AN ECOSYSTEM APPROACH FOR CULTIVATING CAPABILITIES: THE CASE OF AN INNOVATIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

AN ABSTRACT
SUBMITTED TO THE LAW SCHOOL OF TULANE UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS ON THE TWENTY FIRST DAY OF NOVEMBER 2014 FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BY

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Abstract

I apply complex systems thinking to investigate the inner workings of an innovative urban youth leadership program to reveal how development organizations can create an ecosystem to cultivate “change”. The global “youth bulge”, globalization, and a lack of opportunities leave young people without work and skills to survive in a complex world. New approaches, labeled social innovations, focus on finding transformative ways to solving systemic issues through financially sustainable, system-focused, holistic solutions.

My dissertation entails a mixed-methods case study of a US-based development organization and program. I bring together trends in international development and youth development, complexity thinking, and the emergence of social innovations to examine how “change” can be cultivated. “Change” in this context refers to intentional advancement of individual capabilities, observed through the Capabilities Approach, and the concepts of “hard” and “soft” skills. The complex systems lens brings attention to the feedback loops (mechanisms), and how the elements and mechanisms come together to form an “ecosystem”. My findings explain how change happens through an ecosystem approach.

The ecosystem consists of “Real Talk”, “Real Work”, and “Real Accountability”. These mechanisms work to reinforce each other to cultivate “leaderly” change in youth through a system of feedback loops. I introduce the term Leaderliness to capture the enhanced capabilities in the “soft skills” of self-confidence, interpersonal communication, self-efficacy, experience and understanding of a professional work environment. Specific individual cases of youth reveal the independent, unique experience that each individual pursues through the program. Diverse youth experience their own pathway to change, influenced by various personal factors. Diversity is an important element of the ecosystem, introducing differences for youth to learn from.

Relationships encourage leaderly growth in youth, through interactions with peers and with Crew Leaders. The natural environment sets the scene, working to advance youth capabilities through the sun, heat, rain, insects, living plants. The cultivation of living plants in the hot, thick southern air provided meaningful, relevant work for youth.

My research study contributes to the field of international development, social innovation and youth development, but also add to others looking to create positive a culture of “change”.

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Many people were important to helping me along the way to complete this work. I am forever grateful to the young people of New Orleans that I worked side-by-side with on the farm while conducting my research. I enjoyed our time together. This is for you all, and all young people in the world who motivated me to contribute something that informs our understanding of how to create positive change.

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I hope this inspires people out there to create, innovate, and pursue solutions that can make positive changes for the world. As Nelson Mandela said, “it only seems impossible until it is done”.
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List of Acronyms

GNP = Gross National Product
ILO = International Labour Organization
RA = Real Accountability
RT = Real Talk
RW = Real Work
UN = United Nations
UNDP = United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA = United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF = United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID = United States Agency for International Development
WB = World Bank
WEF = World Economic Forum
Chapter 1.  Introduction: the global challenge of youth development

1. Introduction

Growing up in an urban setting today can be challenging for any young person. Youth raised in a stable home with a supportive family, access to financial resources and good schools are more likely to experience success later in life than those without it. The majority of youth around the world, however, are raised in conditions of poverty and instability, facing uncertainties of many forms and affected by an environment beyond their control. Many youth in New Orleans and other “developed” communities attend school to build skills and prepare for the workforce but lack the capabilities to compete for a shrinking number of jobs. A young person in urban Nairobi or “developing” setting faces a reality of limited schooling, nonexistent formal employment opportunities, and a life of day-to-day existence, hustling for food and opportunities to earn money by whatever means necessary. Regardless of the situation, young people today require capabilities to succeed and navigate the world, and nurturing environments to grow and develop capabilities that enable them to thrive.

This dissertation investigates how to cultivate an ecosystem where positive, valued capabilities (i.e. “change”) can develop in young people. In this introductory chapter, I present my study, describe its’ purpose and significance, and offer the justification for the research approach, methods, and study setting in 5 sections:

• In this introduction (section 1), I introduce the background for my study, positioning it within the complex, global challenge of youth development. I explain the “youth bulge” and traditional prescriptions for developing youth in international development. I introduce new “socially innovative” approaches to addressing youth issues that aim to cultivate “soft skills” and other youth capabilities. I describe complexity thinking and outline the focus of my research.

• In section 2, I define the purpose of my research.

• Section 3 explains the significance of the research for international development, youth development, and other organizational contexts.

• Section 4 justifies the case study approach, use of qualitative methods and data collection, the theoretical backdrop, and the use of a study site in New Orleans, Louisiana in the United States.

• In section 5, I offer a “road map” that outlines the succeeding chapters of the dissertation.
The global challenge of youth development

Youth under the age of 30 make up half of the world’s population (7 billion), and 1.7 billion are between 10 and 24 years of age (UNFPA, 2012). Youth challenges are linked to multiple-interrelated factors including shifting demographics, increasing urbanization and unemployment, and the “de-agrarianization” (Bryceson, 1996) of many rural areas of Africa and Asia. Young people often represent the largest share of the population in developing countries (USAID, 2012). The idea of a “youth bulge” extends to many developing countries and describes a common phenomenon where children and young adults (between ages 15 and 29) make up the greatest proportion of the total population (World Bank, 2012).

For the past 60 years, programs in international development commonly view youth as an asset for development. Approaches to mitigate the effects of the youth bulge and capitalize on the “population dividend” focus on the promotion and production of human capital. Funding is focused on expanding opportunities for youth by investing in education and technical training. Investments in “hard skills” are believed to enable young people to contribute to greater production and connect to jobs in a “growing economy” (Schultz, 1961; Easterly, 2001). This follows traditional, linear development thinking. Increased economic production is the result of an investment in education and technical training and is thus the leading objective of youth development (Heckman and Masterov, 2007). When policies fail to promote growth, and adapt to the changing conditions of an interconnected, globalized world, youth are left without work and vital skills important to their survival. Despite these approaches to youth “development”, poverty and unemployment continue to plague young people and societies all over the world. While a skillful workforce is important, the focus on capacity building through hard skills has proven limiting. The current global system requires more than technical capabilities for youth to thrive.

Policymakers and development practitioners around the world have struggled to find solutions and adapt education and training models to respond to the evolving conditions youth face. Small, unpredictable events shift the conditions for young people as they come up in households around the world — a financial crisis in Asia can tank agricultural commodity prices in Brazil, leading to cuts in production causing a young mother in a favela to lose her job and ability to cover the cost of her children’s school fees. A young person in rural Kenya completes secondary school, but cannot find work. His family faces a drought on the
farm, so he decides to depart for the city in search of an income to support his family in the village.

Without productive land and opportunity, this young man and others migrate from rural areas into urban settings adding to the existing “wicked” problems of urban environments (Rittel and Webber, 1973). Without the necessary training, certifications, and education, most of these young people cannot find work. Lacking opportunities, they are more likely to end up on a path of “risky behavior” - crime, violence, early pregnancy, and greater susceptibility to disease. These examples demonstrate how societies are interconnected, fragile, and susceptible to shocks induced by climate change, shifts in the global market, or other emerging conditions.

Traditional education and international development practice have remained stagnant, failing to adapt and adopt practices that create resilient, resourceful, skillful, prepared young people. Alternatives to mainstream development paradigms have emerged to highlight the limitations of viewing development through conventional, linear models to build human capital. In 1990, the UNDP introduced the concept of human development to broaden the scope of what international development should be trying to achieve (HDR, 1990). This view defines the purpose of development as a process of enlarging people’s choices: namely, advancing the richness of human life, rather than the richness of the economy in which human beings live. Human development is aligned with Amartya Sen’s “Capabilities Approach”, which explains that the goal of development is to enhance individual freedoms to do more and be more (Sen, 1999).

Recognizing the growing complexity and connectedness of our globalizing, urbanizing world— including the nature of international development practice and the settings that we work in – aligns with new thinking on how to better prepare youth for the world. “Soft skills” are skills, abilities and traits that pertain to personality, attitude, and behaviors that are important to success in life and work (Moss and Tilly, 2001, p. 44). Rather than formal/technical knowledge, “soft skills” are increasingly recognized for their importance in youth development (Tough, 2012; Manpower, 2013). Focusing on “soft skills” to build capabilities, socially innovative development organizations pursue new strategies to tackle these complex “wicked” challenges of developing youth.

Labeled as social innovations, programs emphasizing the importance of acquiring “soft skills” through “leadership,” “worker readiness”, small business and “entrepreneurship” training grow in prominence seemingly signifying a shift towards more holistic/integrated approach to enhance a range of
youth capabilities. Led by new actors called “social entrepreneurs” (Bornstein, 2007), these models aspire for transformative change in youth through “systemic transformation in patterns of thoughts, behaviors, social relationships, institutions, and social structures” (Praszkier and Nowak, 2012). Rather than simply focus on developing increased tangible, technical abilities and “hard skills” (e.g. the ability to program a computer, construct a wooden fence, or operate machinery), these strategies pursue holistic, alternative methods to cultivate youth capabilities.

For example, Rafiki Wa Maendeleo Trust, a small community-based organization in rural Kenya, targets a growing population of out-of-school youth using a small business and entrepreneurial training curriculum designed by the International Labor Organization (ILO). Rafiki aims to develop youth capabilities to develop and grow existing businesses in rural communities by advancing “life skills and work readiness”. USAID promotes youth initiatives around the world through a “Youth Empowerment Program” focusing on youth participation in programming to empower young people to build communication and leadership abilities (USAID, 2012). The Ashoka Foundation supports social entrepreneurs around the world by spreading the concept of “everyone a changemaker” Their Ashoka Youth Venture project aims to encourage young people everywhere to become “changemakers” by designing and implementing their own social change ventures (Ashoka, 2013). A changemaker recognizes that not all people need to found and operate an organization to create social change within a community; rather the goal is for everyone in society to take initiative to address problems, lead positive change, and adopt a mentality of social and economic improvement (i.e. “changemaking”) in their own individual way (Drayton, 2006).

Other alternative models pushing experiential education/training such as Fundacion Paraguaya (sustainable agricultural schools focused on business training and entrepreneurship education), Spark (urban youth in the US tracked into apprenticeships in the community), and Livelyhoods Kenya (micro-consignment model where youth earn income selling sustainable products in slums) strive to expand technical capabilities, enhance “soft skills”, and encourage personal growth to better prepare young people. These strategies present novel approaches to tackling youth challenges but we do not understand how they work to cultivate valued capabilities. It is important to comprehend how different actors within this socially innovative, youth-oriented development landscape create environments that promote valued,
positive capabilities (i.e. “change”) that adapt and respond to dissimilar young people and the shifting, global conditions.

Need for a Pathways & Ecosystem approach

Complexity thinking (or complex systems thinking) acknowledges diverse framings of individual actors within a system, and the conditions that influence those perspectives: people within a system view the “pathways” to improving it differently (STEPS, 2011). For example, a young person seeking work, a congresswoman, an employer or owner of a business, and a labor economist all frame and interpret the labor market and the reasons for limited job opportunities differently (Leach et al, 2007). The labor market and other systems are characterized by their interconnected and interdependent elements, and the different dimensions that shape how “dynamical change” transpires in society, the natural environment, and technological systems. Over the past decade, this thinking has permeated into mainstream development institutions such as the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Economic Forum (WEF) (e.g. Ramalingham et al, 2008; USAID, 2012; WEF, 2013). They begin to acknowledge the limitations of existing, conventional, mainstream strategies for “development” and seek better understandings of multifaceted challenges facing poor people. Some development researchers recognize that it is practically and analytically useful to think in terms of systems to describe and understand how changing, interacting social, technological, and environmental elements are configured around given development issues (STEPS, 2011).

The inefficiency and ineffectiveness of traditional development to solve social problems has encouraged the adoption of complex systems thinking into development research and practice by ODI, STEPS Center, and others noted above, while also inspiring new approaches for leading positive change – anti-poverty, employment, healthy behaviors, etc. – in the social sector. The explosion of “innovation” and novel approaches for social change denotes a shift toward new practice distinct from mainstream international development. They demonstrate a shift away from these top-down practices, and acknowledge the power of individuals to build ecosystems focused on creating valued change for society. For example, the Propeller social venture incubator in New Orleans, LA illustrates how to construct an ecosystem aspiring to support actors to foster social change within a community. By supporting social entrepreneurs
through fellowships, encouraging growth of social ventures with an incubator space, and promoting an infrastructure to nurture the development of social problem solvers. Propeller fostered a social entrepreneurial ecosystem in New Orleans. The ecosystem seeks to create interactions between aspiring social problem solvers through an open, incubator space and generate a collision of ideas and innovation, to spark and advance positive social change in the community.

Embracing complexity and viewing social change through an ecosystem perspective offers a different understanding of processes, how agents and components within systems are connected, and how to address issues of poverty and youth development. Signature elements of systems are that change is emergent, nonlinear, and occurs across a system as agents/actors interact (Goldstein, Hazy, and Lichtenstein, 2010). Systems are non-linear – change does not occur from a single cause leading to a predictable, proportionate result. Within the system, change is unpredictable. It emerges gradually like a river chipping away rock to eventually opening up a canyon, or it can be abrupt and sudden such as a bolt of lightning striking a drought-ridden forest and igniting a fire. Like a forest fire, the initial conditions influence outcomes within the system: what agents bring into a system determines how they interact, adapt, and respond to conditions within it. Interpersonal relationships between actors, and their interactions with the physical place, matter in shaping the system and how agents experience “change” within it (Ramalingham, 2013). People interact, react, and respond differently to the conditions, and thus have different experiences. Feedback loops function to relay information that influences how the system adapts and responds to the emerging conditions, thus altering the individual pathways of agents. The feedback loops connect mechanisms of the system together working to form an ecosystem.

I apply this ecosystem perspective to consider the rise of new trends for youth development (social innovation, “soft skills”, and ecosystems) and explore a case of a socially innovative development organization aiming to cultivate youth leadership capabilities utilizing urban agriculture.

I embrace complexity thinking to explain change processes within the organization and the leadership development program. Through this case study, I explain how “change” is cultivated in youth participants. Change is aligned with the concept of “soft skills” and refers to the advancement of youth leadership abilities. I introduce the term “leaderliness” to represent the positive, fundamental characteristics, attributes, and capabilities developed by youth through participation in the leadership
development program. My research focuses on how leaderly change is advanced within the program through the ecosystem approach.

To value change and the change processes, I view leaderliness through Sen’s Capabilities Approach, which offers a normative backdrop based on how the program advances an individual’s ability to be more and do more in their life, and achieve the things they find value in (UNDP, 1990, Sen, 1985).

To explore, capture, and understand how change is advanced, I draw on complexity thinking. I view the organization’s leadership development program as an evolving, adaptive ecosystem aiming to cultivate leaderly change within youth. The ecosystem approach is supported by complexity thinking to consider all factors that potentially influence pathways for participants - to uncover what influences leaderly change in the individuals and the change mechanisms – intentional and unintentional – that cultivate the leaderliness in youth. Using the ecosystem approach, I describe how leaderly change is cultivated and demonstrate how an ecosystem approach rooted in complexity thinking can be used to understand a youth training program.

2. Study Purpose

Development institutions have pursued a multitude of interventions throughout the past sixty years seeking to transform youth and better prepare them for the world and workforce. As recently as 2007, the World Development Report suggested that developing countries must invest in better education, healthcare, and jobs training for the record number of young people (aged 12 to 24) to take advantage of the “demographic dividend to accelerate economic growth and sharply reduce poverty” (WB, 2007). Recently, youth development organizations recognize the limitations of only targeting specific technical skills and human capital to advance growth, and concentrate on preparing youth to contribute to society using holistic, integrated programming aimed at addressing the complexities of young people’s lives (USAID, 2012).

This study combines emerging trends of youth issues with broader shifts in international development (complexity, capabilities, and social innovation) to consider how positive, intentional change within youth programming really happens. The purpose of the research is to:
1) understand the types of environments required to cultivate positive capabilities in young people to address youth challenges and the youth bulge,

2) explore the concepts and cultivation of “soft skills”, leadership, and other capabilities youth require for success in life and work within the context of a leadership development program, and

3) demonstrate the value in examining the whole ecosystem to understand change processes, and how a program and single development organization operates to create change in young people.

To do this, I apply the ecosystem framing to investigate a single case of a socially innovative development organization aiming to transform youth through its leadership development program. I explore in-depth individual youth pathways to change – how youth grow, adapt, and respond to a program - by engaging in work on an urban farm, and how the program ecosystem influences change – the program components, processes, and feedback loops that interact to create “change” in youth.

3. Significance

My dissertation explores an alternative approach to youth development to explain how positive, intentional change is cultivated in young people. This is significant for understanding:

- how to address youth related issues and advance capabilities and capabilities in young people to better prepare them for the world,
- how to create development programs, institutional environments, and organizational cultures that foster valued change, and
- the value of complexity thinking and an ecosystem lens for understanding youth development and international development.

The findings from the research are significant for various actors and sectors within international development and humanitarian aid, youth development, global and domestic policymakers, and the scientific/academic audience.

Youth Development

My dissertation demonstrates how to tackle youth issues within an urban context by exploring the mechanisms/processes aiming to cultivate positive growth. The challenges of poverty, security, violence
and crime are not limited to geographical boundaries. Issues in urban settings vary based on context but engaging youth in meaningful ways are transferable across developing communities. The old, conventional methods perceive youth on a singular, linear pathway toward progress, gaining knowledge and technical skills in school and training programs. Those who do not follow this path are “at-risk”, “disconnected” and on a different life course. My approach offers a new understanding where a life path is evolving. Events, interactions, relationships, along the youth pathway can tip a young person toward a positive, alternate trajectory. This is significant for our understanding of how people grow and progress - what young people need to cultivate necessary capabilities (outside of technical skills), and how we can cultivate ecosystems where positive growth can occur.

“Soft skills” and Leaderliness

My research is significant for understanding how to cultivate “soft skills”, leadership, and other capabilities within youth development programs. It explores the meaning of leadership development, and unpacks the components required to build an organizational ecosystem that advances positive, “leaderly” type changes in young people. The changes advanced in this case are fundamental, foundational capabilities for leadership, employment, and success in life and work, and form a foundation for the development of other competences.

Applying complexity

Applying a complex systems lens to the youth bulge is novel approach that has applications for humanitarian aid and international development – specifically youth development organizations (work readiness and jobs training programs), and more broadly institutions considering how to construct ecosystems aiming to encourage desired changes. Complexity thinking explains that change is dynamical, occurring from small iterative processes and/or in one abrupt episode. My dissertation reveals how “change” can be encouraged within a program and development organization, and the mechanism/systems within that work together to create it. This is significant for organizational entities in international development, youth development, social innovation, and leadership that are seeking to promote growth in young people, and institutions aiming to create cultures/ecosystems that enable transformation, innovation,
and reform (i.e. other types of positive, desired “changes”).

**Social innovation as a new approach in International Development**

The conventional approaches in international development focuses on growth and production, and modernization to improve the lives of consumers. Youth are treated as capital for investment, which translates into growth. Development strategies typically employ a top-down approach, where an intervention is funded, implemented, and determined a success/failure based on the cause and effect relationship of variables within the scope of the project. My dissertation explores an ecosystem approach to development, where change is treated as a fluid process that doesn’t start and stop at the beginning and end of an intervention. Youth experience change and are affected (positively and negatively) based on an entire “social innovation” and its ecosystem.

It is important for development institutions and practitioners, social entrepreneurs, foundations and policymakers to better understand “social innovations”. Funding and resources are being pumped into these new strategies that aim generate social impact, to create sustainable, scalable ecosystems for change and innovation to prosper. Understanding how these mechanisms function, evolve, adapt and respond, as an ecosystem is significant for social innovation and international development. Additionally, aid and philanthropic organizations looking to get more “bang for your buck” may benefit from understanding the ecosystem processes, and how mechanisms foster “change” in participants to allocate resources.

**4. Justification for a case study**

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context (Yin, 2009). Case studies are particularly useful for conducting detailed contextual analyses in a real-life setting. I seek to reveal and describe in detail the change processes to understand how a program and organizational ecosystem creates positive change in youth.

There is a dearth in understanding youth development within this context (leadership development using urban agriculture, social innovation aiming to tackle youth issues through an ecosystem approach, applying complexity thinking to youth bulge), which calls for an exploratory case study approach.
I focus on a single case study of a socially innovative development organization set within an urban environment. With this study, I desire to uncover new insights within a program aimed at youth development – how the ecosystem functions to cultivate positive capabilities in young people. A single case allows new concepts to be revealed in context related to trends of social innovation, complexity, and enhancing capabilities in youth.

**Qualitative methods**

The goal of this study is to reveal novel concepts regarding the nature of change and change processes. A single, in-depth case study can be the basis for significant explanations of new concepts of social phenomena (Yin, 2009). A case study approach of a development organization with multiple imbedded cases of participants within its ecosystem is useful for exploratory and descriptive work in a contextually rich, phenomenological environment, where concepts remain fuzzy and not clearly defined.

This research explores individual pathways (agents and actors) and the patterns of change promoted by a program and development organization (processes, change mechanisms, feedback loops) within an ecosystem. This requires multiple layers of inquiry with different units of analysis. Thus, I employ qualitative methods aiming to explore and expose new concepts within the case study context. The interacting parts within an individual ecosystem of a development organization and program are fluid and evolving, and difficult to capture with a static, paper survey. This type of research requires a design and methods that allow for innovative data collection techniques to capture change. Creating (and thus understanding) social change is a messy process that is often non-linear, long term, and unpredictable (Ramalingham, 2008; Lacayo, Obregon, and Singhai, 2008; Quinn-Patton, 2011).

I apply the complexity lens to identify and explain the change processes within an organization and program seeking to create positive change. The program and organization are in an evolving state, continuing to be shaped by internal and external factors/forces. A large population and quantitative dataset do not exist to conduct a large population-based study, nor would they provide the necessary understanding “how” change is cultivated. Thus, different methodological tools are required. The complexity framing exposes factors influencing change within and outside the organization, which would not be revealed with other research methods. I embrace the complexity framing to explain these novel change processes. I
appreciate that small things matter in shaping pathways within a program; that the interconnectedness/interdependency of the program elements, mechanisms and feedback loops function together; and that an ecosystem is something beyond the physical walls of the organization and its individual program. Therefore, an approach that captures the whole system and how its parts interact is required.

**Data collection and analysis methods**

Real-time fieldwork to obtain information within the setting where change is happening is required to understand and capture change in an organization that is evolving. My research utilizes qualitative inquiry supported by continuous participant observation over the duration of the leadership development program. To understand fully the complexities of many situations, direct participation in, and observation of, the phenomenon of interest is the best research method (Quinn-Patton, 2002). By imbedding myself within the organization, I can capture and interpret the various intentional change mechanisms while they are working, understand how actors within the system adapt and respond, and the internal and external “shocks and stresses” that shift the program.

