coworkers at first. The recommended course of action did not come easily to these young men, but the prodding of other teenagers catalyzed progress. This can be seen especially clearly when Brad’s coworkers prompt him and indulgently wait out his slow change of course. The unique team-oriented environment may have also contributed to the acceptance of others’ opinions. Whereas other settings populated by adolescents may tend more toward provoking defensive responses to criticism, camps, as pointed out by some scholars, evoke a strong sense of belonging to a positive community (Garst & Johnson, 2003; Johnson, Goldman, Garey, Britner, & Weaver, 2011). In my experience, campers and counselors alike extol the idea that camp makes people act more positively toward each other (including giving more constructive feedback) and are more receptive to others’ viewpoints. Perhaps due to a combination of these factors, the residential camp
environment may facilitate more positive peer relations and, in this way, support successful teamwork.

Also characteristic of adapting advice was that the three youths did not mindlessly absorb suggestions, but incorporated their own understanding of the advice into their personal thinking. They did not mention thinking a lot about the advice before taking it, but did chronicle how later they critically analyzed the advice. Through the process of accepting compromise, Kevin came to appreciate the usefulness of others’ counsel and advocated that others in the program “be ready to take everyone else's advice and try and use it at least once.” He had not only learned from specific advice, but had also appreciated the experience as a whole, coming to respect the contribution of his peers at camp. Phillip, similarly, related the headway he made in controlling his temper and then how he built on that to cultivate other skills for getting along with and accommodating peers. Brad’s story had him amending his disruptive behavior and maturing to the point where he had incorporated the habit of bringing others to agreement into his own repertoire of interpersonal strategies. The initial advice episodes came across in the narratives as turning points, but it was clearly the teens themselves deriving meaning from the encounters. They adapted the advice to their own understanding and incorporated the lesson they took away into their own approach to teamwork.

**Significance**

The three categories shared a number of features which constituted the basis for the grounded theory presented here. The adolescents whose learning was documented in this study were very much “producers of their own development” (Lerner, 2002). They could be seen taking active roles in processing their experiences and generating new knowledge as a result of this. The teenagers here made choices and commitments to learn how to collaborate and be better teammates. They reported deliberate and methodical thinking around the complex issues of group involvement. The teens distilled meaning from situations and synthesized their knowledge into flexible cognitive models. By expending effort in resolving social problems, these adolescents demonstrated agency in making sense of and learning about their reality. Especially as they expanded upon the social information that they take in, teens engaged in active developmental processes.
From the narratives, emerged a theme of youths learning and benefiting from their peers in various ways. The acts of “doing” teamwork and learning teamwork skills were themselves conveyed as collaborative endeavors. The participants, while always embedded in their social context, reported various levels of peer involvement: from observing to co-learning. Teenagers are watching peers, listening to peers, and working with peers, but they are not blindly mimicking or going along with what they experience. The process is more nuanced and is made up of other component processes.

The current study explores the oft-overlooked potential of adolescent peers to serve as resources for each others' development (Allen & Antonishak, 2008). Specifically, the findings contribute to research documenting positive peer processes (Brown, 2004; Newman & Newman, 2001) by analyzing youths' accounts of this prosocial influence. The processes of learning teamwork that emerged are similar in nature to the "constructive processes" of value development found in after-school programming for adolescents (Larson, Jensen, Kang, Griffith, & Rompala, 2012). Together, these studies suggest the existence of a broad and diverse array of development processes that occur within the context of adolescent peer groups.

A general pattern to the learning episodes can also be seen across the three categories: first, an initial challenge to smooth team functioning, then contemplation and development of a personal understanding of the situation, and finally determination of a preferred course of action. The initial problems were framed as barriers to the successful completion of shared tasks or to the enjoyment of the work for the parties involved. Varying in etiology, the obstacles ranged from different work strategies to longstanding animosity, but uniformly impeded the team’s unitary progress. Such a disruption could be viewed as a likely precursor to learning, as some change would be needed to reverse the dysfunction. As opposed to unchallenging or nonproblematic situations requiring less purposeful effort, difficult circumstances would seem more likely to result in conscious learning processes.

Faced with impediments, the teens did not resort to instinctive reaction or habitual response, but rather sought to reason out the dilemma. They attempted to understand complex situations, inferring causes and positing solutions. Adolescents benefit from neurological maturation that facilitates greater problem solving abilities, even in complex
real-life settings (Kuhn, 2009). Moreover, at camps as in other youth programs, youths find themselves at a confluence of high challenge and high motivation (Larson, 2000). The presence and involvement of others in a community of peers augments the pressing need to achieve accord (Garst & Johnson, 2003). As a result, adolescents exercise and expand their new cognitive potentials to address challenges (Larson & Angus, 2011). This broader view--of teenagers learning conceptually through cognitive engagement--is consistent with recent research on adolescent thinking and understanding (Kuhn, 2009).

**Limitations and Future Directions**

Necessarily, a single study of limited scope leaves many aspects to be expanded upon for future work. Single interviews from twenty-six participants cannot provide the type of detail that larger studies could utilize in constructing a more thorough grounded theory. Similarly, this project examined a single atypical summer camp program for a very specific age group. Other studies could cover learning processes in a variety of program types--including summer camps, after-school, and other programming--to better delineate the interplay of contextual influences. Research including the spectrum of ages served in youth programs could also give a more clear developmental picture for teamwork processes.