To comprehend the whole ecosystem, I gather multiple perspectives and interpretations of the key change mechanisms within the program and how the various actors interpret/experience change. I conduct in-depth interviews with actors in the organizational ecosystem (program participants, staff, and key informants connected to the participants) to provide multiple interpretations of how the processes function and influence the participant pathways.

I support the interviews and participant observation with extensive review of program documents, which reveal in-depth the specific mechanisms within the program, and how they work to advance “leaderly” growth in the participants.

**Justification for Capabilities Approach**

The “Capabilities Approach” offers a framing for valuing change enhancing the freedom of participants in a program/intervention. The approach is useful to understand the freedom of people in a complex and evolving environment (Alkire, 2005; Hartmann, 2009). The “change” the program aspires to
create through “leadership development” requires a normative approach to value the change processes, and how they benefit participants. The Capabilities Approach is an accepted theoretical underpinning within international development for operationalizing human development (Alkire, 2005).

**Justification for study site**

My case and the setting of New Orleans provide a fitting site for a study on how positive change is cultivated within a program and development organization. The development challenges in the city, and the trends of social entrepreneurship and innovation, make it an opportune time and location for an exploratory case study of how change within a socially innovative development organization occurs.

Demographics and socioeconomic indicators demonstrate New Orleans relevancy for exploring emerging trends in international development. High rates of poverty, marginalization, and inequality remain in a city with a history of development issues (GNOCDC, 2012). The challenges created by a “youth bulge” and other developmental issues for young people is playing out in New Orleans, as organizations, policy-makers, and educators seek to understand how to cultivate youth capabilities to better prepare them for the world. Young people (between 15 and 30) make up a substantial portion of the population (approximately 25%). Urban development policies have been unsuccessful in creating enough jobs and adequately equipping youth with skills. High crime and rates of violence are linked to youth without opportunities. Low-levels of education and high dropout rates demonstrate the challenges of preparing youth in the city. The local government and many socially oriented organizations seek answers to issues surrounding urban youth. Human development and capabilities are needed in every community, and in New Orleans, innovative methods for building youth capacity are being explored in an attempt to discover ways of generating real change.

Organizations such as Propeller (an incubator and accelerator for local development organizations), and the Idea Village (a entrepreneurship accelerator) promote a culture of innovation and social change in the city. Tulane University has been a leader in championing social innovation and entrepreneurship through its efforts on campus and in the community including incubating youth-oriented initiatives. Following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the city underwent a social revitalization, as various forms of financial and human resources from around the world poured in to help rebuild. These efforts, combined
with the persistent development issues, have transformed the city into a laboratory for social and entrepreneurial problem-solving. For more information on my study site and history of development in New Orleans, see appendix C.

5. Chapter Wrap-Up

In this first chapter, I introduced the larger topic of urban youth development, and laid out the issues facing policy-makers, international development practitioners, and youth themselves in navigating the complex, urban world. I presented the purpose of my work to explore how change is cultivated in socially innovative development organizations. I establish the significance of my case study within the international development field generally—as part of a trend in social innovation that is embracing complexity and the “youth development” landscape, and explain my justification for the use of a case study approach supported by mixed qualitative research methods in New Orleans, Louisiana in the United States.

I now present the layout of my dissertation chapters (i.e. a “roadmap”).

6. Roadmap of dissertation

My dissertation research presents findings and analysis from a rich, descriptive case study of a single development organization focused on building youth leadership capabilities. I present my case study in 11 chapters:

• In chapter 1, I introduce issues of global youth development and discuss the purpose, significance and justification for my case study and research approach.

• In chapter 2, I present the relevant literature to my study focusing on conventional approaches in international development and youth development, and emerging alternative thinking/trends in social innovation, “soft skills”, leadership and complexity thinking.

• In chapter 3, I present my research questions and conceptual framework.

• In chapter 4, I describe the organizational ecosystem through “one spring on the farm”, where I introduce the components of the ecosystem, the designed mechanisms of change – Real Talk and the accountability system (“Real Accountability”), and the various elements of the farm and work
(“Real Work”). I explain the people, place and events that occurred over the five-month youth leadership development program.

• Chapter 5 presents findings on enhanced capabilities (outcomes) cultivated in youth from the leadership development program. Here, I introduce to the outcomes and leaderly capabilities enhanced through participation within the program.

• Chapter 6 describes “Real Work on the farm” – the work, activities, and events that youth experienced to explain how the program functions and the various elements within it that work to cultivate change.

• In chapter 7, I describe “Real Talk” as a primary change mechanism, and present my findings related to how Real Talk worked to cultivate change in participants.

• Chapter 8 builds on the findings from chapter 7 by continuing to unpack Real Talk through fine-grained content analysis of the language delivered to participants through the change mechanism.

• In chapter 9, I focus on the system of accountability within the program – that is “Real Accountability” and present findings from content analysis of program documents and related evidence to express how Real Accountability functioned as a change mechanism.

• In chapter 10, I discuss the findings from my case study and address each of the research questions.

• Chapter 11 presents the relevant implications from my research, and I offer my concluding remarks and limitations to the study.
Chapter 2. Literature review: Theoretical Backdrop

This study is intended to contribute to and increase the body of knowledge of how intentional, positive change happens among beneficiaries/participants in programs of a development organization, and thus how development actors—social entrepreneurs, policy-makers, and participants—can better cultivate desired changes within their “ecosystem”.

This requires a critical review of relevant literatures spanning several topics: social innovation and social entrepreneurship, complexity thinking/complex adaptive systems, the Capabilities Approach, and approaches to “youth development” including leadership. The literature is presented below in 6 sections.

I bring these together in a conceptual model (chap 3) to guide my enquiry into the process of change.

1. Human capital and conventional thinking

Over the past decade, the fabric of international development theory and practice is undergoing radical changes—a reweaving. Since the establishment of the existing structures of aid and current development systems following World War II, academics and practitioners have sought to provide a universal blueprint and justification for the processes of how to change society for the better (i.e., Easterly, 2006; McMichael, 2012). Traditionally, Western countries drive the dialogue in pursuit of modernization of the “Third World”, as it has been believed that developing countries and populations improve by becoming more like the West (the First World). (This rhetoric arose out of the Cold War era where the Second World was considered the eastern European communist states).

Modernization and neoclassical theory are the dominant paradigms focused on growing the economy by increasing production of goods and services. Mainstream “Development” concentrated on growth theories to increase the Gross National Product (GNP), which is believed to propagate household income levels to improve the overall quality of life for all in society (Rostow, 1960). Policies that lead to growth are viewed as pro-development and inherently good, while policies that have detracted from growth or had no impact are viewed as ineffective (Sen, 1985; Sachs, 1992; Sant’Ana, 2008). These conventional models of change aim to increase “human capital” and build the capacity of the population to generate
greater economic production. Human capital is considered a stock of competencies, knowledge, habits, social and personality attributes and cognitive abilities to perform labor to produce economic value (Smith, 1776). Human capital is achieved through investments in education and training with the main proposition being that people are considered a form of capital for development. This idea of building the capacity of the workforce through human capital is the traditional development process for creating social change. Here, social change is considered improvement in the overall quality of life for a society.

Opposing/alternate perspectives have emerged challenging this conventional view of how positive, anti-poverty, social change happens. Bilateral and multilateral development agencies have historically employed top-down strategies with the aim of improving the quality of life for developing communities by funneling billions of dollars (labeled as “foreign aid”) into local governments in the form of cheap loans and budgetary assistance. Opponents have criticized these practices citing that there are very few examples where it has actually led to the intended improvements (Easterly, 2001; Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1990). These scholars and others more recently (i.e. Auerswald, 2012; Moyo, 2009; Easterly, 2006) have called for an end to the existing structure of development aid all together, stating that it has only fostered dependency, encouraged corruption, and ultimately, perpetuated a consistent state of poor governance and poverty in Africa and around the world. These critiques have raised questions about whether the conventional paradigm for creating change in the developing world is working, prompting the arrival new thinking and approaches to development and youth.

2. Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship

Social innovations are different from mainstream development approaches. They are defined as novel solutions to a social problem that are more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions, and for which the value created accrues mainly to society as a whole rather than to individuals (Phills, Deiglmeier, and Miller, 2008). Social innovations are the vehicles used by people – labeled “social entrepreneurs” – to create positive change in society. Social entrepreneurs are actors in society that are creating social innovations, organizations, and business models targeting societal change (Martin and Osberg, 2007). They are recognized for passion, willingness to take risk, and combine various forms of capital (human, social, and financial) to create social value by focusing on a fixing the root of a problem
within a system in society (Auerswald, 2008). The social mission for social entrepreneurs is explicit and central (Dees, 1998), and the practice is widely acknowledged as an effective mechanism for generating value in societal, economic, and environmental forms (Seelos and Mair, 2005; Murphy and Coombes, 2009).

Over the past two decades, the field of social innovation and social entrepreneurship received increasing endorsements, resources, and interest from governments and business leaders across the world for the ability to create societal change (Lepoutre et al, 2012). The Ashoka Foundation is a pioneering organization founded in 1980 focused on spreading social entrepreneurship around the world. Since Ashoka appeared, others such as the Skoll and Schwab Foundations followed to support the missions of social entrepreneurs targeting “development” issues. The attention and resources brought by these major foundations assisted in reshaping the current development landscape, marking a shift away from traditional top-down “development” practice, led by multilateral and bilateral institutions.

Traditional mechanisms for creating social change utilize strategies whereby an institution or government identifies a problem and offers funding and technological inputs to solve it. The plan is implemented and “development” happens, leading to improved quality of life, poverty alleviation, and the resolution of the social issue. Despite years of attempts following this pattern, poverty, disease, inequality and unemployment remain significant issues. Social entrepreneurs operate differently, aiming to work from the bottom-out to target and understand the root cause of an issue and involve all stakeholders in generating solutions (Hartigan and Elkington, 2008; Zeyen et al, 2012). Historically, solutions to social problems are relegated to the government, bilateral and multilateral institutions, and nongovernmental organizations that aim to deliver a public good to society. Operating from linear designs, these institutions aim to move the needle on one particular development indicator (e.g. per capita income) using a direct intervention that is rolled out at a set point in time, funded for a limited period, and then measured to determine its impact. Social innovations are different. Social innovators recognize that change doesn’t start and stop with one intervention. These solutions aim to use innovation to disrupt the systems that create and sustain poverty (Seelos & Mair, 2005; Christensen et al, 2006; Bloom and Dees, 2008;).
When traditional mechanisms in the past have failed to address societal demands, shifts have occurred altering the fabric of political, economic, and social systems (Alvord et al, 2004). Social innovations led by social entrepreneurs are the most recent response to problems that continue to plague societal progress, as major institutions are often viewed as inefficient, ineffective, and unresponsive (Dees, 1998). Social innovations are naturally iterative, adapting and responding to the changing dynamics of complex societal issues and the people they work with to encourage societal transformation they seek. Social entrepreneurs recognize it is useful to view human societies as complex ecosystems to consider how broader environmental conditions influence systems and shape how systemic change is achieved (Bloom and Dees, 2008).

3. Complexity Thinking in Development

International development and social innovations are focused on interventions in a highly complex system – the global society (populations, economies, technologies, environments) (Brunner, 2007). Complex global challenges are difficult to solve because they are constantly shifting, responding, and adapting to environmental conditions. Generating solutions that create real, sustainable change, as social innovations aspire to do, has been illusive and inconsistent following the traditional development paradigm. Creating change within complex systems requires consideration of the various actors, the multiple framings and interpretations, and relationships the actors have with existing problems to outline the pathways toward solutions (STEPS, 2011). Traditional thinking on how social change happens in development is rooted in linear rationale inspired by notions of aggregate equilibriums, the ability to control for variation, and manage and control an environment. These types of “planned” interventions fail to recognize the complexity of the systems and the rules by which they operate.

Complex systems thinking (also similarly referred to as “Complexity thinking”, “Complex Adaptive Systems”, and “Dynamic Systems”) is a term used to describe a set of concepts, principals, propositions and ideas that have emerged and clustered together over the course of the 20th century (Ramalingham et al, 2008). These concepts are explained as a “loose network of interconnected and independent ideas” that differs from conventional methods of understanding. Problems are interpreted by steering “a course between induction and deduction by aiding understanding of the mechanisms through
which unpredictable, unknowable, and emergent change happens” (Ibid, p. ix). While traditional international development follows a neoclassical economic paradigm, where social change occurs in a vacuum through direct cause and effect relationships, complex systems thinking views social change as something that is messy occurring through multiple interactions and reactions within a system.

The thinking embraces multiple interactions between agents and actors over time, and stresses the importance of individuality to understand how social change happens within a system. A complex system can be an institution, environment or ecosystem where the boundaries/parameters are typically undefined. These systems contain components that are interconnected - directly and indirectly related to each other, and change within the system is unpredictable. Agents take indirect pathways to change influenced by initial conditions such as past experiences, personal characteristics, and other individual traits. Contextual/environmental shifts affect agents within the system leading to unpredictable and disproportionate responses. Small actions can stimulate larger reactions similar to how a butterfly flapping its wings in the Amazon (say) can shift the pattern of weather in the world (Gleick, 1987).

Complex adaptive systems are dynamic and adaptive. Interacting elements respond and adapt to one another because they are connected. What emerges is a function of ongoing adaptation among interacting elements due to their relationship. Emergence is important within the system. Patterns emerge from self-organization among interacting agents. Each agent within a given system pursues its own path, but paths intersect and connect, and the whole of the interactions combine, becoming greater than the individual pieces. Emergent change is difficult to predict because it occurs as a result of the interconnected components within the whole and cannot be understood by observing the individual parts. Components and sub-systems (what I refer to as “change mechanisms”) function within a system to intentionally/organically shape and respond to conditions within a complex system using feedback loops. Feedback loops are typical of complex systems. Bits of information internally and externally are fed back into systems that generate or enable response to occur. Complex systems are characterized by adaptation. As information is disseminated through feedback loops, the systems and its components adjust and respond.

An ant colony provides a useful example for understanding the functions of a complex system. Within the colony, there is no central organizer meaning the ants act as single organisms carrying out
individual tasks without coordination. The system cannot be understood simply by observing these individual agents; rather it operates as a whole to create a functioning colony or “ecosystem”. Systems that are emergent come together to form something novel. It is made up of individual ants conducting single tasks but together the whole forms an interconnected web of relationships. By following the work of a single ant, we see the ant working to find food nearby, tracking pheromones left behind by others from its colony. As the ant travels, it utilizes receptors to gather and process information from other ants to perform its individual role. Functioning as feedback loops, the bits of information ants receive allow it to respond and adapt to emerging conditions within its ecosystem. The colony functions as a complex adaptive system.

Viewing programs, organizations, and societal interactions as systems opposes traditional approaches for understanding different types of “change” or “growth”. International development programs rely on “log” (logical) frames, planning models, and impact indicators to assess program outcomes. This methodology ignores the whole “colony” and treats social change as something that is isolated to direct cause and effect that is predictable, linear, and prescriptive (Lacayo, Obregon, and Singhai, 2008). The current mainstream development aid system, for example, does not “embrace complexity” and is not set up as a complex adaptive system in relation to poverty and responding to needs (Ramalingham, 2013). Development is in fact characterized by a complex system and adaptive process – it is highly local, particular, context-bound, time-specific, and path-dependent (Ramalingham et al, 2008). Systems, programs, organizations are in fact interconnected, where change in one element leads to a disproportionate responding change in another element, demonstrating the relationship of elements within the system.

Complexity thinking adds value to considering how the world really works. For example, a severe famine in Mali can be understood through the multiple framings of the agents (i.e. how they view the world), and their relationships with each other and with other parts of the system. A subsistence farmer, a seed and fertilizer supplier, the UN World Food Programme, and a local politician are each interconnected agents within a food ecosystem. The natural/physical environment, the local infrastructure, other locations where food is imported from, and the markets where food is sold are all interconnected elements of the system. Markets function as “change mechanisms”, fluctuating, responding and steering production, supply, and demand by altering prices for food. Each of these elements (and possibly others) are directly and indirectly linked to form the food ecosystem in Mali. Complexity thinking does not reduce the famine
to a relationship between the farmer and his land, or the seed merchant and the infrastructure; rather each component is viewed as an individual element of the whole system. This allows the relationships to be interpreted to determine how the factors come together to influence a famine, how the challenges – predictable and unpredictable – emerged, and the potential “pathways” – the possible direct and indirect solutions for overcoming the famine.

Overcoming a famine and other social change in society involves complex social phenomena with less than predictable results. People understand, frame and interpret systems differently based on their particular goals, values, and desired outcomes; all of which influences the way that change happens and can be accounted for. Traditional approaches assume a singular, linear path to development, while complexity recognizes that multiple pathways exist in reaching possible destinations. Complexity reveals that the whole cannot always be reduced to its simpler parts, that instability is commonplace within interconnected systems, and that change is frequently abrupt, discontinuous, and unpredictable (Eidelson, 1997). The path to change in a system emerges from the multiple framings within it, as the “structure, substance and bounding of the system in question” is accounted for and is sure to differ (Leach et al, 2007).

The emphasis on the multiple interpretations and pathways that occur within a system provides a more realistic understanding of the limitations of development aid and the factors involved in the “messy reality” of the development landscape (Ramalingham et al, 2008; Ramalingham, 2013). Within a development organization aiming to produce positive change in individuals, some may follow an expected path, while others diverge. In any case, the world is explained through each of the different, individualized “framings”. Initial conditions and distinct experiences, background, and history shape how a person can and responds to a system of change. Factors such as knowledge, attitude, belief, and efficacy all influence behavior change (Resnicow and Page, 2008), thus it is difficult to predict what factors will ultimately “tip” the scales toward a positive or negative change.

3a. Developmental Evaluation

Applying a complex systems approach to social change requires an evaluative framework that captures what is actually happening – outcomes that evolve and emerge rather than applying a rigid blueprint with fixed indicators. Traditional summative and formative evaluations aim to assess impact of a
social program or intervention by testing and measuring the effects of an intervention. Summative evaluation aims to determine if a program is successful, such as whether students learned what they were suppose to learn after an instructional model, while formative evaluation typically is used to validate and ensure the tools for identifying if a student is successful in the program are valid determine what can be improved in the instruction. Summative and formative evaluators attempt to keep conditions constant over a period of time to understand how participants are impacted by an intervention or innovation (Quinn-Patton, 2011).

“Developmental evaluation” (Quinn-Patton, 2011) embraces complexity thinking and offers an alternative way of understanding initiatives where uncertainty is high, and what happens is emergent (evolving from context, synergistic) rather than predetermined and fixed as in an experiment. Developmental evaluation offers insights into capturing and understanding innovations as change is occurring in a dynamic ecosystem. It involves exploring the parameters of the innovation as it happens, providing real-time information to allow for adaptation based on changing circumstances delivered through feedback loops. It recognizes that sources of nonlinearity and unpredictability are deeply entangled in a complex web of relationships within the system.

Organizations in innovative states like social innovations seek different types of information to enable a change or different course of action. A summative evaluation yields data that helps an organization render judgments about the “merit, worth, and value” of a program, while formative evaluations help a program become a more effective and dependable model in the future (Gamble, 2008). A developmental evaluation is appropriate in situations with a high degree of connectivity and interdependence, and where there are diverse elements/mechanisms whose interactions create unpredictable, emergent results.

Social innovations are often about breaking previous boundaries and exploring the extremes of an ecosystem. Developmental evaluation supports processes of innovation as it enables greater exploration, acting as a continuous “learning system” where the systems is in flux. For example, a developmental evaluation can be applied to a situation where an organization seeks to acquire knowledge about a particular intervention, how it is being taken up by potential stakeholders, and how to alter the strategy to ensure its having the desired effects. Rather than isolating particular variables to determine the
effectiveness of a static intervention, or assessing a program’s replicability to another context, the
developmental evaluation takes a deeper look at the innovation to understand:

- how it is working and unfolding,
- who it is working for,
- how information is be used to alter specific outcomes,
- how to institute feedback mechanisms that facilitate better assessment,
- what directions are promising and what ought to be abandoned,
- and pivots from strategy that could be experimented with (Gamble, 2008).

3b. **Pathways**

Complexity thinking values context – the local conditions and various interpretations of what is
happening within a given system. It also means that we can see multiple pathways toward “progress”
growth, advancement, innovation) within an ecosystem. Supported by complexity thinking, the STEPs
Centre – an interdisciplinary global research and policy centre – pioneered the “pathways approach” for
understanding and building sustainable human-ecological systems to address poverty. This framework
acknowledges that who you are shapes how you frame, understand, and respond to a system (STEPS,
2011). Initial conditions, past experiences, and personal beliefs influence how a person “frames” and
responds to a system. A farmer, a seed merchant, a member of parliament and the head of a multinational
compny might all view issues of food security differently. The pathways approach acknowledges that
personal characteristics, power dynamics, and individual perception can influence outcomes within a
program or system aiming to create positive change.

3c. **Tipping points**

Change is **dynamical** in complex systems. Systems thinking and developmental evaluation
recognize the importance of tipping points – simple, small actions that can stimulate larger reactions, as
explained in the *butterfly metaphor*. “Tipping points” are occurrences that cannot be predicted in advance,
but their consequences are monumental (Quinn-Patton, 2011). Major shifts occur within individuals,
groups, or an organization that change the whole landscape of action and response. They are dramatic
changes in social behavior that arise quickly and usually unexpectedly (Gladwell, 2000). In addition to differences in starting points, there may be key vectors along a **pathway** that propel an individual into dramatically different space (Resnicow and Page, 2008). Tipping points can occur within different systems and to different degrees. For example, few predicted the fallout from the collapse of a few financial institutions during the recent financial crisis in 2008, which is believed to have triggered a sequence of events that led to the prolonged global economic recession. These nonlinear events can be negative as well as positive and usually lead to a cascading effect like that of a rolling pebble setting off an avalanche.

In behavioral terms, the tipping point can refer to the threshold at which individuals adopt a particular idea or practice that alters their future pathway towards individual progress (Resnicow and Page, 2008). A pathway in this context refers to the individual’s route and what influences their experience within a system. Within a system or program, there are several different pathways that a participant can follow. Tipping points involve discovering when an innovation or intervention moves from slow, gradual, incremental acceptance to rapid, fast, and widespread. For example, an experience with a teacher in a school who is supportive of a student day after day can lead the student to improve in self-confidence over time and eventually propel the student to change a behavior like passing a class leading to them doing better in school and advancing on to higher education. Tipping points can also occur more drastically, where the same student, for example, experiences a tragic event like a classmate getting shot, leading them to turn violent and aggressive, and negatively altering their trajectory toward a life of crime.

**Developmental evaluation** tracks the adoption (or resistance) to tipping points including who is adopting (or resisting), to whom they are connected, and their reasons for adoption (or resistance) (Quinn-Patton, 2011). To observe tipping points, consideration must be paid to each individual and group within the complex system, and their relationship to one another and the environment. Additionally, the conditions upon which an individual enters the system can influence how and when a tipping point might occur. Distinguishing whether a person’s life and attendance in a program is **static** (stable, predictable, and known), **dynamic** (change is trending/progressing in a manageable direction), or **dynamical** (change pattern is volatile and unpredictable) is important to detect potential tipping points within an individual’s pathway through a program.
4. **Valuing Outcomes: Capabilities Approach and Human Development**

Pathways are diverse through a program and require a method of valuing change. The Capabilities Approach is a normative development framework utilized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It was introduced to expand the scope of development from the narrow focus on economic growth to consider other important aspects in improving society and an individual’s quality of life. In 1990, the UNDP released its first Human Development Report to introduce foundational concepts of human development supported by the Capabilities Approach. Acknowledging the limitations in viewing development strictly through inputs and outputs, the UNDP explained:

> The purpose of development is to offer people more options. One of those options is access to income – not as an end to itself, but as a means to acquiring human well-being. But there are other options as well, including long life, knowledge, political freedom, personal security, community participation, and guaranteed human rights. People cannot be reduced to a single dimension as economic creatures. What makes them, and the study of the development process, fascinating is the entire spectrum through which human capabilities are expanded and utilized (UNDP, 1990).

The introduction of the Capabilities Approach marked a departure from the limited focus on economic growth and increased income within mainstream development agencies. Development began to be looked at more holistically to account for how an intervention actually affects an individual to enhance their individual freedom to be more and do more. The emphasis is on how social arrangements expand people’s capabilities – “their freedom to promote or achieve valuable beings and doings” (Sen, 1985). The expansion of freedom, according to Sen, is viewed as both the primary end and principal means of development.

Three central components make up the Capabilities Approach: (1) functionings, (2) capabilities, and (3) agency (HDCA, 2005). The functionings are the valuable activities and states that make up people’s well being – such as a healthy body, being safe, being calm, having a warm friendship, an educated mind, and a good job. Functionings are related to goods and income but the focus is on what a person is able to do as a result. They include all aspects of human fulfillment – the very basic needs (i.e. nourishment, literacy, clothing) to more complex opportunities (i.e. being able to program a computer). Capabilities are the “alternate combinations of functionings that are possible for a person to achieve” (Sen, 1999). In this view, pursuing development is about pursuing/enhancing capabilities, or valued freedoms.
The capability set is a type of “opportunity freedom”. Just as a person with a lot of money could buy many different things, a person with many capabilities can enjoy many different goods. He/she have the ability to pursue any of several paths they choose.

The concept of **agency** is central to the Approach – this refers to the ability of an individual to pursue and realize goals that a person “has a reason to value”. The agency concept is important because it considers what a person has the ability to do to utilize their capabilities. The key idea is that people are able to be active, creative, and act on behalf of their own aspirations (HDCA, 2005).

The Capabilities Approach has been applied in a variety of ways to understand and assess levels of human development in poor countries. Progress, development programs, and poverty reduction policies all should be evaluated on whether people have greater freedoms (HDCA, 2005). It is a departure from traditional economic development and methods of analysis focusing on growth and capital as predictors of improved quality of life. Broadening the notion of development, the Capabilities Approach treats income as a means rather than as an end, and challenges the assumption in conventional thinking that there is a link between growth and progress. Growth of GNP and income, and increasing human capital, of course, are important as a means to expanding freedoms of individuals, however freedoms depend greatly on other determinants, such as social and economic arrangements (for example, facilities for education and health care) as well as political and civil rights (for example, the liberty to participate in public discussion and scrutiny) (Sen, 1999). The concept shifts the emphasis from viewing an individual as simply means of production, and focuses on individuals as ends of the productive process (UNDP 1990, p. 11).

5. **Developing Youth Capabilities, not Capital**

Development programs typically define youth as those between the ages of 15 and 24 (USAID, ILO). Recently, new thinking has shined light on how youth develop. Supported by complexity thinking, and the emerging social innovations for youth development, practitioners have come to recognize that the transition from childhood to adulthood is not finite or linear, and can vary across individuals and countries (USAID, 2012). Faced with difficult upbringings, youth around the world fail to transition to adulthood with the necessary preparation to face the “wicked challenges” (Rittel and Webber, 1973) of the real world. A lack of preparation and opportunity leave many without work, and ample amounts of time to explore
activities (sex, drugs, violence) making things worse for themselves, and presenting greater challenges for the communities they live in. The conventional approach to youth development has focused on building **human capital** through institutions to provide education and technical training. When this approach has not succeeded, policymakers, educators, and practitioners of youth development have explored routes for finding what works and offers lasting change for youth.

Adolescence is the pivotal period between childhood and adulthood where youth acquire attitudes competencies, values, and social skills that will carry them forward into a “successful” adulthood (NRC, 2002). Parents and families play a crucial role in assisting young people in navigating this phase of life. In the past, a wider network/ecosystem of schools, neighborhoods, and communities were looked to in supporting the upbringing of society’s young people. Traditionally in the West, and more specifically in the United States, the pattern for creating individuals that can contribute to society is tied to schooling and social institutions. The path for building productive adults begins in primary school, progresses to secondary school, and, for some, moves on to higher education at a university or a trade school. This trajectory seems to be atypical for many urban youth (New Orleans and other settings (see Appendix A for more details on New Orleans).

Scholars often portray the transition through adolescence as a “life course” constructed by and through social institutions (Rosow, 1985). Schools are age-graded institutions, and compulsory education is seen as having an established separation between the stages of adolescence and adulthood (Rosow, 1985). Everyone is considered to progress similarly through a linear life path through school and on into other social customs including work, marriage, and parenthood. Progress is charted based on one’s ability to navigate and excel through these stages without consideration for individuality and acceptance of people developing at a different pace. Through this transition, individuals are believed to obtain the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities that it takes to contribute positively to society. Yet with this current prescription for youth development, at least 25% of youth in the early 2000s in the United States were thought to be facing serious risk of not achieving “productive adulthood” because of issues such as substance abuse, adolescent pregnancy, school failure, and involvement in the juvenile justice system (NRC, 2002).
Many youth enter the “labor market” with inadequate knowledge skills, such as the ability to communicate effectively, interact in a professional environment, resolve conflict, arrive on time and successfully complete a workday, and prepare for and succeed in a job interview. An exclusive focus on the “problems” that youth represent to, and face in, society limits the ability to understand and foster environments that promote holistic development. Beyond the elimination of problems, one needs “skills, knowledge, and a variety of other personal and social assets to function well” during adolescence and into adulthood (Ibid., p. 3). The preventive measures to counteract challenges and accept individuality in this process have led practitioners of youth development to consider a larger framework for promoting outcomes that expand youth capabilities.

5a. The Youth Bulge

Young people under the age of 30 make up half of the world’s population (7 billion), and 1.7 billion are between 10 and 24 years of age. Youth challenges linked to multiple-interrelated factors including shifting demographics, increasing urbanization and unemployment, and the “de-agrarianization” (Bryceson, 1996) of many rural areas of Africa and Asia. Existing models of education and technical training to build youth capacity have failed to meet changing demands and requirements of today’s global system. Connected to the increasing numbers of youth without skills to contribute to society and the failures of economic development to provide enough jobs, the global economy has not been able to accommodate the growing youth population around the world.

Young people represent an especially large share of the population in developing countries, often the largest share (USAID, 2012). The idea of a “youth bulge” extends to many developing countries and describes a common phenomenon where children and young adults (between ages 15 and 29) make up the greatest proportion of the total population (World Bank, 2012). Combined with higher education and aspirations to find real, meaningful work, youth in these settings often contribute to “urbanization” through rural to urban migration, as they transition to areas looking for better job opportunities and a means to earn a living. The de-agrarianization of rural communities and the desire of young people to find more formal employment increase the number of youth migrants to urban areas (Beehner, 2007). Where a youth bulge exists, researchers and development practitioners explore the benefits of investing in youth as a future
“dividend” because of the potential return on investment (Bloom et al, 2003), while also considering the negative impact of youth without opportunities (e.g. Urdal, 2004; Sommers, 2006; Weber, 2013). Growing numbers of disconnected youth in urban areas have contributed to emerging complex challenges in the developing world, such as the post-election violence in Kenya in 2007 (UNICEF, 2010) and the recent Arab Spring in 2011 (Malik and Awadallah, 2013). The lack of jobs in the Middle East, and a highly educated and growing youth population is thought to be the catalyst for the Arab Spring across the region (Malik and Awadallah, 2013).

Within the bulging youth populations, youth “at-risk” are often the target of many development initiatives. They are defined as individuals between the ages of 12 and 24 that face “environmental, social and family conditions that hinder their personal development and their successful integration into society as productive citizens” (Cunningham et al, 2008). This is often related to socioeconomic status, stability and structure in the household, demographics (race and gender), parental education, and other factors. These youth are the focal point of many interventions because they have a greater propensity than peers to engage in or be subject to “risky” behavior, such as school absenteeism, early/frequent sexual encounters, delinquency, violence, and substance use and abuse.

In traditional top-down, economic development, building the capacity of the youth is considered vital for future production of a country’s economy. Historically, approaches to mitigate the effects of a youth bulge and capitalize on the “population dividend” focus on the promotion and production of human capital. This follows traditional linear development thinking where increased economic production from the investment in human capital is the leading objective of youth development (Heckman and Masterov, 2007). Investments are made in education and training for youth to develop “hard skills” such as technical and vocational abilities to build worker capacity. While a skillful workforce is important, the focus on capacity building through hard skills has proven limiting. The current global system requires more than technical capacity for youth to access opportunities. “Soft skills” (i.e. communication, commitment, and other personal attributes) are recognized for their importance in expanding youth capabilities and options (Tough, 2012; Manpower, 2013).

Policymakers and development practitioners around the world have struggled to find solutions and adapt education and training models to respond to the changing issues that youth present. Prescriptions of
economic development driven by capacity building and technical skills to better equip the workforce and generate jobs fail to create enough opportunities to engage and prepare young people for today’s world. In some instances, increased training and education merely increased the expectations of the youth population, who seek opportunities for formal employment (Beehner, 2007). Programs built to expand youth capabilities and encourage the adoption of “soft skills” are currently trending in development organizations. Technical and skills training programs have existed for decades. The United States Peace Corps, for example, operates capacity building as “Mentoring in Professional and Technical Areas” in countries around the world since the 1960s. But in the complex, globalized world, even skilled youth fail to find work under the traditional neoliberal development strategies to enhance human capital (ILO, 2013; Awogbenle and Iwuamadi, 2010).

5b. Soft & Hard skills

Young people’s skills – hard and soft, cognitive and noncognitive – have a significant effect on whether they are able to transition successfully from childhood to adulthood (J-Pal, 2013). The importance of holistic “soft skills” is recognized recently as equally vital, if not more, than traditional “hard” academic and technical abilities (Tough, 2012) for youth success. “Soft skills” are defined as skills, abilities and traits that pertain to personality, attitude, and behaviors rather than formal or technical knowledge (Moss and Tilly, 2001, p. 44). They include attributes and characteristics like self-control over impulses and anger, the abilities to remain on task, to focus and listen, and specific personality traits such as persistence, curiosity, and confidence. Various agencies and organizations attach different labels to “soft skills”, ranging from key competencies to non-cognitive abilities, transferable skills, and essential skills (Brewer, 2013). The ILO uses the term “core work skills” to define skills that build upon and strengthen the “hard”, technical capabilities for occupations – specifically professional and personal attributes such as honesty, reliability, punctuality, and loyalty (ILO, 2013). These capabilities enable individuals to “constantly acquire new knowledge and skills”. “Soft skills” are key to success in work and life (Heckmann, 2000; Tough, 2012) and something employers are increasingly seeking in job candidates (Burnett and Jayaram, 2012).
Around the globe, a fervent interest in cultivating “soft skills” has emerged. Conventional approaches to youth development, jobs skills training, and education target the development of “hard”, technical skills, yet employers today cite “talent shortages” in students and candidates for potential jobs related to “soft skills”. A recent study of global employers alleged that 36% suffer from talent shortages, unable to find suitable/prepared candidates to fill vacant positions (Manpower, 2013). The skills most frequently cited by employers that candidates lack include collaboration (ability to work with a team and within groups), work ethic (understanding hard work, professionalism, and punctuality) and communication skills (ability to communicate and interact with co-workers) (Casner-Lotto and Barrington, 2006; ILO, 2011; Brewer, 2013).

Much of the research on skills for employment has been restricted to the formal economy in developed countries, whereas 90% of the world’s young people live in developing regions with a future of irregular and informal employment (Burnett and Jayaram, 2012). While the informal economy dominates income-generating opportunities, “soft skills” are considered even more critical for success and survival in these settings. In many developing countries, the informal sector represents the most substantial share of the economy. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, it comprised 38.4 percent of total GDP in 2005 (Schneider, Buehn, and Montenegro, 2010). As of 2006, the informal sector in Kenya, for example, accounted for 82.6 percent of all male employment and 92.1 percent of all female employment (UNRISD 2010). Informal sector workers are overwhelmingly low educated and low-skilled and often require perseverance, grit, self-confidence and resourcefulness to overcome the harsh reality of conditions of extreme poverty.

Typically, development approaches look to traditional, formal education systems to teach and develop the capabilities youth need to contribute to the workforce, be productive citizens, and learn the skills to positively contribute to personal development (Rosow, 1985). Secondary schools remain an important channel through which young people acquire skills to improve opportunities (ILO, 2013; Brewer, 2013) however in developing settings, education systems are underfunded with low-performing teachers who maintain a pedagogical approach focused on rote memorization to teach, educate and improve youth skills (UNESCO, 2005: p. 3). Thus, formal education models cannot be solely relied upon to teach and develop the skills.
5c. Youth Development Landscape

It is well established that youth today lack the competencies necessary to contribute effectively to the changing global dynamics (Burnett and Jayaram, 2012; Biaveshchi et al, 2013; ILO, 2013). With the attention on “soft skills”, the persistent youth bulge, and the promise of the “demographic dividend”, questions linger around how to prepare the youth for the world. Novel solutions to youth development have surfaced recently with different aims. Socially innovative development organizations recognize the importance of incorporating “soft skills” into their programs to encourage youth to develop capabilities to be better prepared for life and work.

Youth development programs predominantly focus on educational activities to build skills without a great understanding from researchers on the “features of successful youth programs” for skill development (J-Pal, 2013). Most of the skill acquisition programs evaluated to date target very young children (i.e. not those young people between 15 and 30) focused on education initiatives that transfer knowledge to youth in hopes of generating success later in life (Heckman, 2000). Fewer skill interventions have been targeted at young people ages 15 to 30. In the few cases where strategies targeted remediation and development of “soft skills” in this age demographic, studies revealed lower success rates, and the successful programs appear to “attenuate quickly over time”, meaning advancements for youth dissipate after leaving the system (J-Pal, 2013). Research in these areas (skill-building, workforce development) in the context of developing countries is particularly scarce.

Many countries have adopted a set of school-to-work programs designed to address this issue (Stern et al. 1997). These include job shadowing (following a competent worker through the work day); mentoring (matching students to an individual in an occupation); cooperative education (combining academic and vocational studies); work in a school-sponsored enterprise; tech prep (a planned program of study with a defined career focus); and internships or apprenticeships (J-Pal, 2013).

Neumark and Rothstein (2005) analyzed surveys from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) data in the US to explore the effectiveness jobs training, internships and apprenticeship programs. Their findings suggest that in the United States, internships and apprenticeships, cooperative education (involving a combination of academic and vocational study), and school-sponsored business were the most effective interventions for men for long-term employment rates. For women, they found that internships or
apprenticeships were the only effective measure. Vocational and technical programs supported by large aid organizations like the ILO and USAID have existed for decades. The Peace Corps’ “Mentoring in Professional and Technical Areas”, for example, started in the 1960s to provide training to youth by mentoring teachers and professionals in the developing world to teach carpentry, woodworking, and other skills. More evidence is needed to “understand the effects of these programs and the mechanisms behind them” to understand what is working and address their shortcomings (J-Pal, 2013, p. 61).

A trend in youth development “interventions” targets youth in developing or expanding enterprises through entrepreneurship and business training, and how to create enterprises focused on solving social and economic issues in sub-Saharan Africa and other developing settings (Schwartz and Lanna, 2013). These programs or “social innovations” utilize curriculums focused on entrepreneurship (Rafiki Wa Mandeleo Trust, ILO), business administration (Per Scholas, Samasource), and business expansion (Youth Banner) to create more opportunities for young people. Few studies have evaluated the effect of these training models, however one meta-analysis explained modest benefits for long term “labor attachment” but no effects on earnings for individuals or growth in employment sectors (Caliendo and Kritkos, 2010). Additional research is needed to determine how existing interventions can improve the economic and employment prospects of youth (J-Pal, 2013)

Leadership and Youth Development in Social Entrepreneurship

Leadership traditionally has focused on the individual leader, and the notion that the unique makeup of the leader is the difference between success and failure in organizations (Ancona, 2005; Northouse, 2006). Trait theory, for example, concentrates on the “great man theory” which highlights personal, unique characteristics of a leader that they are born with, enabling them to lead from the front of organizations (Stogdill, 1948; Judge et al, 2009). Research emphasizes qualities in successful leaders of companies, political offices, and other institutional contexts. Other seminal research on traits, style and contingency approaches to leadership have focused on the way individuals convey information and communicate to influence members of their organization to achieve goals (Kramer & Crespy, 2011). Definitions of leadership suggest that it is a process of social influence to enable, empower, and maximize
the efforts of people around us, and encourage people to work toward the achievement of a goal (Senge, 1996).

Building leadership characteristics for youth development is growing in practice amongst international development organizations (i.e. USAID, 2012; UN-Habitat, 2012; Cunningham, 2009). Social innovations focus on developing leadership qualities in youth (e.g. Young African Leaders Initiative, African Leadership Academy, Global Changemakers) to develop the abilities of today’s youth. Leadership development programs overlap with other innovations targeting youth skill building and necessary requirements for success in life and work. Connected to the components of “soft skills”, leadership programs aspire to build communication, trust and relationships, confidence, self-advocacy, responsibility, motivation, and better decision-making (USAID, 2012). They recognize the growing complexity of the world and suggest future leaders will be required to possess adaptability and self-awareness with the ability to span traditional boundaries, collaborate, and think across networks of people (Petrie, 2011).

In these settings, youth are placed in situations where they can succeed and participate in leading organizational programming. By strengthening social and leadership abilities, and encouraging active participation in organizational programming, youth (it is envisioned) are empowered and feel ownership over what they are doing. This is a signature concept of socially innovative organizations in building from the bottom out aiming to create social change. Concepts such as “Collective Impact” within the world of social innovation recognize the importance of individuals being able work across multiple sectors to serve stakeholders with different interests. This requires indirect, adaptive leadership, where leadership is context specific, and leaders need high levels of empathy, emotional and social intelligence to be able to connect with diverse types of people.

Similar to other youth development programming, evaluation/research on the effectiveness of youth leadership development programming is underdeveloped (J-Pal, 2013).

6. Chapter Wrap-up

While these models may target the development of individual skills through curriculum based on leadership, entrepreneurship, and other disciplines, the common thread is the push toward advancing youth capabilities connected to “soft skills”. Some target professionalization and sociability to prepare youth for
the workforce, while others aim to generate capabilities in hopes of producing entrepreneurs, leaders, and problem-solvers of the future. To enable youth to push into other areas of work, these approaches recognize the importance of cultivating fundamental “soft skills” such as self-confidence, self-efficacy, perseverance, arriving on time to work, and others that are integral in propelling youth toward successful futures.
Chapter 3. Approach to the Research

This chapter outlines my approach to the case study in 3 sections:

- In section 1, I present my conceptual framework and visual model linking theoretical topics surveyed above including the Capabilities Approach, complexity thinking and developmental evaluation to construct my approach to this research.
- Section 2 introduces my research questions and explains the connections to my conceptual model.
- And finally, in section 3, I outline my research design, the various qualitative data collection methods, and the different analytical techniques I performed to interrogate my data to compile the case study.

1. Conceptual Framework

I apply a complexity, developmental evaluation and the Capabilities Approach to understand how and what valued changes arise – and can be encouraged – among youth participating in a youth development organization. Valued change must be understood through the multiple interactions within a given ecosystem. I developed a conceptual model in figure 3.1 below. I capture change by observing enhanced capabilities, looking for particular tipping points that alter the direction of youth pathways, and exploring how the organization responds to change within the youth.
Figure 3.1: Conceptual Framework: Visual model outlining pathways and factors shaping change.
Modeled after the STEPs Centre’s “pathways approach” for understanding and building sustainable human-ecological systems to address poverty, this framework acknowledges that who you are shapes how you frame, understand, and respond to a system (STEPS, 2011). This approach considers how an organization delivers a program for individuals to experience change within a fluid and nonlinear “ecosystem”, and values the multiple pathways participants experience toward change. Viewing youth experiences in a development organization’s program through the complexity lens offers an analytical framing to draw out themes and identify concepts that would otherwise be unnoticed through a traditional linear framework (Quinn-Patton, 2011).

The ecosystem consists of various elements represented in the graphic that have the potential to intentionally and unintentionally effect change and conditions within the program. Dotted lines are used to depict that the system and its components are porous and undefined. I include specifics within each box that I am paying attention to, however I also look for other organic, grounded evidence to emerge from within the system to further define its parameters and determine what influences a participant pathway.

An ecosystem has physical elements like the places, the natural environment, and setting where a program is delivered, and other spaces that participants might encounter. Places influence change and help to create the ecosystem. The natural environment is adaptive and changing, and the seasons influence the setting. Youth interact outdoors in nature, responding, adapting and interpreting the natural environment around them. The context and conditions of an urban agricultural site in a community (i.e. New Orleans) is also infinite and the bounds of the system are blurry.

The external environment/context where a program operates has the potential to place stress and create shocks (represented by the purple arrows) that influence the organization and program. Stresses and shocks can be shifts in the economy influencing donor expectations of an organization which can alter the programmatic direction toward available grants, or conversely the changing social entrepreneurship landscape in a city – like new incubators or funding—can influence the organization toward other market-based mechanisms. Unexpected weather such as a flood or drought can alter conditions that change they way a program is delivered and operated.
Change within the system leads to emerging complexity, influencing how things interact and respond (Quinn-Patton, 2011). Individuals operate within a system as participants, staff members, founders and organizers, volunteers, interns and researchers. These people are key elements of an ecosystem. Participants, staff, and other agents influence how a program is created, delivered, and received.

Participants entering a program/system bring unique experiences, factors, and history, which influence how they change, and how the ecosystem functions. External factors (stresses and shocks) in the home and school or other have potential to impact the individual pathways and how people experience and help to create an ecosystem.