One obvious point of further interest would be the youths’ later use and application of the skills and strategies associated with successful teamwork. Many of the participants in this project made mention of commitments to or desires for change in their behavior as a result of their learning. Without observation or other corroboration of demonstrated learning, the processes cannot be linked more strongly to specific outcomes. Studies unifying the learning process with the outcomes that result would make for a richer theoretical account of many aspects of adolescent development. Linking process with outcome would go a long way in orienting the research for use in applied settings.

This study has aimed to map out some of the ways that teenagers see their peers as a part of their learning process. With research having more thoroughly documented concepts like peer contagion, scholars have called for work on the ways peers contribute to positive development among adolescents (Dishion & Tipsord, 2011). By documenting
basic social processes of adolescent learning, the findings presented here should contribute to a basis for research on mechanisms of positive peer influence.

**Practical Implications**

While the results of this study are not generalizable in any meaningful way, the preliminary results could initiate discussion among youth professionals. The findings suggest aspects of a learning process which practitioners could strive to facilitate. Teens could be coached to think about and make sense of challenges they encounter in the course of deciding how to respond. Youth workers could pay attention to the steps that teenagers actually take when they resolve teamwork problems; they could assist in the stages of assessing, adapting, incorporating, or assimilating. More basically, practitioners could use the findings as a basis for considering and discussing how teenagers learn to get along better as they collaborate. The various ways that peers are involved in learning could inform the way program leaders structure activities and institute programming. Conceptualizing how adolescents serve as resources to each other and can catalyze one another’s growth could help professionals facilitate the specific ways that teenagers learn teamwork.
References


Appendix

Interview Protocol

Part A.
So we’re going to start off talking about some common situations you might have come across on the job.

1. A lot of people working together can have lots of different ideas for how to do things. Can you think of a time like that when you were working? (Alternate Wording [AW]: didn’t see eye to eye with someone)
   
   PROBE: How did you approach the change?

2. Did you ever manage to work well with someone who you didn’t think you’d be able to get along with?

3. Are there times when it feels like you can really identify with where other people were coming from when you were working together?

4. Did you ever feel like you’re the people you were with were working really well together?
   
   PROBE: What was going on?
   PROBE: How did it get like that?

5. Did you ever have to go along with the way someone else wanted to do things when you were working?
   
   PROBE: What did you hope to accomplish by going along with them?

6. Did you ever have to compromise with someone you were working with?

7. Can you think of a time when everyone agreed on something except for one person? (AW: stubborn)
   
   PROBE: What did you do? How did that work out?

8. What if you’re the one person that doesn’t agree? (AW: no one listens to a good idea you have)

9. Do you think people have different styles that makes it different working with different people?

Part B.
In this next part, I'd like to ask some questions to get a better sense of what teamwork was like.

10. Do you have to do anything differently to work well with other people? Can you think of any times like that?
PROBE: So, what does it take to work successfully with others?
PROBE: How did you figure that out? Did you try anything else first?
PROBE: What would happen if you didn’t do _____? Can you think of a time this happened?

11. Do you think you've gotten better at working well with different types of people in the? Can you think of a time that really shows that?
   PROBE: How did you know to do it that way?

12. Was it easy to __________ (whatever they mention)?

13. Was there something that made you realize [you had to work with them/you had to do that/they were like you]?

14. If you had to summarize, what would you say you’ve learned about working well with other people in the Corps?
   PROBE: So do you think you have a certain “style”? Do you usually work with people a certain way?

**Part C.**
Now I want to talk about learning to do the things we talked about in the first part of the interview.

15. Did you have any past experiences that helped you figure these things out?

16. Did anyone help you to figure out how to _____ (work with other people; something they’ve mentioned)?

17. Was there anyone that did a really good job of working with a lot of different people? What did they do?
   PROBE: why is that a good thing?
   PROBE: what happens when they do_____?
   PROBE: what happens when people don’t? Example?

18. Did you ever learn anything about teamwork from seeing how others in the Corps were working together? What happened?

19. Do you ever see people interacting in a way that doesn’t help out the team?

20. Have you ever had to work with people that didn’t get along with each other?

**Part D.**
For the last part of our interview, I want to step back and talk more generally about teamwork and the sort of situations we've talked about.
21. Do you think working at camp is different than other places?

22. Do you think working on a team is different here? How so? (AW does that make working on a team different here?)

23. What advice would you have for someone about how best to work well on a team?
   a. Can you think of any stories about when someone didn’t __________ and it didn’t work out well?
   b. How about when someone did a good job at ______ and it did turn out well?

24. Do you think everyone starts out good at _____?

25. What do you think you is the best way to learn (that)? (AW: how can somebody learn (that)?)

26. Is there anything else you want to add about teamwork (or thing you've learned)?

Interviewer’s Memo

0. Recurring or other key words
1. Summary (of the youth’s advice)

2. Your general impression of the participant (e.g., general demeanor, level of expressiveness, general mood, interaction. Keep brief: 1-3 short sentences). Was there anything that was striking about him/her?

3. How the interview went. Was the youth responsive? Any conditions or dynamics that you think might have affected his or her responses? Also include interview tips for yourself! How’d you do?

4. Interview highlights (keep brief). Did the interview provide any particularly valuable insights on the topics of our research? (Any themes that stood out?)

5. Input on the interview questions. Were there any questions or groups of questions that worked really well or didn’t work very well? If they didn’t work well, do you have suggestions on how to improve them? Any insight into the order of the interview questions?(If you have detailed comments suggests on the interview questions, you may write them on the interview protocol.)

6. Other notes and quotes keep a text file of quick notes of things you can and should go back to