The ecosystem is not closed to outside stresses and shocks, but the subject under study here are youth as participants within a program within a development organization (as illustrated in figure 3.1 with the participant (black box) within a development organization (black box). I imbed myself within the organization to explore the program and how it advances change and enhances youth capabilities. The interactions within the system under observation (between youth and the environment, between youth and other (other youth, staff, external community), between youth and the program/curriculum) lead to mixed interpretations and understandings of what is happening, which impact what occurs.

Internal change mechanisms are part of a program influencing pathways. These mechanisms work to cultivate change within a system. They can be intentionally designed such as a workshop built around food justice aiming to increase knowledge, or a simple game used to encourage people to get to know one another. Change mechanisms can also be looser, more organic such as the budding of a relationship between two people from working within the same office, or an individual’s challenges experienced from working in the hot sun. The mechanisms of a program are depicted within the black box in figure 3.1 within the “development organization” and are susceptible to the same alterations, stresses, and shocks explained above.

Feedback loops – depicted in figure 3.1 by the orange reverse arrows -- are trademarks of dynamic systems and are sources of change (or stagnation) within an ecosystem (Quinn-Patton, 2011). Feedback loops are intentional and unintentional. They deliver information from one component of a system to another and lead to a reaction. In program focused on youth development, feedback loops can be utilized to alter course of a program to guide youth toward change. For example: As youth transition
through and out of the program, specific feedback loops provide the organization with information about what is happening in real-time, so program staff can adapt messages and reinforce desired change. Social innovation actors/organizations (more than traditional institutions) intentionally build in feedback loops to allow iteration and “pivots” to respond to external influences.

I look for other emerging and unpredictable factors that influence youth pathways through these mechanisms and feedback loops. Greater attention to the “local food” in the city, for example, can influence one youth’s understanding of food justice and carry them toward activism, while it can have no effect on another participant. An interaction with a peer or staff member, a single or repeated confrontation with heat, sweat, and insects, or an encounter with rules and expectations within a work environment can all alter a pathway. These types of emerging factors can affect the program and individuals within it.

This framework values development outcomes and processes through the Capabilities Approach. The strength of this normative development framework is that it can be applied in a wide range of evaluative purposes (Sen, 1993). This approach allows participants to subscribe to his or her pathway of what is happening based on enhancement of individual freedoms. The pathways within the ecosystem – represented by the green squiggly lines – are diverse, nonlinear, unpredictable, and dynamic. Motivation for change in individuals arrives/arises as oppose to being planned (Resnicow and Page, 2008). Each individual has their own aspirations and set of values, and respond to shocks and shifts in different ways.

Various, diverse experiences lead to different interactions and reactions within a system and thus, alternative pathways. I consider various outcomes in this framework including “hard” and “soft skills” (outlined in visual), agency (a core component of Capabilities), and specific tipping points that may alter youth trajectories. In each of these areas of consideration, however, the outcomes are not limited to what is presented in the framework. Following the complexity framing, I do not intend to subscribe youth to a particular predetermined pathway. The pathway (green squiggly lines) turns and shifts to illustrate potential alterations and tipping points in the youth pathway.

Tipping points are unpredictable in systems and individuals. Acquired skills (hard and soft) are different for each person. Those explained here are the targeted outcomes, however enhanced freedoms may occur from different adaptations based on the individual. Youth pathways to outcomes are varied and nonlinear, again represented by multiple squiggly lines. Tipping points can occur from small iterative
changes overtime, or in one moment from a cataclysmic event. Non-linear: Complex Systems thinking recognizes that simple actions can stimulate larger, positive and negative, impacts and disproportionate reactions/feedback (Gleick, 1987). For example, a participant of a youth workforce development may receive continued negative criticism overtime from a superior, which eventually “tips” the person to leaving the program and pursuing another means to earn money, or perhaps a shock to the individual’s home tips the scale for a young person, such as a mother going to prison leading an individual to have to dropout of school to earn money. Tipping points can come from small changes (nonlinearly) producing a large result, or can occur sharply, drastically from a single event.

Here “change” relates to the individual pathways and an overarching focus on personal growth: how youth’s capabilities are enhanced/cultivated through participation within a program. The pathways are influenced (potentially) by numerous factors and elements of the ecosystem including the physical elements, change mechanisms, people and feedback loops. “Change” and pathways are the cultivation of capabilities through the experiences/interactions with and within the ecosystem, and the elements that alter the experience.

The ecosystem and “change” under exploration here is an innovative program aimed at developing leadership qualities and human development in urban youth. This particular social venture aims to build youth capabilities through urban agriculture. The concept of leadership in this context is not aligned with mainstream definitions. The adoption of leadership in this context is understood as the expansion of youth capabilities – empowering youth to be more and do more. The concern here is on individual growth and progress connected to enhanced capabilities.

I consider how this social venture focusing on youth leadership development cultivates capabilities in youth. I attend to programmatic mechanisms affect the youth, and how different attributes -- age, sex, race, class, and personalities -- interpret and express change. Youth form relationships, and the organization itself is evolving and adapting to internal and external conditions, which also interacts with the individual change that is occurring.

Each person will have his or her own unique experience and adaptation of leadership qualities that the organization is aiming to cultivate in youth. Within this context, attention is paid to the individual, and how each person responds and adopts leadership qualities, and considers how it expands their freedoms.
The visual representation curved, squiggly lines in the framework shows that each person will be affected differently in his or her pathway toward change within the program.

2. **Research Questions**

My overarching research question is: **How can development organizations pursue effective and meaningful change in youth, i.e., enhanced capabilities?**

In other words, I address how development organizations can create systems that cultivate “change” meaning building leadership capabilities and other positive changes in youth within my case study. Change also relates to other ways of building infrastructure that encourages different types of transformation within organizations and institutions such as innovation and other valued, sought-after positive social change.

To answer the overarching question, I address the following questions:

1) What particular **elements** of the system **cultivate** the **valued changes**, - enhanced capabilities?

Specifically:

A) Role of **diversity** in group of students/employees

B) Role of **small groups** and **team building**

C) Emphasis on **trust** and authentic **relationships**

D) Significance of the natural **environment**

These relate to the shocks/stresses (purple arrows) in the conceptual framework and the elements aiming to cultivate change within the develop organization delivered through the programming. Elements are part of the ecosystem and change mechanism within the program. Diversity is an intentional aspect introduced by this program to shape the youth experience and can be considered an element aiming to cultivate change. Groups and relationships are part of programming, as youth transition through the program together and experience things through their interactions. The natural environment is an element of the ecosystem that influences experiences, and potentially shift and alter a youth pathway.

2) What **factors and experiences** influence individual pathways through the system? What role does an individual’s gender, race, and socioeconomic background play? What is the role of the school and home environment? This relates to the “context (dashed blue box) in the conceptual model and the individual
factors youth enter the ecosystem with, and the various internal/external aspects during the program that shape/alter their pathways.

3) How does the designed structure of response and adaptation in the organizational system influence programming and change in youth pathways? In other words, I consider how the organization responds and adapts the program overtime as it receives information on youth participants through internal feedback loops (orange arrows in my conceptual framework), and how the “responses” to the feedback lead to “adaptations” that influence youth outcomes (i.e. youth pathways – the green squiggly lines in my framework).

3. Study Design: Case Study Approach

I use a case study research design, informed by qualitative enquiry supported by different field methods and analytical methods.

Design

The case study method is a research strategy that employs empirical inquiry to investigate a phenomenon within its real-life setting (Yin, 2009), to allow the investigator to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events using multiple forms of data and data collection techniques (Yin, 2009). Case studies allow for flexibility in design and application. They are used to describe processes and generate theory (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1997), as well as to test theory (Yin, 2009). Complexity theorists favor the case study approach because it enables the researcher to study a phenomenon as an integrated whole (Lacayo, Obregon, and Singhai, 2008). In this case the phenomenon under study is the processes of change within a socially innovative development organization. The combination of a case study design with a complexity framework provides a useful model for understanding change and how it is cultivated within an ecosystem. It is a useful companion to complexity theory because it “simultaneously fosters an attitude of attention to emerging patterns, dynamism, and comprehensiveness while focusing attention on defined system properties” (Anderson et al, 2005).
Case/Site Selection

My research relies on a single case study of a social venture during a specific time frame with multiple imbedded individual cases within the social innovation (i.e., a sample of youth participating in the program). My study site setting is an urban farm—a specific, innovative program environment in New Orleans—discussed below.

My study site and case were chosen for this research using an information-oriented selection to maximize the utility of information from a single desired case (Flyvbjerg, 2006). This type of selection focuses on the unique circumstances of a case and allows certain information to be obtained on a given problem or phenomenon. My case is distinct, offering a socially innovative venture operating in a developing setting targeting the complex issue of youth development. The purpose of this research was to explore a case that fit these specific criteria.

Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative inquiry fits with the theoretical orientation and complexity framing with methods informed by developmental evaluation. Qualitative enquiry is useful to capture and describe the learned and lived experiences of select individuals (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Field methods for case study research follow a qualitative design seeking richness and depth to explain social phenomena focusing on “how” and “why” questions. Qualitative data is useful for understanding complex phenomena, as it is collected in close proximity to the specific situation allowing the local context to be taken into account and not discarded (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This type of data “subsumes richness and holism, with strong potential for revealing complexity” (Ibid., p. 10), yielding thick, vivid descriptions that are contextualized (Leech and Onwuegubuzie, 2007).

Data Collection Methods

The research relies on qualitative methods including participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document review. A complete data inventory is included in appendix D.
Document review

Extensive document review was performed to dissect change. I reviewed secondary data from existing program documents on current and past program participants. The documents consist of several different pieces of data from program instruments used to internally track individuals and organizational activities. This includes applications forms, pre/post program surveys, interview documents, programmatic documents tracking participant performance and progress, and documented feedback and observations from staff on individuals.

Internal documents on organizational history, success and failures of programming activities, and information on curriculum were also reviewed, as well as generic proposals and reports to external organizations.

Participant observation

Participant observation is critical for capturing change in innovative, dynamic systems (Quinn-Patton, 2011). My role within the organization provided an opportunity to explore in-depth the change that occurred in real time through participant observation. Since December of 2012, I was involved in assisting with building and managing the program monitoring and evaluation “learning system”. This began full-time in January when the 2013 cohort commenced. With this, I assisted in establishing a platform for tracking and monitoring what happened as youth progressed. I was onsite and involved in all programming beginning on January 31st, 2013. I was present anytime the youth were present, and also spent the majority of programming hours on site when the program staff was present and planning.

My observations were recorded in field notes, which documents various observations, experiences, and interactions with the youth, staff, and within the program ecosystem. I kept detailed notes and observations from both formal and informal conversations. During my time on the farm, I interacted regularly with youth in all their scheduled activities, while also participating in staff meetings, engaging in staff activities like “Real Talk”, and attending all related events on and off site. Tracking of occurrences took place in systematic documentation, namely my personal field notes, and also through photographs, collecting program schedules, staff meeting agendas, and other paper handouts distributed to youth during workshops and activities.
In-depth Interviews

I conducted a series of in-depth interviews with youth participants, program staff, program alumni from previous cohorts, and key informants from participant households and schools. The interviews included:

• in-depth exit interviews with 23 of 25 program graduates and 3 “Assistant Crew Leaders” (youth from the 2012 program) participating in the 2013 program.
• 1-2 representatives from 4 of the 5 schools.
• 1 adult/guardian from 8 youth at the completion of the program to consider how others perceived growth.
• 8 alumni - past participants from 2011 and 2012 cohorts that offered a retrospective look at change in themselves, and how the program continues to influence them in life.

Analysis

My analytical strategy followed from the complex systems framework to illuminate and interpret multiple pathways within the ecosystem. The strategy focused on interpreting and understanding different levels of “change” that occurred in the program using the organizational, crew, and individual layers. I followed a deductive and inductive process of these units of analysis to reveal change processes.

I focused on the ecosystem framing and concentrated on how youth were advancing through the program, and how the organization itself was changing. adapting and responding using internal change mechanisms, and how it related to individual and group pathways.

All my interviews and field notes were transcribed in MS Word files, where I hand coded the data to reveal themes and description of experiences, responses and change in attributes of individuals related to experiences in the program. Codes were derived from iterative cycles of deduction (from elements in the conceptual framework and research questions) and induction (following a more “grounded” approach, drawing on real time experiences during the program, represented in field notes) advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Coding and recoding was considered complete when all incidents were classified, when categories became “saturated”, and when a sufficient number of regularities occur (Miles and Huberman,
I considered various perspectives of events interpreted by different actors within the system to further unpack the codes and categories.

Analysis began by reading through all the existing data – interview transcripts, field notes, program documents, other collected items like photos, calendars and schedules from the 6 month program cycle. I began by focusing on the individual cases of youth in the program. From the individuals, I abstracted themes using key word in context, key word searches, and word counts within my transcripts. I then began exploring other forms of data in program documents and personal field notes. My field notes and on the ground experience were extremely valuable in this process. As the program evolved, and my knowledge of the ecosystem and individuals within it advanced, I began to recognize how changes were happening in real time, and the processes that were cultivating growth. I recorded these findings within my field notes, which I continued to return to as I developed themes from other sources of data to corroborate my findings. These data helped to construct the rich, descriptive narratives of the change mechanisms; recreate scenes, scenarios and events; and articulate the experiences, routines, and rituals within the findings chapters.

Within the analysis, I sought to uncover concepts related to my conceptual framework and research questions, specifically the “leaderly” capabilities and the individual factors influencing change related to gender, race, and socioeconomic status. I also explored emergent concepts connected to change within individuals related to the system and interactions with other actors. As themes emerged, I explored other existing internal documents in the inventory to crosscheck and consider how narratives and other targeted outputs could be constructed with the different pieces of information. I compiled these accounts from multiple pieces of data to reflect the individual experiences and alternative pathways.

I recognize the importance of using multiple types of qualitative analysis of the same data set to increase the understanding and validity of the conclusions (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2007). I considered individual framings of events and the alternative perspectives of the same events from other individuals, and work to triangulate the data based on these multiple perspectives – my view, a participant view, and another person’s view.
Quantitative Content Analysis

I utilized quantitative content analysis to analyze programmatic data related to Real Talk and the accountability system – Real Accountability. Quantitative content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of manifest content (Berelson, 1952). It enables the researcher to consider large amounts of textual information and systematically identify properties, patterns, and frequencies within the text.

Within quantitative content analysis, I utilized two different techniques: manifest and latent. Manifest analysis focuses strictly on the number of words within a given document or series of documents to abstract the frequency – the number of times a word appears in a given set of documents. Latent analysis allows the researcher to interpret and categorize words within a given document based on frequency of appearance.

I used these techniques to analyze programmatic documents for Real Talk and Real Accountability (chapters 5-8). Program Crew Leaders recorded Real Talk “Positives and Deltas, and Real Accountability Violations and Earnbacks in specific forms - examples are provided in appendix D. I transcribed and compiled these data in MS Word files, and performed latent and manifest content analysis on data extracted from these documents.
Chapter 4. The Program as Ecosystem: One spring on the farm

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the program as an ecosystem through “one spring on the farm”, i.e., the five-month youth leadership development program. The ecosystem framing draws on the complex thinking and conceptual framework to portray how the various components of the program come together to form an ecosystem.

The ecosystem consists of people – youth participants, staff, volunteers, places – the farm, other sites in New Orleans, and the intentional “leadership” change mechanisms including Real Talk, the accountability system (what I refer to as “Real Accountability”), and the “Real Work” on the farm (i.e. the curriculum, tasks, and other activities youth participants engage in). This chapter is designed to inform the reader’s understanding of the program as an ecosystem, and to offer context and backdrop for examining specific mechanisms of leadership development, real talk and accountability – in the later chapters.

The information in this chapter is drawn from my personal observations, experiences, and conversations interacting with staff and youth during “one spring on the farm” from January through June in 2013. Program documents, interviews with school partners, and discussions with staff and youth assist in describing the different elements of the program ecosystem.

Road Map of Chapter

This chapter contains 8 sections to outline the program ecosystem.

• In section 1, I introduce the people, the physical space and the “Ecocampus” (i.e. the structures and outdoor classroom where programming occurs), and the farm work that youth engaged.

• Section 2 describes participant intake processes including recruitment, interviewing, and application and hiring procedures.

• In section 3, I introduce the accountability system (i.e. “Real Accountability) – a principal change mechanism in the ecosystem.

• Section 4 presents the Real Talk process, program language, and specific guidelines used on the farm.
• In section 5, I explain key activities and routines in day-to-day work on the farm such as “circles”, games, and “observation walks”.
• In section 6, I recount a “typical day” and describe other occasional/periodic activities during the springtime.
• In section 7, I explain the schedule from the summer portion of the program and the various activities that occurred.

2. The ecosystem: farm and people

The research site is a non-profit, social venture located in New Orleans, Louisiana in the United States. The program utilizes farming as a vehicle for youth leadership development. Youth are hired into the program and work for five-months on a farm. Youth between the ages of 15 and 19 from five different schools in New Orleans are able to apply for the program – see appendix B for specific partner school information. Youth are hired with race, gender, and “level of engagement” in mind to create diversity within the program ecosystem.

The organizational site (offices, training spaces, field) and majority of program activities take place on a four-acre space in a park. The farm and eco-campus sit along the bayou on the site of an abandoned golf course. The farm holds five planted plots of land with rotating crops depending on the time of year. The Eco-Campus is a unique design featuring an outdoor classroom, teaching kitchen for cooking demonstrations, locker rooms, administrative offices, dry and cold storage, and a large post-harvest handling area for cleaning and preparation of produce for sale. In addition to the farm and eco-campus, youth spend time at other locations in and around the city including two farmers markets.

Farm Work

The bulk of activities take place outdoors in the natural environment, forcing youth to endure the challenges of the spring and early summer in southeastern Louisiana. The majority of youth’ work and time in the program is devoted to fieldwork and farming. Participants are paid a stipend (roughly $6.50 an hour for 250 hours of work over five months) to work on the farm and off site locations. The work includes various agricultural tasks including weeding, planting, transplanting, trellising and other basic farming
tasks. In addition, youth participate in trainings on financial literacy, cooking and nutrition, environmental, social and food justice, and “diversity” (i.e. sociocultural).

Trainings are designed to transfer a package of skills and knowledge to youth. Youth learn and gain exposure to people, places, and issues in the city affecting their lives that reinforce the development of leadership skills. Youth spend roughly 60% of the time in the field in agricultural activities. Activities include planting, weeding, hoeing and tilling the field, harvesting, trellising, and other required work. Youth performed all activities within a designated crew but frequently split into smaller groups of two or three to address specific tasks of the day. Staff pair youth together based off strengths and limitations, and to encourage participants with different backgrounds and diversity to work side-by-side. Fieldwork inspires socializing between youth, as they are given significant time to work and talk to one another.

The agricultural cycle of the farm mirrors the weather patterns of Southeast Louisiana. In the beginning of the program, youth grow cooler weather crops such as broccoli, cauliflower, radishes, and different greens like kale and mustards. As the weather warmed, much of the cultivation shifted to greens such as arugula, red and rainbow chard, and purple and green kale. Other crops during the program included tomatoes, carrots, fingerling potatoes, eggplant, and different herbs. (The agricultural production goals for 2013 were to grow 10000 lbs. of food, and earn $15000. Within production, the program also donates 40% of everything it grows. The majority of the donations go directly to the youth participants to bring home, while the remaining produce is given to food banks or other nonprofits in the city. The program achieved all of these goals in 2013).

**People and Crews**

Youth are hired into the program from different places on a spectrum of leadership. The leadership spectrum is based on youth’ characteristics and experiences related to level of engagement in school, community, and extra curricular activities. Youth are hired with the goal of deliberately creating a mix of young people from different backgrounds. Hires are split into three “Crews” in the beginning of the program. Crews are organized based on gender, race, and level of engagement determined during the hiring process.
On January 29th, 2013, 32 youth entered the five-month leadership development program. Each crew consisted of 10 crewmembers, a Crew Leader represented by a staff member, and an Assistant Crew Leader (ACL) hired from a previous cohort. Different staff acted as Crew Leaders: Heather Warren led Crew 1, Erin Lee led Crew 2, and Kyle Lott led Crew 3. Will Stafford was ACL for Crew 1, Katie Smith for Crew 2, and Holly Sutter for Crew 3. Details on Crews can be found in appendix A. While school was in session (end of January till mid-May, 2013) Crew 1 worked on Thursday’s afterschool from 4 to 6 pm, and Crews 2 and 3 worked Friday’s from 4 to 6 pm. All crews during the school year worked on Saturdays from 8 am to 3 pm. After school ended (end of May thru June, 2013), all crews worked from Wednesday to Saturday, 8 am to 3 pm.

The core program staff consisted of five people (pseudonyms are used to protect their identity):

- “Heather Warren”, Founder and Director
- Erin Lee, Program Coordinator
- Ray Billings, Farm Director
- Kyle Lott, Volunteer Coordinator and Site Manager
- Kathy Anderson, Farm Assistant and Market Coordinator

The core program staff worked Tuesday thru Saturday, 9 am to 5 pm during the program cycle. In addition to the core staff, three interns and a part-time nutrition consultant were brought in:

- Nicole Williams, Social Work Intern
- Dana Hansen, Public Health Intern
- Kelly Burns, Nutrition Consultant
- Joshua Schoop, Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator.

Nicole, a Master of Social Work student from Tulane University, worked onsite directly with youth, present anytime that youth participants were on the farm. Nicole’s role was to support and connect youth to services outside the scope of the organization. She was tasked with designing an internal case management system. Dana, a Master of Public Health student from Tulane University, worked in the program to complete a required degree practicum. Dana was on-site only during cooking and nutrition classes and related exercises, and her interaction with the youth was limited to these sessions. Kelly Burns was a part-time paid Nutrition Consultant. Kelly was brought in at the beginning of the program to offer youth one-on-
one nutrition and health consulting. Youth in the program had the option of consulting with Kelly to outline personal health and nutrition goals during the course of the program, and receive continued feedback and guidance over time. Kelly also provided nutrition lessons to all participants during the program, which occurred simultaneously with cooking lessons. For example, a crew spent a Saturday afternoon preparing and cooking a dish in the kitchen with produce from the farm. Youth learned the recipe, and then engaged in a structured conversation around nutrition and health such as learning how to read product labels or how much sugar goes into common sports drinks.

The 2013 Cohort

On January 31st, 2013, 28 Crew Members, four Assistant Crew Leaders began the five-month leadership development program. These diverse youth participants were hired from five partner schools representing ages 15 to 19, hailing from neighborhoods across New Orleans with mixed socioeconomic backgrounds. Some participants did not last long in the program, and overtime, youth entered and exited the ecosystem for myriad reasons. Background information on each participant is outlined appendix C including specifics on each participant’s performance within the ecosystem (days in the ecosystem, absences, violations, pay withholdings, etc.).

Visitors

Outside of core and related staff, several individuals and groups came and went on the farm throughout the program. Site maintenance occurred regularly, bringing different vocational workers and laborers to the farm. Volunteer groups were also common, as the program relies on physical labor and significant contributions from volunteers. Students from universities all over the country volunteered for a weekend or an extended, experiential service trip. Local elementary, middle and high school students frequented for educational visits, and other local urban farming programs from the New Orleans area volunteered time to learn about the program by assisting in fieldwork. It was also not uncommon to encounter a potential funder, representative from a partner organization, or a city official visiting the site.
3. **Recruitment and hiring**

Youth participants were recruited from five partner high schools in New Orleans (see appendix C for details on hiring from partner schools). The selection of the partner schools was based on academic performance, type of school – charter, district run, or private, school demographics, and interest from the school in partnering with the program. The program initially worked with one school in its pilot year of 2011, adding an additional four schools the second year to expand its pool of candidates and potential for diversity. Within each school, a site coordinator was appointed to work directly with program staff and youth participants from inside the school. Site coordinators support recruitment and communicate with youth participants and the program staff from within the school building. Some partner schools are more supportive than others in assisting the program.

**Interview and application process**

In the beginning, organizational staff actively recruited in each school, making pitches to students during assemblies or other gatherings inside the school. Over time, graduates became the best advocates and recruiters for the program. Word of mouth spread throughout partner schools about the program, earning it a strong reputation for a place of employment. Field trips, games, and other training activities are more desirable for youth than traditional jobs for teenagers in New Orleans in fast food, grocery stores or other typical teenage employment. As 2013 participant Frank Jones explained his friends were jealous of him for earning a paycheck, and getting paid to go on field trips. Frank believed people looked down upon the program at first because it involves farming and in his view, young people don’t want to be farmers working in the hot sun. As his friends learned more about Frank’s work on the farm and what the program was about, they changed their view. Students graduated the program and helped to establish legitimacy within the partner schools. The application numbers increased exponentially since the first year showing greater interest from young people (see table B.2 in appendix B).

The process for applying began with the distribution of applications by each school’s site coordinator. The application deadline was set for a date in November, and staff visited each school to collect the applications. After application submission closed, the program set an interview day for a Saturday in December. Application requirements included a paper application (see appendix D) and a letter
of recommendation. The application process also required youth to attend the interview in-person on the farm during the scheduled interview day.

Interviews took place the same day on the farm. Youth dressed business casual, and upon arrival to the farm received a nametag and a photo was snapped for review of applications after the interviews. Applicants gathered in a large circle and staff explained the interview process. The interview process involved two phases for each individual applicant. Every applicant interviewed one-on-one with a staff member or program affiliate. Program affiliates consisted of members of the organization’s board, long-term advisors, or other volunteers who have worked with the organization since inception. The other phase of the interview involved a group interaction in a series of games. Applicants interacted in activities and games with other peer interviewees and staff in a large group outdoors. A staff member recorded on a notepad how youth interacted and connected with each other during the games, which was later used to inform the selection of who to hire.

The interview process focused on a few key criteria. The highest priority for staff was to determine whether youth would be able to complete the program. According to staff, scheduling conflicts and other commitments were historically the leading cause of youth dropping out of the program in previous cohorts. The hiring criteria focused on determining where youth fit on a spectrum of engagement based on evidence from home, community, and school involvement. The program classified youth within three tiers of engagement, and sought to hire a representative number of youth from each tier - 20% of hires were classified as “currently engaged” and demonstrated leadership skills inside and outside of school; 20% of hires were classified as “potentially disconnected” due to poor performance and attendance at school, challenging home environment, or history of legal and/or behavioral issues; and 60% were students neither excelling nor failing at school that fell in the middle of the spectrum classified as “currently unengaged”. The tiers of leadership were predetermined by the program in advance of the interviews, linked to the desire to bring together a diverse group of youth from the city. Youth were categorized based on background, academic performance, and other activities they have been involved in determined in the paper application, recommendation letters, and in-person interviews.
Gender and race also factored into hiring determinants, as the program aimed for roughly a 50/50 split between male and female participants. The potential for diversity based on race (white, Asian, non-black) was limited because of the demographics of the schools and the majority black population in New Orleans. Therefore, white students and other ethnicities were prioritized in hiring. In 2013, 28 of the 32 youth hired were black with the other four being white.

After the completion of interviews, staff and interviewers reviewed photos of the applicants one by one to hear and document observations of the interviewees. The group discussion allowed comments to be voiced and heard by all. Contributions were given to reflect where different observers, and the interviewer, believed each applicant fell on the spectrum of engagement. Each interviewer was asked to be responsible for the youth they interviewed, and to document the group input on what was observed. After the review of each candidate, the interviewer gathered all the information and decided whom to hire from their group of applicants. Staff asked interviewers to then document and indicate “yes”, “maybe”, or “no” for each applicant they interviewed. The final phase of hiring occurred the week after the interview. Interviewers reconvened on the farm for roughly three hours to decide who would be hired, wait listed, and rejected. In this process, all applicants were reviewed, and the hiring list and wait list was created.

**Size of program**

The program started with 11 youth in the first cohort in 2011, and grew to 20 youth in 2012. In spring 2013, 31 youth were employed. To determine the hiring numbers, at the beginning of each year the program staff review the number of participants from previous years and consider capacity to handle more youth. Director and Founder, Heather Warren, explained the rationale: to continue to show growth in the program’s scale, while never growing overly large to the point that youth and staff cannot adequately form bonds and build a relationship. From previous years, the staff expected a level of attrition during the program cycle and always over hired in the beginning of the program. The wait list allowed for backfilling of new youth as needed to meet the desired number of graduates when hires quit or are fired from the program. The main determinant of youth not being hired into the program related to conflicts in scheduling due to being overly committed to other activities. In 2013, the program wanted to graduate 25 youth so 30 youth were hired in the beginning. The target of 25 was set to demonstrate an increase of five graduates.
from the previous year. Entering the summer program, the program staff hired additional youth just for the summer to ensure 25 youth graduated from the program. Two youth were recruited during the month of May 2013 to participate in the summer portion of the program. These youth did not go through the original hiring process in December of 2012. They – Dave Duncan and Ben Davis – were recruited through existing youth participants. Ben and Dave completed the application, a one-on-one personal interview with a staff member, and were then hired for the summer.

4. Accountability System

Every other Saturday, youth received their paycheck. During the school year, youth worked a set schedule – either a Thursday or Friday afternoon from 4 pm to 6 pm, and all day Saturday from 8 am to 3 pm. Upon the completion of the school year (roughly May 22nd, 2013), youth began the summer portion of the program. Youth received a week break after school ended and began the summer portion of the program on May 29th, 2013. Over the course of the program, youth earned up to $1660 paid out in a stipend every other week. Due to the possibility of earned violations, not all youth earned the full $1660 stipend.

The “accountability system” (as named by staff) is a structured model of programmatic standards built on the values and mission of the organization. Youth received payment for involvement in the program, and all the work and time spent on the farm. In the beginning of the program, youth signed a contract outlining the specific functions of the job. The contract defined a series of values and expectations of youth participants in the program. The values consisted of “programmatic standards” – commitment, responsibility, hard work, sustainability, professionalism, respect, community, integrity, and safety. Within each of the values, expected actions were outlined as set “standards of behavior”, which the program expected youth to adhere at all times on the farm, and when representing the organization in other settings. The program’s “standards chart” with violation penalties can be seen in appendix XX. Below is a table recreated from the original in the appendix outlining the values and expected standards.

**Table 4.1: Values and standards of behavior for accountability system**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Standards of Behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Arrive on time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be at all scheduled work times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No leaving the job without notice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Responsibility | Wear your t-shirt or uniform.  
| | Bring a hat and water bottle each day.  
| | No Vandalism.  
| | No Littering.  
| Hard Work | Work with a positive attitude and your best effort, steadily through the completion of the assigned task.  
| | Keep pace with your crew.  
| Sustainability | Care for tools, equipment.  
| | Care for the soil and produce.  
| | Care for self.  
| Professionalism | Call in advance if you are going to be late or absent.  
| | Dress appropriately for the work environment.  
| | Come to work with all necessary materials (notebook, any required paperwork, etc.)  
| Respect | Respect the wider community.  
| | Respect the organization.  
| | Respect one another.  
| Community | No Sunglasses (except during field work).  
| | Don’t bring or use electronic devices.  
| | No Smoking.  
| | No swearing.  
| Integrity | No being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.  
| | No verbal or physical abuse towards anyone.  
| | No lying.  
| Safety | No fighting, stealing, or sexual harassment.  
| | No possession of weapons, drugs, or alcohol.  

Data Source: content from table drawn from programmatic documents outlining the values and standards of behavior. Original located in Appendix D.

Within each value, the document outlines three to four specific standards of behavior to illustrate to participants the expected conduct within the ecosystem. Each different value offers its own set of behavior standards youth were expected to adhere to, which each participant agreed on by signing the contract.

**Violations**

If youth violate a “standard of behavior”, they receive a “violation”. The first violation in a specific category registers a “warning” for the participant. A second violation within a category leads that participant to a “pay withholding”. For each pay withholding within a given value category, a participant is docked $10 from biweekly wages. For example, if Jenny incurred one violation in the standard of Community for swearing, Jenny would receive a warning. If the next day Jenny decided to use her phone on the farm, she would receive a second violation against the Community standard. The second violation led to a $10 pay withholding from Jenny’s paycheck. Jenny would receive a $10 pay withholding for each
violation thereafter in the Community category during the biweekly pay cycle. As table 4.1 illustrates, each value category has expected Standards of Behavior, so youth earn violations within a specific value category. Youth were allowed to earn a warning, and up to five violations in a specific value category, before losing their job.

**Pay Withholdings and Earnbacks**

Youth received payment every two-weeks in the program. Violations were reported out at the end of the biweekly pay cycle during “Real Talk” (biweekly Saturdays in the spring, and every Saturday in the summer). Staff only addressed violations at the end of Real Talk, and did not correct youth within the moment the violation was incurred. After two weeks, youth were given the opportunity to “earn back” the pay deductions by not incurring any further violations in the specific categories where they accumulated violations in the previous pay cycle. Returning to the example of Jenny, she received two violations in community. The first violation earned Jenny a warning for swearing, and the second violation led to a pay deduction of $10 for using her phone. During the next two-week pay cycle, if Jenny did not incur any further violations in the Community standard, she earned back the $10 she lost the previous two-weeks. This applies to each value and standard category.

The organizational values are aligned with the mission and goals of the program. The accountability system was designed to encourage youth to adhere to behavioral standards built by the program staff on the organizational values and type of change the program seeks to create in participants. Youth entered and exited the program throughout the spring. Heather Warren explained the goal of the standards and accountability system is to encourage accountability. She explained that the system is set up to be rigid, yet flexible at the same time because the goal is to keep youth in the system to enable change to happen.

**Rehiring process**

The rehiring process allowed participants to recover their position within the program after being fired for excessive violations. After a person was fired, they participants received one week to complete the rehiring process if they desire to return to the farm. I offer the example of Bryan Miller to explain the
process. Bryan Miller was fired from the program in May of 2013 for excessive violations in the Commitment category related to absences. In order to get rehired, Bryan completed the rehiring process in this order.

1. Bryan first wrote a letter to the rehiring committee explaining his case. In the letter, Bryan was asked to outline why he was fired, and what he planned to do differently to avoid the patterns that led to his firing, if he was offered his job back.

2. Bryan then attended a hearing in front of the rehiring committee explaining his case. (The rehiring committee was made up of a representative from each different crew. The representative is elected to participate through a blind, democratic vote within each of the three crews. Two staff members were also part of the committee, making up a total of five members).

3. After the hearing, Bryan was dismissed, and a member of the committee read Bryan’s letter aloud explaining why he should be rehired. After the committee digested the letter, they deliberated and voted on whether Bryan should be offered his job back.

4. Bryan was offered his job back. The final step for Bryan was to complete an unpaid day of work without earning a single violation. All youth going through the rehiring process must work a full volunteer day. During the volunteer day, participants cannot incur any violations or they would not be given their job back. Bryan successfully completed the rehiring process without any violations during his volunteer day.

5. **Real Talk and Guidelines**

Real Talk is a structured system of communication between youth and staff. According to the program staff, the purpose of Real Talk is to offer youth and staff a non-hierarchical platform to receive feedback on their performance and behavior in the work environment. On payday Saturdays, youth engaged in Real Talk. At the end of the Saturday around roughly 1:30 pm or 2 pm, Crew Leaders and Assistant Crew Leaders would gather individual crews in a circle at different locations around the farm to conduct Real Talk.

To begin Standard Real Talk, the crew leader asked for a volunteer. After a crewmember volunteered, Crew Leaders first outlined two “positives” related to that person’s performance rooted in
examples from the past two weeks. A positive is the recognition of an individual strength or positive contribution a participant is making based on the program’s values. Positives were immediately followed by one delta – an area for change or improvement – tied to an example from the past two weeks of work. A delta – represented by the mathematics symbol “Δ” for change – is a recognized area for improvement and growth for a participant rooted in the programmatic values. After the two positives and one delta are verbalized, the Crew Leader shared the Violations, Pay Withholdings and Earnbacks the crewmember accumulated over the past two-week period. The person receiving Real Talk was instructed in the beginning to not respond to the feedback for 24 hours including any appeals they may have to violations received. After the Crew Leader offered Real Talk to the first person, they continued around the circle one-by-one until each member of the crew received Real Talk.

Real Talk occurred at all levels within the organization. The Assistant Crew Leader and Crew Leader conducted a separate one-on-one session of Real Talk on a biweekly basis. Staff-to-staff Real Talk occurred once a month, and consisted of each staff member delivering and receiving Real Talk in a one-on-one setting with each coworker. On payday Saturday’s, only youth Crew Members participated in Real Talk. Additional formats of Real Talk were also utilized during the program:

- **Intensive Real Talk** - occurred twice during the program and happened within each individual crew. All Crew Members (youth participants) delivered and received Real Talk to peers within their individual crews.

- **Self-Reflective Real Talk** - occurred once in the program. It consisted of individual youth participants taking 15 to 20 minutes in the beginning of Real Talk to write individual positives and deltas from the previous weeks of the program. Each crewmember went around in the circle and explained personal positives and deltas to the group, followed by feedback from the Crew Leader on what was said, and how it aligned with the Crew Leader’s most recent observations of positives and deltas.

I observed Real Talk throughout the entirety of the program. Crew Leaders and Assistant Crew Leaders prepared Real Talk in advance of the actual session. They reviewed each youth’s performance over the previous two weeks, and reflected back on previous notes from the past Real Talk sessions to consider how
they were building on feedback over time. Crew Leaders kept and stored notes in a programmatic log over the period to document occurrences for each participant during working hours.

**Guidelines and program language**

The organization introduced a series of guidelines and common language for youth to utilize within the ecosystem. These “guidelines” are introduced periodically throughout the program and included the following labels – “step up, step back”, “both/and statements”, “try it on”, “multiple truths”, “no blame, shame, or judgment”, “its ok to disagree”, “practice self-focus”, “process and content”, “intent v. impact”, and “confidentiality”.

The staff did not employ a systematic schedule for introducing the guidelines. While the guidelines relate and build on each other, staff explained that guidelines are introduced to respond to emergent issues within the system. They were often employed based on timing of activities and feedback being gleaned in real time from the program. For example, before engaging in an activity where youth would learn personal things about fellow Crew Members, the guideline of “confidentiality” was introduced to remind participants of the importance of maintaining privacy. According to staff member Kyle Lott, the rationale behind the guidelines was to pass a message to youth about what is expected of them in the workplace and attach a specific word to guide youth to the concept throughout the program.

Each of the different guidelines was rooted in the values of the organization and the types of change they aimed to create. The guidelines focused on getting youth to arrive at situational thinking, apply the label, and translate it into action. The goal for participants was to apply the guideline appropriately when they encountered various circumstances emerging in their work and interactions on the farm. Over time, youth begin to internalize and identify situations where the guidelines could be applied. Each guideline is explained below.

**Step Up, Step Back (SUSB):** SUSB was utilized to encourage youth to recognize their strength in leadership and consider how to better support others within their group. SUSB was introduced early on in the program based on the desire to encourage and ask youth to model different types of leadership within the program. Youth who were more outspoken were asked to step back and let
others take they lead by stepping up. Youth who tended to sit back and let others lead are encouraged to step up.

**Both/And Thinking**: the goal with this guideline was to shift youth from the “either/or” mentality to considering multiple perspectives and views outside of concrete right or wrong terms. The dominant “either/or” thinking creates a duality of right or wrong with no acknowledgment that some of each could be true. Both/And thinking asked youth to expand their personal perspective to consider alternative solutions and less definitive yes/no circumstances. Youth were encouraged to use “yes, and” as oppose to “yes, but” to recognize that part of something they may see as definitively false could have some truth to it.

**Try It On**: try it on encouraged youth to consider something new. Youth were asked to “try on” a new concept, thought, idea or thing before making a judgment about it. It encouraged youth to try something new before making a decision about it.

**Multiple Truths**: the guideline of multiple truths relates to how people see and experience things differently, which influences and forms personal opinions. Youth learned that “what is true for me may not be true for you, but that doesn’t mean one of us is right and the other is wrong”. It aligns with “both/and thinking”.

**No Blame, Shame, or Judgment**: this concept guides youth in considering their personal views and reactions to peers within the program’s ecosystem. Youth were asked to pass no blame, shame or judgment onto others within the system, and to accept other people’s views, no matter how different they may be from their own.

**Practice Self-Focus**: Youth were encouraged to avoid the use of “you” or “we” statements. This deals with projecting ideas, opinions, and beliefs to represent the opinions of others. The focus of individual thoughts, opinions, ideas, and beliefs are our own, and youth were encouraged to use “I” statements whenever possible. The ideas is to recognize how “I” statements keeps them honest. For example, “I think peanut butter tastes better than jelly” places the emphasis on a person’s opinion, allowing a subjective view to be conveyed without projecting the view onto others.
Intent v. Impact: This guideline asks youth to consider intentions in speech and action and the potential for impact. Staff explained that people often intend one thing, and their words or actions have a different impact on the recipient. Youth were asked to recognize and take responsibility for the intent of their words, and if the listener was honest about the impact, the dialogue could be deepened and people can learn more about each other.

Confidentiality: related to the desire to form trust and bonds between youth, confidentiality was used to prevent gossip, create a safe space for youth to grow, and encourage openness and confidence in/between peers. The goal was to build confidence in one another through the environment to encourage individual growth, so the staff utilized this guideline to remind youth that what was heard within the program ecosystem should remain confidential.

Ok to disagree: Youth learn that disagreement is not a natural part of building relationships, and it is not a bad thing, even though it can be uncomfortable. This connects with the plurality of perspectives (“multiple truths” in that not all people share the same views. Youth learn agreeing to disagree allows people to be honest in a dialogue and learn what forms a person’s opinion.

6. Program Routines and Activities

Circles

The “circle” is an important facet of the program. Anytime youth and staff gathered together (e.g. Real Talk, staff meetings, opening and closing circle, etc.) the group – no matter how big or small – organized into a circle. The circle allows each person to feel a part of the team and conversation, and ensures each participant is actively engaged within the activities. Youth were frequently reminded to form a circle and include everyone. If someone joined late, staff always made a point to make space within the circle.

Games

Games and activities were used throughout the program as tools to motivate youth at the beginning of the day. Games were always scheduled as “energizers” or “ice breakers” to kickoff the workday. Games were used to bring youth attention to the farm and get participants engaged and motivated
for the workday. They often focused on a specific skill or idea that staff wished to convey to the youth. The skill or idea was either predetermined based on the program curriculum, or it would be in response to something a staff member recognized during the previous week. Circles were frequently part of the games, and concentric circles were often used within specific games. For example, when nonverbal communication and eye contact was emphasized within the program curriculum, youth engaged in a game called, “baby I love you but I just can’t smile”. In this particular game, youth organized into a circle with a single volunteer moving into the middle to begin the game. The person in the middle of the circle approached anyone within the circle, looked into his or her eyes, and said the phrase, “baby I love you but I just can’t smile”. The receiver of the phrase was to repeat the phrase, “baby I love you but I just can’t smile” with a straight face, but if the person being spoken to smiled, they were the next person to be in the middle.

Observation Walks

The farm is positioned within a natural setting. The farm and nature around it were constantly changing and evolving through the spring and summer of the program. Temperatures increased across the spring and into summer, adding and shifting the natural elements within the ecosystem. As the weather warmed, the crop cycles changed. Youth were encouraged to absorb the natural setting by taking periodic scheduled “observation walks”. Farmer Ray Billings often kicked off a Saturday of fieldwork by asking youth to take a silent 10 to 15 minute walk around the farm and fields to see what was changing. Following the walk, youth reorganized into a circle, shared out and reflected on what they saw within the ecosystem.

7. Spring Program Schedule

A typical day in the program:

Youth encountered many different experiences and events throughout the 2013 program. This section explains the youth schedule and recounts specific events relevant to understanding the organizational ecosystem. The schedule was consistent through the school year and changed once youth finished school.

From January 31st, 2013 to May 18th, 2013:

- Thursdays, 4:15 pm to 6 pm: Crew 1
Below, I outline in greater detail what a typical day would look like for each of the different crews through the program. An example of the afterschool and Saturday schedule can be found in appendix E.

**Rotating schedule during school year**

**Thursdays:** Crew 1 worked every Thursday during the school year. Bus transport picked up all the youth in this crew at school and dropped them on the farm by 4:15 pm each Thursday during the school year. A typical Thursday began with youth arriving, changing into work clothes, and depositing belongings in the locker room. The workday started with an opening circle, where the activities and schedule would be outlined. After the announcements, youth and staff engaged in a planned, organized game. The Crew Leader, Assistant Crew Leader, or Farm Director usually led the game. After the game, youth started the day’s activities.

A typical Thursday for youth involved a lot of fieldwork. Crew 1 ordinarily spent time weeding, planting, and harvesting in the fields. They were responsible for collecting produce for the coming market on Saturday.

In addition to fieldwork, Crew 1 occasionally engaged in a planned activity to prepare for an event or activity on the coming Saturday. For example, all three crews separately worked a Saturday at a local pop-up soup kitchen to feed the homeless. To prepare for interacting with the homeless at the soup kitchen, Crew 1, led by their Crew Leader Heather Warren, went through a workshop on homelessness the Thursday before the trip. Other workshops on Thursdays also occurred to prep youth for future activities.

Thursday always concluded with a closing circle, where additional announcements were made, and a period of reflection happened. The Farm Director, Crew Leader or ACL guided youth in reflecting on how the day went. At times, closing circle was very structured and staff would seek reflection on a specific topic. Other times youth were asked to comment on the day, offering one word to reflect how they felt, or what they thought about the day. Farm Director, Ray Billings
would at times give the crew feedback and a grade for the day’s performance in the field. For example, if the youth worked really hard and collaboratively they would receive an ‘A’ grade for the day.

The crews worked until 6 pm when the bus arrived to fetch the youth and return them to school.

**Fridays:** Crew 2 & 3 worked every Friday during the school year. The standard schedule mirrored the Thursday schedule for Crew 1. The bus picked up all the youth at school and dropped them on the farm by 4:15 pm each Friday during the school year. A typical Friday began the same as a Thursday, with youth arriving, changing into work clothes, and depositing belongings in the locker room. The workday opened with the opening circle, where the activities and schedule were outlined. After the announcements, youth and staff engaged in a planned game based on a specific skill or idea staff wished to convey. The Crew Leader, Assistant Crew Leader, or Farm Director usually led the game. After the game, youth started the day’s activities.

Friday workdays were filled with fieldwork and agricultural activities. The main difference between the Thursday and Friday crews was the importance of market preparation on Friday. Crew 1 harvested the produce on Thursday. The Friday crews completed the remaining harvest and were also responsible for preparing the produce for sale at market the next day, which included washing, collating, and packaging the necessary produce.

Similarly to Crew 1, Crews 2 & 3 at times had a set activity planned in preparation for the coming Saturday. On occasion, the crews split up – one crew prepped for the activity while the other completing the necessary fieldwork.

Friday always concluded the same way as Thursday. Crews closed in a circle where additional announcements were made, and the reflection on the workday happened. The crews worked until 6 pm when the bus arrived to fetch the youth and return them to school. An example of the Friday afterschool schedule can be found in the appendix.
Saturdays during school year

**Saturdays:** On Saturdays, youth received transport to and from the farm from the closest high school – Jefferson High School. The bus met the youth at 7:30 am at Jefferson and dropped participants at 3:15 pm. All crews began work on Saturday at 8 am. The day commenced with opening circle, which was followed by a game. Then, crews went their respective ways based on the day’s schedule. Each crew had a unique schedule for Saturday, with a single crew assigned to work at the market.

Each Saturday, a different crew of youth with Crew Leader, Assistant Crew Leader, and Market Manager, Kathy Anderson, worked at the farmers markets to sell the produce. The crew split in half with one group going with Kathy to the local farmers market to sell produce, and the other group going with their Crew Leader to a local mixed income housing project to sell produce from the popup market. Market tasks included stocker, cashier, talking to customers, and sampling products for customers. Youth rotated by crew each Saturday for market work. The division of tasks was decided based on previous experience and where crew members had not worked before. The bus drove the youth to each of the markets.

The other two crews typically worked together in the field on Saturday mornings. Staff tended to schedule fieldwork for the morning when the weather was cooler. In the afternoon, the crews participated in different activities or workshops, such as cooking and nutrition lessons, or other educational discussions such as food justice or health. Every other Saturday was also payday for youth participants, which coincided with Real Talk on the farm.

Saturdays closed similarly to other workdays. All crews gathered in a circle, and a representative from each crew was asked to share a synopsis on the day from his or her crew. After each crew reflected on the day, Ray Billings reported out on the progress of farm related goals. He recapped the number of pounds of produce grown, the number of revenue earned through sales of produce at the markets, the number of donated pounds of produce, and the remaining pounds and dollars needed to generate to achieve the programmatic goals. Examples of a Saturday schedule can be found in the appendix.
Other notable activities in the springtime

**FOOD Inc. screening:** On a Saturday in the beginning of the program, each crew had an opportunity to screen the documentary “FOOD Inc.”. The film outlined the industrial food complex in the United States. Youth often referred back to what they saw and learned in the documentary when reflecting on food and nutrition issues during the program.

**Outdoor activities and ropes course:** Twice during the program, all youth crews visited a local outdoor recreation organization in a park to engage in different outdoor activities.

- The first visit (February 16th) youth played team-building games and canoed in the bayou.
- The second visit (April 20th) youth played more team building games and spent the afternoon playing on the ropes course.

**Feeding the homeless:** A local nonprofit convenes a soup kitchen once a month in a local church. The organization utilizes the church facilities to open a breakfast “restaurant” focused on feeding the homeless. Homeless guests from around New Orleans visited the restaurant for breakfast. Each crew participated on a separate Saturday during the spring portion of the program. Youth were given different roles within the restaurant – servers, cooks, dishwashers, bussers, and greeters– to support the nonprofit staff in preparation, feeding, and cleanup. Prior to attending the restaurant, each Crew Leader led their crew in a workshop exploring the idea of homelessness to help youth think about their perceptions and misconceptions of what makes someone homeless.

**Mother’s Day shooting and violence workshop:**

On Mother’s Day 2013 (Sunday, May 12), a second line parade in New Orleans came under gunfire from two young, black males. Members of the program staff and youth were in attendance at the parade. In response to the violence, the program organized a workshop on the following Saturday on the farm to process the shooting, and discuss issues of violence. All crews participated in the Saturday activities. The day began with a screening of a documentary – “Shell Shocked” – which focused on gun violence. Then, youth constructed real paper trees representing “healthy community” and “violent community” – with roots, stems, trunk, branches, and leaves to depict healthy and violent communities as trees. The day concluded with a short presentation from
a member of the mayor’s office to get youth participants’ input on overcoming violence in the city.

8. **Summer Schedule and Events**

   Around mid-May, school ended, and youth were given roughly a week off. The final week of May, everyone was back on the farm working a Wednesday to Saturday schedule for the remaining five weeks of the program. Youth were all provided transport to and from the farm from Jefferson High School.

   - From May 29th, 2013 to June 22nd, 2013:
     - Wednesday to Saturday, 8 am to 3 pm: Crews 1, 2, & 3

   The summer schedule varied day-to-day. Fieldwork, games, Real Talk, and other activities continued throughout the summer program. Youth worked 32 hours a week, so they were present within crews more frequently for the final five-weeks of the program. An example of the summer schedule is in appendix E.

**Summertime**

During the summer program, youth took regular fieldtrips to local businesses such as Whole Foods, Rouses, and a local sustainable butcher. They visited garden and urban farm projects like the ARC of Greater New Orleans, participated in a social justice workshop at a local university, and toured a mental health facility. The final week of the summer program, youth took a three-day camping trip to a state park near Alexandria, LA.

**Community Lunches:** Each Friday in the summer youth organized and put on a “Community Lunch”. One crew each week prepared food with a guest chef affiliated with the program. The program invited select youth partner organizations, school partner reps, city officials, program alumni, and other affiliates from around the city to come eat lunch on the farm with the youth participants. Youth participants had an opportunity to interact and dine with people from different organizations and businesses.
**The Hunger Banquet:** All program participants were broken up into three groups and then given lunch onsite at the program’s Ecocampus. The sizes of the groups were proportional to world population and the number of food secure people in the world. The largest group at the bottom (12 students) received only rice and water to share amongst each other. The middle group (8 students) ate at a table and received a greater amount of rice and a small amount of meat to share. The “elite” group (4 students) received a full 5-course lunch and ate at an isolated table with a full staff to serve them. After the staged lunch, youth were all served pizza and reflected on the activity.

**Camping Trip:** The final week of the program (June 17th to June 19th, 2013) all youth participants were led by program staff on a three-day, two-night camping trip to a state park in Alexandria, LA. The trip marked the end of the program and was an opportunity for youth to celebrate completing their work. Youth engaged in outdoor activities such as fishing, hiking and canoeing. Different crews rotated to prepare and serve meals. All youth participated in campfire activities where they had a chance to bond and share feelings about their experience in the program.

9. **Chapter Wrap Up**

This chapter describes people, places, schedules and events during a spring season (2013) of the youth leadership development program. The key people, place, and program mechanisms (Real Talk, Real Accountability, and the “Real Work” on the farm) are described. The individual components and mechanisms add up to the program ecosystem that aims to promote “leadership”.
Chapter 5. “Leaderliness” as a Desired Change

1. Introduction – we grow with the farm

Over the course of the five-month leadership program, youth changed—i.e., developed aspects of their capability set—through the work, activities, relationships and interactions in the place and space with diverse types of people. Program participant Frank Jones was a 16-year-old, African-American male from the Central City Neighborhood of New Orleans. Frank was a participant who fully embraced the program, engaging with his peers, demonstrating hard work, opening up to the program and environment. Frank explains in his own words what happened to him and his fellow Crew Members during their time on the farm:

Well I think basically we grow with the farm. See because I noticed everything we do is for gaining knowledge and improving yourself. So for example, I will use myself, when I came, I had no idea what it was about. Everything that I learned over the year while I was on the farm, I didn’t know any of it. The things that were challenging, I learned from. I grew from those experiences. The trellising, the weeding, everything that seemed tough in the beginning, you learn from and grow. That’s what I mean. You know how a plant starts growing, like when first its just leaves, then the fruit comes? Well that’s how I feel like it went. I started as something small and branched out and grew stronger and eventually became this beautiful fruit. I started growing slowly, but then as I started doing more, I transformed and changed as a person. As we went along, the hard work made me have more pride in what I was doing. It was challenging but that’s what was meaningful about it. This is how we got this done, as this team…..as seasons change on the farm and different things happen, and as the youth come in, things are going to change with that person. We weed, we water, we do all the things that is needed to care for the plants, well the youth that come to the farm need those same things. Those things that the youth need are the hard work, the professionalism, and other things we are learning … so like when you see the plant’s stems getting stronger, growing up, and starting to branch out, and then the flowers start to open up, it’s the same as when the youth are opening up their minds to new things.

Frank’s explanation of how youth grow with the farm by gaining knowledge and improving yourself in activities and work captures the changes youth experienced. Youth participants that come to the farm need the same things that plants need to grow - the hard work, professionalism, and other things to help youth grow stronger, grow up, and start to branch out by opening up to new things.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe and explain the change cultivated in youth participants through the five-month leadership development program. I introduce and describe the main outcomes—the visible changes and the versions of “leaderliness” that emerged in youth participants. This helps to address my research question considering individual factors influencing youth pathways, and the cultivation of capabilities within the leadership development program.
My conceptual framework identifies potential outcomes and indicators of “enhanced capabilities” including “soft skills” - communication, work ethic, self-confidence, and self-advocacy, and hard skills – work experience, technical capabilities, specific knowledge of farming and food– and the concept of agency – greater self-control over one’s life and future. I address the cultivation of these skills within the program ecosystem and describe what change looked like in youth participants.

I introduce the term leaderliness to reflect the leadership traits youth adopted – the “soft skills”, agency as well as hard skills --that comprise the overall set of enhanced capabilities. “Leaderliness” represents the basic fundamental capabilities that enable an individual to be successful in life and work. These leaderly capabilities youth adopted included self-confidence, basic communication and interpersonal skills, and self-efficacy/agency.

Road Map of Chapter

In this chapter, I describe the changes that occurred in youth participants in 6 sections.

- In section 1, I open with a quote from Frank Jones, who describes the change that youth undergo through their work on the farm.
- Section 2 defines what leadership is within the program and the dimensions of leaderly capabilities youth participants adopted in the program.
- In section 3, I describe the leaderly indicators of opening up and stepping up that helped to manifest the emergence of self-confidence.
- In sections 4, I explain the growth in communication.
- Section 5 portrays the cultivation of self-efficacy.
- In section 6, I expound on the various workplace behaviors youth learned, specifically professionalism, hard work, and commitment.
- Finally, in section 7, I recount knowledge youth cultivated related to the program curriculum of food, nutrition and wellness, and social justice.

To represent leaderly change, I present various individual cases and aggregated program data drawn from:
• events, conversations, and happenings in various settings that I observed first-hand (primary data),
• in-person interviews with youth, staff, affiliated school partners, and parents of participants (primary data), and
• programmatic documents such as Real Talk content, pre and post program questionnaires, interviewing and hiring documentation, and records revealing youth performance in the accountability system.

2. Introducing “leaderliness”

The primary program goal is “to nurture a diverse group of young leaders through the meaningful work of growing food.” On the farm, the program seeks to develop leaders who are “respected, have a strong voice, can communicate and present ideas well, can listen even better, and who can bring disparate people together towards a common goal”. Heather Warren outlined additional attributes important to describing what the leaders look like:

• strong communicator – both listening and speaking
• able to identify problems and propose creative solutions
• understanding of one’s own identity and personal experiences, and how it influences individual perspective
• empathy– ability to empathize with people who are different than oneself
• motivation to positively contribute to society
• strong work ethic - consistency and focus in work

Leaderliness, not leadership

I introduce and apply the new term “leaderliness” to refer to changes youth took on as a result of participation in the program, differentiating the program’s vision of “youth leadership development” from conventional understandings of “leadership” (as individual characteristics, and how they are cultivated). To achieve these capabilities in leadership, fundamental competencies must be cultivated in and between individuals. Leaderly capabilities align with Capabilities (outlined in my conceptual framework) and are
the functions youth adopted on the farm. The dimensions of leaderliness represent the basic capabilities youth gained that are critical to individual success in work and life. These include self-confidence, interpersonal communication skills, understanding of how to behave in work environment, self-efficacy, etc. These foundational capabilities enable an individual to advance into other tiers of leadership, and align with the elemental competencies youth garnered related work environments including professionalism, commitment, and hard work. The visual model below depicts how I interpret leaderliness reflected by change in the individual youth participant.
These “leaderly” qualities revealed themselves in various ways among the participants. Youth entered the ecosystem from different places on the spectrum of leadership (i.e. engaged leaders, currently unengaged, and potentially disconnected), thus each person took on an individual version “leaderliness”. As depicted by the feedback loops (orange dotted lines) in the illustration, growth in leaderly capabilities reinforced the cultivation of other individual capabilities.

3. **Self-confidence**

“*You get confidence to do something and then once you have that, you have to think about how you can continue pushing yourself to grow*” - Katie Smith

The most basic element of leaderliness emerging from participants was self-confidence. Self-confidence is defined as a feeling of trust and certainty in one’s personal abilities, qualities, and judgments. It is linked to the cultivation of other personal traits including self-esteem, assertiveness, emotional stability and self-assurance (Howell, 2012). It is a key soft skill related to the success of individuals in future work (Tough, 2012; Heckman, 2006), an important capacity for successful leadership (Howell, 2012), and a desired outcome for many youth development programs (Silbereisen and Lerner, 2007).

I use the term self-confidence to reflect an individual level capacity. Growth in self-confidence was visible in youth participants over time in their work on the farm. Here, enhanced self-confidence was displayed in participants by:

- exhibiting an increased willingness to participate and engage in groups and amongst peers – referred to by program staff as “opening up”
- showing a greater inclination to take initiative, try new things, lead and demo tasks and activities - referred to by program staff as “stepping up”

Self-confidence was cultivated in youth through various program mechanisms, interactions, dialogue, and time invested in work and activities within the program ecosystem.

“Opening Up”

For youth to experience change, they first needed to “open up”. Crew Leaders utilized the term “open up” to encourage youth to speak, share, and engage more with the work and peers on the farm. A
participant that opened up was someone that willingly engaged with peers and staff – speaking, sharing, and actively participating in activities and tasks. Participants that opened up were focused on what was happening in the activity or work. They voluntarily interacted with other Crew Members through verbal exchanges. They actively listened to others by acknowledging the speaker to indicate they were hearing what the person was saying through eye-contact and body language.

Opening up was a critical element for advancing self-confidence and other capabilities. It was a central focus of the program, and a capacity each individual participant cultivated. Some participants came in with more self-confidence, and thus a greater predisposition to “open up” to people, ideas, and the environment. All, however, advanced personal/individual openness.

At first, I observed many participants to be timid and standoffish. They did not like to share opinions or speak. Their voices were soft and hard to hear. They often stared at the ground when speaking and lacked confidence in their body language. Participants who were not open, often drifted to the back of a group during discussions, choosing to remain in the background and not stand out within the group. Youth expressed the experience and challenge of opening up.

Julie: The most difficult for me was opening up because in the beginning of the program I would kinda stick to myself and wouldn’t talk to nobody. So the challenging part for me was getting to know everybody and get used to the feelings and used to how you get along and talk to people.

Kristen: The hardest thing was like I was very very very shy, and just didn’t want to talk to people.

Joe: When I first came I was very quiet and it took me a long time to really open up, and like talk to the crew and feel comfortable.

Through encouragement in Real Talk and from spending more time with one another, youth began feeling more comfortable by making friends and learning about other participants. As they grew more comfortable in their surroundings with the people and environment, participants explained they were more comfortable, open, and willing to speak to people and build relationships. Opening up helped encouraged participants to embrace the program and begin to benefit from being within the ecosystem.

Kristen: [After I opened up] that was when I was just starting making new friends, I just love everybody now and am much more comfortable and open.

Dan, alum: [The program] kind of like forces you to talk to everyone and like actually open up. Not just like stand off in the corner, which helps you get more comfortable and learn about other people. We go through the program together, so I think its important for us to learn about each other.
Frank: What I learned was that I know I need to open up to people, and I can’t just stay like this forever…I need to branch out, and build relationships.

Every participant came into the program with different levels of confidence, efficacy, and work ethic. I offer the case of Kevin Bishop. Kevin reveals the case of an individual who opened up and displayed more initiative by through the emergence of self-confidence.

What opening up looks like – the case of Kevin Bishop

Kevin arrived on the farm as a quiet, standoffish 16 year-old black male. He attended Jefferson High School and resided in a mixed and modest Mid-city neighborhood with his grandmother and father. In the beginning of the program, Kevin rarely expressed his views or opinions. He explained in his initial job interview, “I don’t have many friends at school because I don’t talk very much”. Through discussions with Kevin’s peers in the program, staff on the farm, and teachers in school, I learned Kevin’s brother was tragically shot and killed in an incident with a gun in 2012. Kevin’s teacher, Mary McKnight, expressed that the incident had a significant impact on Kevin, and that he really carried his brother’s death with him and had gone into a bit of a shell over the past year. She said he was always a quiet person, lacking confidence in his academic abilities and never really having a place that he fit into socially in school. Mary believed these issues impacted Kevin’s confidence and image of himself.

Early on, I observed Kevin often looking expressionless. He rarely smiled and seemed listless and closed off any time youth were asked to engage in conversations or interact socially on the farm. In fieldwork, however, Kevin shined. He frequently received accolades from Ray and other staff for hard work and quick pace in the fields, but he struggled with trust and openness. He seemed disconnected. Kevin never volunteered his opinion unless his Crew Leader, Heather Warren, forced him to. Kevin was frequently encouraged in Real Talk by his Heather to open up and show more of himself early on in the program. Kevin’s Real Talk from the first three Standard Real Talk sessions reveal the early focus on opening up to his peers and engaging more by sharing and speaking.
Table 5.1: Heather Warren’s Real Talk for Kevin Bishop from first three Standard Real Talk sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Positives</th>
<th>Delta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| February 15th | 1) Did an awesome job at market – quiet hero, quickly stepped up and anticipated what needed to happen  
             2) Opening up more – in workshops, public speaking, on bus | Don’t hold back, share out and speak up, find your center |
| March 2nd   | 1) Speaking up more and asking questions  
             2) Great job teaching others about culture  
             3) Always willing to do any job – strong learner at physical tasks  
             4) Very insightful | Share knowledge more with others, speak louder!  |
| March 16th  | 1) Pace, hard worker and focused worker  
             2) So exciting to hear you express yourself – comments on article really interesting*  
             3) Compassionate, wise old man spirit – can always see both sides | Speak louder  |

Data Source: Heather Warren’s Real Talk logs for Kevin Bishop  
*Note: this is in reference to a homelessness article participants read. In this scenario, Kevin contribute to the group conversation around the article.

In Kevin’s Real Talk, Heather focused Positives on recognizing when Kevin was opening up, speaking up more, and asking questions, citing specific examples from the farm where Kevin verbally contributed like expressing comments on an article and opening up in workshops, and taking initiative through public speaking opportunities and speaking on the bus with peers. In Deltas, Kevin was encouraged to speak up, share out, and speak louder.

Over time, I observed Kevin feeling more comfortable with himself. He began to speak and smile more frequently. He demonstrated humor and enjoyed joking around, as he felt more confident with himself and his surroundings. He was more inclined to step up by taking on leadership roles in fieldwork and was frequently asked to model and explain agricultural tasks to peers or volunteers visiting the farm. He contributed more in workshops and seemed more alive and assertive. In Kevin’s final two Real Talk sessions, Heather focused on Kevin’s emerging confidence and growth.

Table 5.2: Heather Warren’s Real Talk for Kevin Bishop from the final two Standard Real Talk sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Positives</th>
<th>Delta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| June 8th   | 1) Speaking up – community luncheon  
             2) Most active in workers rights discussion  
             3) Created a system for sorting tomatoes – unusual set of skills, capacity to be thoughtful about ag work  
             4) Remaining positive about injury to your leg | Don’t doubt the quality of your ideas  |
5) Positive response to field trip on social justice – mind changing

June 15th

1) Both a seer and a doer – patient, insightful, thoughtful, hardworking – helping out with the tomatoes and fixing the lawn mower.

2) Growth in the realm of trust – willingness to speak more to peers and staff, take more responsibility leading tasks, and your growing sense of confidence in your abilities.

Do not be dismissive of others views – learn to value another person’s perspective even if you do not agree with it.

Data Source: Heather Warren’s Real Talk logs for Kevin Bishop

Heather cited specific examples of where Kevin grew in Positives, specifically around willingness to speak, take more responsibility, and a growing sense of trust and confidence. Kevin evolved his speaking abilities and willingness to open up, receiving praise for speaking up at the community luncheon and for stepping up and being the most active in a worker rights discussion. Heather’s acknowledgment of growth in speaking, taking initiative and opening up is a result of Kevin’s increasing self-confidence. Kevin’s peers on the farm also observed Kevin’s development over time. Fellow Crew Members Jenny, Jeff and Kristen were asked, “who in your crew change the most as a result of the program?” Each person cited Kevin and offered the following responses:

Jenny – when I first met Kevin, he didn’t talk…. like he was trying to not be open but over time I seen him putting more in with the people and talking about how he sees things…

Jeff – [Kevin] was even quieter than me [in the beginning] like he talked less than me…. But by the end of it, he would talk to anybody, make jokes and stuff. He is really funny!”

Kristen – I think Kevin. In the beginning he wouldn’t say more than 10 words, but in the summer by the end of the day he could just write a novel because he had so much to say…

Kevin’s teacher at Jefferson, Mary McKnight, also recognized the emergence of Kevin’s confidence and openness at school, stating that the experience is something that he has really carried with him… He has grown more confident because of his work [on the farm] with you.

Kevin exemplified a participant who opened up and grew in self-confidence from participating in the program. A participant who “opened up” through the program, gained self-confidence and also grew in other ways.
Stepping up and stepping back - taking risks, trying new things

A program goal is that youth learn to step up in activities and tasks, and push themselves to overcome fears in the work and activities on the farm; and for others learn the importance of stepping back and leading by encouraging and supporting the advancement of others. Related to personal factors upon entering the ecosystem, two types of participants existed:

1) youth who entered the program with greater self-confidence that naturally “stepped up” in tasks, took initiative, led a task without being asked, lead constructively contribute to group communications, and

2) youth that tended to sit back, blend into the background, and allow others to take charge and lead conversations.

Stepping up/back is distinct from opening up in that it related to taking initiative in tasks. The programmatic guideline of “step up, step back” brought awareness to these personal tendencies. Kyle Lott explained the concept on a Saturday early in the program. Kyle began by instructing the youth to ask themselves, are you a person who likes to sit back, not say much and rely on other members of your Crew to take the lead? Or are you a person who likes to jump in to the conversation, be the first to raise your hand, and take the lead in what we are doing here? Well here on the farm, we like to use a guideline called “step up, step back” which asks you to consider if we are someone who likes to step up and take initiative or if we are someone who prefers to step back and let others be in charge. Kyle went on to explain that it is important for us to understand how we usually act in situations to push and challenge ourselves to try the other way. Kyle challenged the youth to think about how you act - try to take more risks if you are someone who steps back but if you are someone who likes to step up, be the person who tries to step back and support other people to be the one to lead.

Youth were encouraged throughout the program to recognize their tendency and to try the opposite. The concept related to a person’s inclination to lead in group settings, but also their propensity to take risks, initiate conversations, and try out new things. It aligns with the concept of opening up as youth were encouraged to initiate conversations and dialogue in activities and in the work. Youth internalized the step up, step back guideline and utilized it to help advance their own leaderly abilities. As participants opened up, they were more willing to take initiative in tasks on the farm and interact with peers and staff.
They began to try new things, and challenge themselves in the work. Youth increased self-awareness around their leaderly tendencies.

**A participant who stepped up – Brett Samuel**

Most participants were more inclined to naturally “step back”. These youth did not jump on opportunities to speak, respond to questions in group discussions, lead tasks, or take initiative. They were less likely to try out new things, take risks, and seemed to possess less self-confidence in their personal abilities.

Brett Samuel offers an example of a participant who wrestled with stepping up. Brett was a 16 year-old black male from Central City in his junior year at Jefferson High School. He was hired from the middle tier of the leadership spectrum, demonstrating involvement in school activities but not indicating high levels of academic achievement or leadership experiences. In getting to know Brett over the course of the program, I observed significant growth in self-confidence and willingness to step up. He started out shy, standoffish, timid, and struggled to look me in the eye when he spoke. Over time, Brett evolved into a open and engaging young man, who thrived within the program ecosystem and was not afraid to take risks and put himself out there for others when asked to speak and step up.

Early on, Brett lacked initiative and did not engage when new opportunities to grow were presented to him on the farm. Brett explained in his exit interview that his biggest personal challenge was opening up to people because I think people are gonna think different than I do. I think that way about myself, negatively, so I didn’t want other people to think negatively about me. Brett continued and explained that much of this challenge stems from his inability to trust myself.

In Brett’s exit interview, he recounted a salient point in the program – a tipping point – that helped him to realize his personal growth and abilities to try new things. On a Saturday in early April, all three Crews spent the day at a local ropes course. The day was filled with various teambuilding exercises and activities. They played games in the morning, and then after lunch moved onto the ropes course. The ropes course had various obstacles. Youth climbed nets up wooden posts, walked high wires, and jumped from net to net at various heights and levels of difficulty. One particularly challenging obstacle involved climbing a wooden ladder approximately 20 meters off the ground to the top of a small wooden platform.
The platform was just wide enough for a single person to stand on. Once on top, a person (with a rope and safety harness attached) was to leap off and grasp a wooden handle hanging roughly 3 or 4 meters in front of the platform. This was a popular obstacle for the more courageous participants. Just before departure for the day, Brett mustered up the confidence to scale the ladder to the top of the platform.

As Brett approached the top, I observed him shaking. He screamed often as he struggled to gain his balance atop the platform. Once he had his balance, Brett settled in but was frozen with fear. His fellow Crew Members and the program staff all stood near encouraging and cheering Brett on, but he refused to budge. He remained perched on the platform for nearly 10 minutes. After persuasion from his Crew Leader Erin Lee, finally Brett decided to jump. He leapt from the platform and missed the handle by a wide margin. The safety harness caught him and he was slowly lowered to the ground. Brett recounted this event and explained how salient it was for his personal growth.

Brett: [I felt I improved on] being brave! When we went to the ropes course, my experience there had me thinking a lot when I got home about how you need to trust people and myself. I was up there thinking ‘oh no way, I ain’t jumping’, and everyone was yelling to me to just jump, and I started shaking, but eventually something came over me and I just jumped.

Brett learned afterwards from his Crew Leader and peers in Real Talk that through this experience, and through other encounters watching Brett evolve, people thought he was brave. Brett stated I never knew that people thought I was brave, I was like “y’all really think I am brave?”, so its nice to hear somebody say something nice to me and learn that. This experience boosted Brett’s self-confidence. He learned of his abilities and began trusting himself more. This encouraged Brett to take more risks in the work environment. Brett’s fellow Crew Member and friend Allison Marx offered her observations of Brett’s growth.

Allison: In the beginning he almost really never talked but towards the end he volunteered for facilitating like I did. He volunteered for almost everything. When people asked who wants to do this, he would always raise his hand first.

The growth for Brett related to his ability to step up was also recognized at school. Brett’s teacher, Mary, explained the changes she observed in Brett:

He began to discover this whole new world around him that he seemed to never really pay much attention to before. He began to become an agent of change in his own life. He cut out people that he didn’t feel contributed to who he wanted to become. I can’t believe how much more aware he is of everything. He is in an AP psych course. He isn’t the strongest student, but he has so much to contribute now to the conversation. It’s like he developed this sense of the world that you didn’t see in him before.
Brett’s experience opened up his eyes to new things around him, and he learned his abilities to advance by stepping up.

A participant who stepped back – Bryan Miller

A few participants entered the system with more leaderly qualities. These youth inherently took on challenges, stepped up, and had no trouble speaking up in discussions or jumping on opportunities to lead. These youth needed to learn how to step back and lead by supporting others.

One young person who exemplified more advanced leaderly capabilities upon entering the program was Bryan Miller. Bryan was a high performing student from Washington High School. He was in his senior year and had already been accepted into Louisiana State University on a partial scholarship. Bryan was very active in extra curriculars. Bryan was an engaging young man. He was not intimidated to speak to adults, could carry a conversation with anyone on the farm, and seemed very comfortable with himself. He was frequently the first person to raise his hand to respond to questions in activities.

Because of Bryan’s tendencies to step up and lead, Bryan needed to learn the importance of teambuilding and supporting the development of others. Bryan’s exit interview reflect his personal observations on leadership, and how he changed during the program:

Bryan: sometimes you have to step up and step back and know how to deal with that also—so in my case I’m a step up person, I say what I need to say, but I learned to be a step back person when in a group activity and someone else is leading....I guess for me, leadership skills are like making sure that everyone is being correct doing things and going towards the goal and helping one another going towards the goal. The thing about it is like not everybody can be a leader and sometimes when you’re in a group you have to let a person lead and a lot of times everybody cannot be a leader in a group

By understanding and increasing their awareness of their leadership tendencies, youth altered their leaderliness by learning to step up and step back.

4. Learning to communicate

Communication is a valued soft skill. Improved communication was emphasized from the outset of the program as a defined area for growth and programmatic goal targeting an “increased ability to communicate effectively with staff and peers”. The primary advancement of communication abilities related to basic skills important for fostering and maintaining relationships. These communication skills were interpersonal and relational abilities to enable an individual to successfully navigate social and professional situations. Basic interpersonal communication is a relevant soft skill associated with language
and verbal abilities needed to carry a conversation, dialogue, and social exchange to communicate information.

Youth learned to effectively communicate verbally – to interface with adult superiors and speak face-to-face with diverse types of people. They learned the importance of respect and use of appropriate language. They learned to communicate positive and negative feedback to support the growth of peers, and to be able to express emotions and feelings about co-workers in a structured environment. The mechanisms for fostering these interpersonal communication abilities are described in greater detail in Real Talk, Real Work, and Real Accountability chapters.

Growth in communication for participants is connected to the building of self-confidence, opening up and feeling comfortable speaking and communicating personal views. Youth first needed to be willing to engage and speak before they could advance communication. Over time, participants learned how to speak and interact in a professional setting, and how to constructively and respectfully convey information and feelings to coworkers, superiors, and customers. This growth was achieved through the Real Talk mechanism (explained in Chapter 5 & 6) and through the work and activities on the farm (explained in detail in Chapter 7). In exit interviews, youth offered their perspectives on the growth in communication abilities.

Steve Young explained for him he improved in learning how to communicate with different types of people.

Katie Smith agreed with Steve explaining that her communication skills grew by just interacting with other people…interacting with people that are different than me and learning about how to go about that.

James Foster explained that he learned the importance of being able to communicate to people in work environment because you have to constantly communicate with one another, like let them know what’s going on and what needs to be done and stuff like that. So, it just helped me learn to open up more to people.

Youth entered the program with varying levels of comfort and experience speaking in public. Over the course of the program, some seized the opportunity to speak in front of groups. Upper level communication development included growth in public speaking. Some youth were placed in situations to develop public
speaking abilities, but it was not a significant change in all participants. I offer the case of Jenny Elliot to describe how two young women advanced their communication abilities in the program. Jenny learned the importance of opening up to people which enabled her to build on communication skills through leading tours to volunteer groups on the farm.

**Jenny Elliot**

Jenny was a young person who struggled with interpersonal communication. Crew Leader Kyle Lott explained that Jenny was somebody who couldn’t even look you in the eyes when she arrived here. She struggled with authority and speaking with adults. Jenny’s Crew Leader Heather Warren explained that I always saw this great potential in Jenny to become a leader. She showed these flashes of being able to think and conceptualize things that revealed a lot of depth and ability. She is really smart and just needed to be pushed.

Jenny’s growth in communication abilities stemmed from her ability to open up and recognize the value in connecting with other people. Much of her challenge also was connected to her self-confidence. Jenny had been kicked out of three schools before she ended up with her final chance to succeed at Monroe High School. One day on the bus, Jenny explained, before I started here I wouldn’t have been able to sit here and talk to you about this because I didn’t know you. I wouldn’t have had the confidence to be able to sit here and even talk with you. She went on to explain that this was because she was only used to being in [a] group of people that I know. I was never getting out of that and trying to get to know other people, and if you don’t ever open up to others, you won’t ever know what they could do to help you.

Heather Warren, Jenny’s Crew Leader reflected on Jenny’s growth in the program in her final Real Talk session, explaining to Jenny, you have become a real communicator, growing into your leadership role, and you have a great capacity for self-reflection understanding that you have the power to change things causing you problems. In her exit interview, Jenny reflected on her personal growth related to communication:

I learned a lot about speaking and speaking out in public, and taking all the opportunities to open up to different people. If you don’t, you will never know what they have to offer, so I guess that’s what I think about the environment is those connections you are able to make with people because you are more open.
Jenny went on to recount a particular relevant experience for her in leading volunteer tours on the farm.

Jenny took advantage of the opportunities to speak to group and represent the farm.

Jenny: On those tours, I really enjoyed them. Like I was saying before, I had a really hard time opening up to people that I didn’t know, and you know working there we were having people come from all these different places that were trying to start farms or learn about what we were doing, so when [Heather] asked me to do those things and like speak about our farm and take them around and show our work and how we do things, and encourage them to get a program and to tell them all the things that [the program] helped me with and have helped other with, I used to really like doing that. That is something I never would have been able to do before.

Time on the farm, opening up and interacting with new people helped advance Jenny’s interpersonal communication abilities, which led her to take initiative and new opportunities like leading the tours.

5. Self-efficacy and agency

Stemming from advancing self-confidence, opening up, and learning to step up, participants also demonstrated evidence of growth in agency and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy and agency was displayed by participants through:

• Ability to recognize and overcome challenges within the program ecosystem,
• Feeling more comfortable with themselves in environments outside of the immediate program ecosystem

Agency is a valued outcome within the capabilities approach defined as a person’s ability to act on what they value and have reason to value (Sen, 1999). Agency relates to a person’s individual freedom to pursue and achieve goals they regard as important. Program participants displayed evidence of emerging agency. I consider the evolution of agency within the context of the program to align closer to the concept and soft skill of “self-efficacy”.

Self-efficacy is a valued soft skill (Tough, 2013) related to self-confidence and belief in one’s personal ability to complete tasks and achieve a goal (Bandura, 1997). Agency relates to a person’s feeling of control over their future. Self-efficacy is a fundamental step in recognizing an individual is the agent of his or her own life that can determine and influence outcomes. Program participants demonstrated recognition in their abilities to overcome challenges and successfully accomplish goals in the program. The advancement of self-confidence played into this understanding.
Growth in self-efficacy was achieved in participants through Real Talk and Real Accountability. Elaborated on in Chapter 7 in greater detail, these change mechanisms helped to reveal and bring awareness to participants of how they needed to grow and change within the program. As youth acknowledged areas for growth, they began to see and hear from trusted adult Crew Leaders how they could overcome challenges. Elements of this was revealed when youth (such as the earlier case of Brett Samuel) began to step up and try new things within the program.

Participant Julie Johnson offers a case of a young woman who began to challenge herself within and outside the program ecosystem.

**Julie Johnson – “I think I can do that now”**

Julie Johnson is a 16 year-old, black female who attended Jefferson High School. Julie was hired from the engaged leader end of the leadership spectrum. She is a good student and involved in different clubs at school. I observed Julie on the farm to be hard working, but early on Julie often held back her opinion and views, seeming concerned with how they would be perceived by her peers. Like many of her peers, she did not want to standout. Julie kept to herself and did not easily warm to the program or the people. She operated in a way where she did not want to make mistakes, take risks, and often preferred to follow the lead of her peers rather than being a leader. Julie contributed at times, but typically held back herself and did not seem to trust her peers or the staff. Early on in the program, Julie received these Positives and Deltas over the first three Real Talk sessions related to her work performance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Positives</th>
<th>Delta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 15th</td>
<td>1) Responsible and proactive – committed</td>
<td>Open up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Strong work in the field today</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Thoughtful participation – sharing out ideas in circle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2nd</td>
<td>1) Incredibly focused</td>
<td>Speak up and offer more of yourself and ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Nice work at market – accomplished tasks independently, self directed, self sufficient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Emotionally mature – don’t allow others to distract you, public speaking game, tenacious</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4) Stepping up and coming out of your shell more – great initiative and engagement at homeless café</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 16th</td>
<td>1) Bringing great work ethic and attention to detail in the field – lettuce planting, teaching others</td>
<td>Step up!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2) Focused and consistent worker – paying attention and listening during workshops
3) Nice job engaging public and peers today

Data Source: Heather Warren’s Real Talk logs for Julie Johnson

Real Talk Positives reveal Heather homing in on Julie’s qualities of being responsible and proactive, committed, and focused. Heather acknowledged her willingness to offer thoughtful participation, listen and engage with people, showing her immense potential and early demonstration of leadership and qualities valued within the program. Heather recognized that she needed to be encouraged and pushed to open up, speak up, offer more of yourself and ideas, and step up!

Heather acknowledged her leadership potential, and as the program progressed, Heather identified leadership as an area Julie was taking your deltas and applying them and stepping up in a big way in different opportunities to take on leadership roles such as tours, facilitating a table at community lunches. Heather saw Julie’s maturation and challenges her to continue to push yourself and take your leadership to the next level in the final weeks of the program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Positives</th>
<th>Delta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 8th</td>
<td>1) Stepping up in a big way – tours, facilitating table at community lunch</td>
<td>Continue to push yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Excellent work on potatoes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Active participant on Thursday – first checkout</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4) Eye for harvesting potatoes and tomatoes – attention to detail</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 15th</td>
<td>1) Consistency and hard work in fields</td>
<td>Take leadership to next level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Strong person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Leadership – leading tours, facilitating tables</td>
<td>Take the bull by the horns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4) Ninja skills – poise, focus, intention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5) Incredible competence – pizza, skit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Heather Warren’s Real Talk logs for Julie Johnson

Julie expressed that the most difficult for me was opening up because in the beginning of the program I would kinda stick to myself and wouldn’t talk to nobody. So the challenging part for me was getting to know everybody and get used to the feelings and used to how you get along and talk to people. As Julie advanced through the program, and began to feel comfortable, she opened up and excelled. She was considered one of the strongest fieldworkers and often received praise for representing for the girls in the program but outperforming the males in agricultural tasks.
When asked “how are you different, or what changed for you” at the completion of the program, Julie offered an example that expressed her growing self-efficacy.

Julie: After I finished this, I went out and joined a summer camp working with kids at the [local homeless shelter for children], and I would have never done that before. I am not outgoing like that because summer camp you really have to have the strength and the courage and patience to put up with them children. And I was like, “I think I can do that now”, so I think it got me more interested to do new and different things. I also broke out of my shyness and am more open to speaking and talking to people, and I really thank [the program] for that. I have more confidence to do these type of things because of working here.

Real Talk content analysis supports the cultivation of self-efficacy related to growth in self-confidence. The predominant focus of the Real Talk content was to reveal positive attributes of the participants – however modest. This supported their self-esteem and helped them to realize they had something good to bring to the team and something positive to contribute to the world. The recognition of this personal strength by a trusted superior (i.e. the Crew Leader) or peer helped to increase the depth and meaning of the compliment. Over time, youth began to recognize their personal abilities. One element that this helped to reveal was their ability to overcome a challenge. Youth often saw a Delta acknowledged later as a Positive, which revealed their ability to achieve a goal and overcome a challenge.

6. Learning to work – Professionalism, Commitment, and Hard Work

The program aims to cultivate experience and knowledge of how to behave within a professional work environment through the development of Professionalism, Commitment, and Hard Work. Each of these competencies are core values and “leaderly” qualities cultivated through Real Work, Real Talk and Real Accountability. (These systems are elaborated on further in Chapters 5 thru 8). Real Talk provided youth verbal feedback on work performance and encouraged them to exercise the expected behaviors in their work. Youth learned how to behave professionally within the work through the accountability system and through Real Talk Positives and Deltas, where they received feedback on their performance. The systems demonstrated to participants the repercussions of not adhering to accepted workplace standards, as youth received pay deductions (i.e. Violations) for failing to meet these expectations.

Professionalism concerns an individual’s behavior and adherence to expectations within the work environment. Indicators of professional behavior (referred to as “expected standards of behavior” by the program) include “calling in advance if you are going to be late or absent for work, dressing appropriately
for the work environment, and coming to work with all necessary materials such as notebook, water bottle, or any required paperwork etc.”.

Professionalism was also advanced through Real Talk and the accountability system. Youth received Positives to reinforce conduct that reflected expected behaviors. For example, youth were recognized when they called in advance to notify their Crew Leader they would be late to work. Deltas also targeted Professionalism to urge youth to adhere to the standard. Growth in Professionalism was reinforced through the accountability system, where youth received violations for not adhering to standards. Professionalism was one of the most frequent violations youth received representing 16.5% of the total violations earned by all participants.

Additionally, within the scope of Professionalism, youth learned proper communication and language within a work environment. Youth received violations throughout the program related to cursing.

Commitment is a programmatic value related to behavior in the work environment. Commitment focused on conveying the importance of punctuality and attendance – meaning youth needed to show up for scheduled work activities and to show up on time. Indicators of a committed participant in the program included “arriving on time, being present at all scheduled work times, and not leaving the job without notice”.

In a work environment, showing up and showing up on time is critical to success in work and holding down a job. Commitment was the biggest challenge for the youth participants representing 70% of the all violations participants received.

Hard work is a valued program outcome expressed in the program standards. Participants are evaluated on Hard Work through the accountability system, specifically for “work with a positive attitude and your best effort, steadily through the completion of the assigned task” and for “keeping pace with your crew” during fieldwork and activities (see appendix D for illustration of the program standards).

Real Work (elaborated in Chapter 7) on the farm was challenging – participants worked in the heat and sun weeding, planting, and digging in the soil. These tasks and other elements of the program encouraged the development of work ethic and an understanding of hard work. Learning Hard Work and experiencing physical labor on the farm pushed participants to learn what it takes to commit, function, and work hard within a professional environment.
Participant Jeff Logan evidently internalized the behaviors within the work environment, and provides an example of how an individual gained important job skills.

**Jeff Logan**

Jeff came from a well off, middle-class household in an exclusive, gated community. Jeff was a 16-year-old white male attending Adams High School. He was one of four white students in the program, and was classified as an “engaged leader” when he was hired. In an interview at the completion of the program, Jeff’s father explained that he was a good student, but he had never challenged himself in work or school. The work on the farm was Jeff’s very first job. Jeff’s father explained that he had never seen Jeff fully invest himself in activities outside of school. Jeff described commitment as his biggest personal challenge, explaining, “I am not very disciplined as a person”.

Jeff demonstrated significant growth around commitment, hard work, and professionalism. The majority of Jeff’s Violations (10) were earned in the commitment category for arriving late and not calling ahead. Jeff struggles with commitment occurred early on – 4 absences within the first six weeks. Jeff explained that he learned to overcome this because my feet were to the fire with the days [I could miss], so I stopped being late and missing days. I learned the importance of being here and being here on time”。 Jeff explained that in his view his primary area of personal growth was professionalism related to his increased understanding of what it takes to be successful in a work environment. Jeff was always a respectful young man, but he learned how to succeed in a professional environment. Guided by the program standards of Commitment, Professionalism, and Hard Work, Jeff excelled within the ecosystem.

During his exit interview, Jeff believed he had definitely changed a lot as a person since I came here, like it is easier for me to be social since I first started here, and the professionalism and how to work a job, and keep my commitments to the job. I think I grew [more] social. I am more open and willing to meet and talk to people really. Working with people helped me come out of my shell”.

Jeff described in his exit interview an experience that speaks to the hard work he and other youth endured together in the fields. On a particular dry and hot day in early May, Jeff and Crew were out weeding in the fields. Jeff explains:
Our crew approached this field which was all dry and cracked dirt and just full of weeds, and our job was to take the shovels and dig these big trenches…. We were digging and I got calluses and blisters on my hand, and I was just digging, digging, digging for like the entirety of that day after school. And like, it was probably one of the hardest if not the hardest days that I worked because we dug these giant trenches. I was so happy when I was finished digging because all we had to do was just level them off and disburse the dirt, and then make sure they were like shelves and even, but I was very proud of myself and my work. I earned myself a few blisters that day and was just drenched in sweat.

Jeff’s father was interviewed to discuss observed change in Jeff during and after the program. The focus Mr. Logan’s thoughts were on Jeff’s growth and maturity. Mr. Logan explained that he had never before witnessed Jeff latch on to something like he did in his work on the farm. He mentioned seeing how important the job was to Jeff in how he prepared and committed himself. He said:

He [Jeff] was excited about the job, and the only way we knew that was by seeing how much he prepared himself for work. He would make sure to get enough sleep, make sure his clothes were clean, he arranged for rides when it was necessary, so a lot of things like that. He took it seriously and didn’t ever talk about it not being the right thing for him. He seemed to enjoy it right from the beginning. There was never any doubt that he was going to dedicate himself to this work. That level of maturity and investment we had not really seen before from him.

Jeff learned what it takes to commit to a job and function within a professional environment. Learning these types of behaviors and expectations was an important change for youth participants in developing professional capabilities for future work.

7. Advancing Knowledge

The program curriculum supports the advancement of knowledge in areas of health and wellness, nutrition, food systems, and social justice issues. Through the course of the five-months, youth engage in workshops and activities designed to increase their understanding in these core areas. Surveys, discussion, short quizzes during the program assess knowledge in:

Health, Wellness and Nutrition

Youth advance their knowledge in areas related to agriculture, food, food systems/justice, health, wellness, and nutrition including:

Cooking – youth engaged in four cooking classes over the course of the program, where they take produce grown from the farm and learn to prepare and cook a healthy recipe. Youth experienced all aspects of working in the kitchen including washing and preparing food, chopping and learning
to use a kitchen knife, measuring ingredients, and different methods of cooking the food like boiling, sautéing and baking. I include a prepared recipe in the appendix.

**Identifying healthy foods** – by working in the fields growing organic produce and selling the foods in the market, youth learned to identify a range of fruits and vegetables. Much of the produce grown were greens such as kale, swiss chard, mustards, collards, arugula, tat soy, bok choy, and others. Youth cultivated these crops in the fields and sold them in the markets, so they were required to understand what the plants were. Figures 5.2 and 5.3 display scenes from the farm where youth worked with the plants. Figure 5.2 depicts a scene in late spring from the farm’ fields. Figure 5.3 shows youth harvesting kale in the early spring.

**Figure 5.2: Produce growing in the fields during late spring on the farm**

(Data Source: Author’s field camera)
Understanding the effects of foods - Participants had access to a program nutritionist who provided one on one nutritional consulting throughout the program. In these sessions, youth began by establishing goals for themselves over the course of the program. They asked questions and learned how to overcome personal health issues such as obesity, diabetes, dieting, sleep disorders, and others. (Note: these issues were drawn from notes recorded by the nutritionist during her consultations with participants). I include an example of a consultation record in the appendix.

Youth also experienced focused sessions within Crews with the nutritionist. In these sessions, they worked on activities within the group to learn to read nutrition labels to understand how much salt, sugar, and other ingredients are in common foods that teenagers often enjoy. For example, in one session, youth measured out how much sugar goes into an orange Gatorade, a common sports drink. In this activity, youth poured sugar into measuring cups, and then dumped the measured amount into the empty Gatorade bottle to learn how much sugar is in each serving of Gatorade. Additionally, youth learned how labels can be deceiving in how much a serving represents to the
size of the bottle. In another session, youth learned about what goes into fast food burgers and other products commonly found in fast food restaurants.

**Food systems** - Youth also learned facts and terminology about the *industrial food complex* in the United States during the screening of the documentary “Food Inc.”, which explains how food systems function in the United States. They learned about issues of food access in New Orleans related to food deserts – areas of the city without access to fresh produce. These trainings emphasized the importance and cultivation of fresh produce for the community through our work on the farm.

Access to fresh food also connected with issues of hunger and obesity. Youth consider questions like “why do we have hunger in some places of the world and other areas where people over consume”? Youth engaged in a *hunger banquet* activity around these topics (explained in greater detail in chapter 4, section 8).

**Homelessness** – youth underwent a homelessness training session. In the activity, youth learned to challenge stereotypes about what it means to be homeless. Youth were asked to describe characteristics of a homeless person. After they listed characteristics, they were given demographic statistics of homeless people, which opposed many of the typical beliefs of who the homeless are and why they become homeless. The session also contained a reading from a former program participant. Ben Thomas, 2012 alum, penned an article for a small, citywide homeless newspaper about his experience growing up. Part of Ben’s upbringing was spent homeless. Following the session, youth spent a Saturday morning volunteering with their Crew at a local soup kitchen serving breakfast to homeless people. Many youth explained in exit interviews remembering this activity and how it had an impact on their perspective of homeless people. Kim Robinson explains her encounter with the homeless:

Kim: *I enjoyed going to the homeless shelter and talking to all the people there. It was fun. I was a waiter and all the people there were so nice they only wanted to talk, they weren’t like “go get me this” and “go get me that” it was just nice. I liked that experience the most…interacting with
the homeless guests. It changed my perspective on homeless people and like, people who just ran out of luck.

**Violence in my community** – On Mother’s Day, May 12th, 2013, a shooting took place at a Second Line (New Orleans jazz street parade). This prompted an organizational response to reflect on violence in the community, and what leads young people to commit violent acts. (More on the specifics of the event is outlined in chapter 3, section 8). The event offered a platform for the organization and youth to reflect on violence in their community. Youth created violence trees (see images below) to depict what factors lead to “health young people in our community” and what factors make young people “unhealthy”. A guest was invited from the mayor’s office to take notes on what youth believed was contributing to violence in their community. In addition to the activity with the trees, youth screened a documentary video on violence in New Orleans and had a Q&A with the director. The opportunity provided youth a chance to converse and reflect on the challenges for young people in the community, and connect the issues to social justice, incarceration, and violence.

*Figure 5.4:* Picture of a “violence tree” from workshop on violence in the community

Data Source: Author’s field camera
8. Chapter Wrap-Up

The purpose of this chapter is to clarify the outcomes and the concept of “change” observed in youth participants, which is captured in the term leaderliness. The findings help to answer the research question related to the individual level factors that influence “change” within the system, and the specific capabilities cultivated on the farm.

Youth experienced a range of “leaderly” changes: growing self-confidence from “opening up” and “stepping up” or stepping back. They learned interpersonal communication – to speak and engage in conversation with peers and adults at work, the importance of respectful, appropriate language, and to convey positive and negative feelings and experiences.

They learned to connect with peers within a work setting (rather than school, home or neighborhood).

Youth reported that they gained knowledge as fact, attitudes, and behaviors around food, nutrition, health behaviors, and food and social justice.

The work experience and program activities seemed to reinforce values of professionalism, commitment, and hard work.

Specific program mechanisms function to cultivate these perceived changes, which I examine in the subsequent chapters in greater detail.
Chapter 6. Change Mechanism I: Real Work on the Farm

1. Introduction

On a cool Saturday in early spring – while others sleep around the city, youth participants, “youth”, awake in neighborhoods to hustle off to meet the bus at Jefferson High School by 8 am. On any typical Saturday early in “the program”, the youth arrive at the farm by 8:10 am after a short, sleepy bus ride. Staff and a handful of Crew Members (already present on the farm after receiving a ride from a family member) warmly greet participants as they walk off the bus, up the wooden ramp leading into the Ecocampus, ready to begin the workday.

The day’s work begins with a morning “icebreaker” and “opening circle”. After the opening circle, a market Crew departs for the farmers market, and the remaining Crew or Crews begin the day on the farm.

Road Map of Chapter

I use the term “Real Work” to refer to the hard and meaningful work youth performed on the farm – the weeding, planting and work in the soil, the activities youth engage in, and the various routines and activities connected to work on the farm.

This chapter describes in detail the various elements of Real Work on the Farm. The purpose is to explain the work and activities on the farm, which helps to address the research question: what mechanisms cultivated change in youth participants, specifically how Real Work functions as a change mechanism, and the role of relationships and the natural environment.

I begin by introducing the schedule and outlining typical activities. Then, to describe Real Work in greater detail, I break the chapter into 2 parts. Part 1 describes a Real Work day on the Farm – the routines, activities, and experiences. Part 2 examines specifics of the work in-depth - the role of money and relevancy of youth in cultivation.

The chapter is organized into 14 total sections provide detailed descriptions of the “Real Work” on the Farm:

• Section 1 introduces the youth arrival and beginning of the Saturday workday.
• Section 2 presents the Saturday schedule on the farm, and related duties and activities.
• Section 3 explains the tone for the start of the workday through the greeting and arrival of youth on to the farm.
• Section 4 details common morning routines of the opening circle and energizers to begin the day.
• Section 5 describes the role of the Circle, and how the program seeks to inspire ownership and investment (through the goals and importance of the work).
• Section 6 analyzes the “observation walk” and its role in encouraging youth to recognize natural surroundings and changes on the farm.
• Section 7 examines the varying viewpoints on outdoor work, and how it factored into the changes youth experienced.
• Section 8 explains the agricultural work and recounts a demonstration from the Farm Manager to explain experiences with physical labor.
• Section 9 details other agricultural work.
• Section 10 analyzes the use of pairings in the field to harness the diversity in the program as a tool to promote change in youth.
• Section 11 describes how youth bonded through teamwork and cultivating relationships in the processes of the work and activities.
• Section 12 features issues of diversity and *multiple truths* emphasized through the program guidelines.
• Section 13 is focused on the closing circle, reflections, and the ending rituals of the workday.
• Section 14 looks at the paycheck and its relevancy to gaining youth investment in the work.
• Section 15 analyzes how the work offered meaningful opportunities for youth to engage and feel relevant in the processes.

To construct the scenes, scenarios, and describe the routines involved in Real Work on the Farm, I conducted analyses of the various sources from my data inventory.

• Program documents: I reviewed program schedules using content analysis and use these data to recreate schedules and events.
• Interviews: I analyzed transcripts from the exit interviews I conducted with youth participants and key informants – staff and school-based partners – to consider perspectives of participants experience within the elements of the Real Work.

• Field notes and participant observations: the majority of the scenarios in this chapter are drawn from analysis of my field notes. Field notes provided detailed description of the settings, routines, events and work on the farm to offer quotes and my interpretation of the occurrences.

2. The Saturday schedule

The morning and afternoon schedule shifted each week by Crew. In Table 6.1 below I provide a schedule from a typical Saturday (March 16th) to offer an example of the work schedule for youth participants. (Note: each week staff prepared individual schedules – a separate schedule for each Crew’s work and activities. Crews were usually split-up on Saturdays with different tasks for the day. I include an example schedule from each workday in appendix D).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 am</td>
<td>Pickup at Jefferson</td>
<td>Josh</td>
<td>8 am</td>
<td>Pickup at Jefferson</td>
<td>Josh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:15 am</td>
<td>Icebreaker</td>
<td>Kyle</td>
<td>8:15 am</td>
<td>Icebreaker</td>
<td>Kyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 am</td>
<td>Observation Walk</td>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>8:30 am</td>
<td>Depart for Farmers Market</td>
<td>Kyle, Kathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:45 am to 11:30 am</td>
<td>Agricultural Task</td>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>9 am to 12 pm</td>
<td>Depart for Farmers Market</td>
<td>Kyle, Kathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30 am – 12 pm</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
<td>12 pm to 12:15 pm</td>
<td>Market Clean-up</td>
<td>Kyle, Kathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 pm – 1:30 pm</td>
<td>Activity – Documentary Screening</td>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>12:15 pm to 12:45 pm</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30 pm – 2:30 pm</td>
<td>Real Talk</td>
<td>Crew Leaders (Heather, Erin, Kyle)</td>
<td>12:45 pm to 1:30 pm</td>
<td>Return to farm and unpack from market</td>
<td>Kyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30 pm</td>
<td>Closing</td>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>1:30 pm – 2:30 pm</td>
<td>Real Talk</td>
<td>Crew Leaders (Heather, Erin, Kyle)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 pm</td>
<td>Depart by bus to Jefferson</td>
<td>Josh</td>
<td>2:30 pm</td>
<td>Closing</td>
<td>Heather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 pm</td>
<td>Depart by</td>
<td>Josh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The schedule is provided to reflect a Saturday where Crews 1 and 2 stayed on the farm for an "agricultural task" in the morning, an afternoon activity screening a documentary, and concluded the day with Real Talk. Crew 3 worked the farmers market all morning, then returned to the farm in the afternoon in time for Real Talk before departing for home.

I use this schedule and other experiences of youth work on Saturdays to generalize about a typical workday on the farm.

**Work on the farm**

On the farm, morning agricultural tasks involved physical labor in the fields. Youth often pulled weeds on Saturdays, but also worked on transplanting and planting crops for cultivation, clearing fields of rocks and debris, leveling soil, harvesting, and washing and preparing produce for sale at the market. All of these activities occurred periodically on the farm. Each week’s agricultural task was determined by the crop cycle, spring calendar, and the work the Farm Manager Ray Billings believed was most vital to sustain the cultivation and production of produce.

**Working the farmers market**

"At market", single Crews rotated week-to-week each Saturday to work the two farmers markets. The Crew split-up with half working the pop-up market on the site of a former housing development project, and the other half working the sales booth in a traditional farmers market located in the central business district of the city. The pop-up market is a mobile-market, constructed on top of a metal trailer that can be towed behind a vehicle. The pop-up market was towed to the site in advance of the youth’ arrival.

At the markets, youth worked different jobs including stocking, selling, and sampling produce. Within the context of work training, youth learned skills in market work:

- customer service skills – interacting with guests at the market stands, directing them to specific produce items for sale, explaining how the produce is grown, and how customer’s purchases
supported youth salaries. Youth also sampled produce and distributed recipes to draw in customers to the market stand.

• handling and counting money – a simple but important role, participants handled the money, counted change, and tracked the sales of produce.

• stocking produce

The market experience was valued for youth, and many viewed it as a highlight of the physical work of the program because they were able to interact with customers that eat the food we grow ourselves (Holly). Participants explained feeling a sense of pride at the market, talking about their job because it’s your food you are trying to sell. It was the end process of all the hard work they put in together in cultivation.

Afternoon activities

After lunch on Saturdays, fieldwork ended and the markets closed. Youth were provided a break for lunch – a short 30-minutes to eat their bag-lunch, and commenced the afternoon schedule. The market Crew did not return to the farm until 1:30 pm. These youth ate lunch at the market, where they had the option of bringing a bag lunch or purchasing food.

The afternoon activities rotated weekly by the Crew. The schedule depended on the curriculum for the week, and what previous activities they had already engaged in. Real Talk was routine on Saturdays, but Crew Members often participated in a workshop or activity in addition to (or in lieu of) Real Talk. For example, one week they might screen a documentary on food justice, and the next Saturday they would be in the kitchen learning how to cook collard greens picked from the fields, followed-up by a conversation with the resident nutritionist about the amount of sugar found in soda, sports drinks, and juice. The market Crew always returned to the farm in time for Real Talk. If Real Talk was not scheduled, the Crew would often engage in a simple activity such as a game or journaling exercise, but never returned to fieldwork or other strenuous task.

Part 1: A Saturday of Real Work

This section characterizes the beginning and flow of the day.
3. **A warm welcome to work**

(This scene is recreated from February 16th, as youth arrived on the farm)

On a typical morning on the farm, Crew Leaders Heather, Erin, and Kyle, and staff Kathy and Nicole, cheerfully awaited the arrival of the bus. As youth arrived to the farm, the adult staff warmly welcomed each person with smiles, hugs, and greetings, acknowledging them each by name as they walked into the Ecocampus. That morning, and every day youth arrived to the farm, the staff affectionately greeted everyone as they arrived. The greeting aimed to set a positive, welcoming tone that participants grew to expect and appreciate when coming to work.

As the program progressed, I observed youth adopting the same welcoming affection for peers. Participants felt appreciated, and the positivity in the greeting helped to set a precedent that youth internalized and came to understand as a culture on the farm. One participant, Kim Robinson, became known for her passionate greetings, which her Crew Leader Kyle Lott recognized her for in a Real Talk session stating *it is so nice to see how excited you are, smiling and giving hugs in the morning*. Participant Frank Jones explained in his exit interview that he was coming to the farm to see the staff and people as much as I was for the paycheck. Frank outlined why the place and space on the farm was “different” for him:

> “Well I guess the staff members there, I feel like its kind of how they present themselves to you. It is loving in a way. I think that is what was different. They really cared. It’s basically just this good mood that is there. Everyday you come to the farm, and you have these icebreakers and you have [Heather] and [Erin] all perky and stuff greeting you, and it seemed like nobody there was faking who they were. It all seemed, you know, like I told [Heather], when in Rome do as the Romans do, so it was just like coming there in that environment you want to be positive” (Frank).

The staff greeting set the tone for each workday and helped to reinforce a culture of positivity, a prelude for the hard, physical labor to come.

4. **Opening circle and energizers**

Following the youths’ arrival to the farm, they began their morning routine. Crew Leader Kyle Lott loudly announced to place all your belongings in the locker room and circle up! Youth hastily deposited personal belongings in individual cubbies in the male and female locker rooms, filled water bottles, finished assembling uniforms, and formed a large circle in the outdoor classroom.
Herded together by the staff, roughly 25 youth organized into the day’s “opening circle”. The opening and closing circle was a ritual used at the beginning and end of each workday. The circle ensured everyone was included and involved – it allowed all participants to see, hear, and observe what was happening within the space. To kick off the day, Kyle – who program staff referred to as the “games guru” – began by saying good morning ladies and gents. Welcome to work! Kyle continued, to begin our day, we are gonna start off with our morning energizer which is called “Where The Wind Blows”. Opening games were referred to as energizers and icebreakers. They were used to get things started for the workday on the farm. Kyle described the opening game that Saturday:

Now the way this game works is everyone starts off in our circle facing the middle. One person starts in the middle of the circle and that person is “it”. The person who is “it” starts the game by saying, “the wind blows for everyone who ate breakfast this morning”. Then, everyone in the circle who ate breakfast this morning has to leave the space they are in and move to a new place in the circle that another person left from. The person who is “it” also is looking for a place in the circle, so there is always one person who will be left out of the circle, and that person is “it” for the next round. So you have to find a place in the circle before all the other people who ate breakfast this morning. You can say anything; it doesn’t have to be about breakfast. You can say like, “the wind blows for everyone wearing black socks”, or “the wind blows for everyone who was born in New Orleans”. Got it? Does everyone understand how this game works?

All the youth and staff remained in the circle to participate in the game. Kyle asked his ACL Holly Sutter to be the first person in the middle of the circle. Holly eagerly jumped into the middle and initiated the game, shouting out, the wind blows for everyone wearing glasses. A handful of youth scattered around the circle, giggling and looking for a vacated space in the circle to slide into. A single Crew Member was left in the middle and took over being it. After four or five rounds, the morning energizer was complete.

“Where The Wind Blows” was a fairly common game played during the opening of the workday. In observing this game, the focus was on getting participants moving, allowing them to be young, silly kids for 10 minutes before they started their day together. Different games were played throughout the program with varying levels of focus and intent. Kyle explained staff selected games to encourage youth to have fun and bond, but at times they were used as tools to convey a specific skill or idea. Sometimes the game was paired with an activity or objective occurring that day (Interview with Kyle Lott). For example, the game “Baby I Love You But I Just Can’t Smile” (as explained in Chapter 4) was used to get participants looking other people in the eyes when they spoke. Kyle or another staff member planned the games out in advance.
of the workday. Over time, ACLs took over the task of leading the games, but the staff assisted in helping to align the game with the day’s activities.

After the icebreaker, youth were buzzing and ready to begin the workday. This day, like all others over the five-months, always started with opening circle then a game. This ritual—among others, like Real Talk, helped youth to be present in the moment on the farm, and leave behind things occurring outside this ecosystem. Brett Samuel later recalled how arriving on the farm and participating in opening activities made him feel like “everything from earlier in your day that you were having trouble with just leaves you [when you get there] and for the whole time you are here”

5. Circle Up: The importance of Our Work

After the icebreaker /energizer, Crew Leader Heather Warren instructed all the youth to head into post harvest handling for the briefing of the day’s agricultural task. Upon arrival in post-harvest handling, youth were directed to a large white board set up on a metal stand on the gravel-covered ground. The board sat next to produce washing stations with the program’s goals scripted out in big black letters. Farm Manager Ray Billings greeted all the Crews as they approached, again prodding the youth to circle up.

Youth organized back into a circle, and Ray began speaking,

*before we begin our fieldwork, I want to talk to you about what we are trying to do here.* Ray continued, *the goals of our program are to grow 10000 lbs. of food together over the next five months; 60% will be sold and 40% will be donated. With our sales, we need to earn $15000. Ray stressed the importance of this work for our community, and that what we are doing here is trying to change the culture of the way people eat and think about food, so our job is to make sure people are able to have access to healthy foods in the community. Ray reiterated that what we are doing helps to pay you folks for your time and work on the farm, so it is really important that we stay on task and complete our work with a quick, efficient pace today.*

The review of the goals and reiteration of the *importance of this work* was routine for youth to hear—repeated nearly every day Crew Members were on the farm. In addition to routine oral reviews of the goals by Ray or other staff, participants were reminded of *what we are trying to do here* on a large, 4 ft. x 6 ft. chalkboard that always rested upright on the floor of the outdoor classroom. The chalkboard—frugally painted onto a piece of scrap plywood—depicted colorful chalk outlines of a carrot and watermelon. These represented the increased revenue (watermelon) and poundage (carrot) relative to the overarching goals of “10,000 lbs. of grown food and $15000 earned revenue”. Figure 6.1 shows the chalkboard.
As production and revenue increased, the staff shaded in the carrot and watermelon outlines to reflect the growth. The drawings, and routine oral reminders from staff, were used to reinforce the goals and message the program sought to instill in participants. Crew Member Holly Sutter explained in her exit interview the role of the goals,

_We are reminded about our goal here every week, so we know where we are at, and what we can improve on to reach our goals (Holly)._ 

Holly’s reflection indicates the role program goals played for youth in understanding what they were trying to accomplish together on the farm.

6. **“Observational walk” in our fields and farm**

At times, after youth were briefed on the work and program goals, they walked the farm to observe the change occurring around them in an “observation walk”. I recreate a scene from an observation walk early on that same February day when all youth remained on the farm. After the goals were discussed, Ray explained all Crew Members would be _doing one more activity before we get out into the fields._

Ray asked the youth, _in the weeks that you have been here, what changes have you noticed about our farm?_ Staff was calculating in using this language in referring to the farm. The pronoun “our” was used to insinuate broader inclusion and ownership of the farm for youth participants. Making youth feel

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**Figure 6.1:** Photo of Chalkboard outlining production goals in poundage and dollars

Data Source: Schoop’s field camera
ownership through language and the goals helped make the work meaningful. Participant Jenny Elliot explained this was meaningful to her because it was not like we were just doing work for ourselves.

We are not just doing work for ourselves, but our work is meaningful because we are growing food that we are selling and we are making money for our farm to keep it running, so not just doing something but doing something that is meaningful (Jenny).

Following Ray’s question about change on the farm, Frank Jones raised his hand and shouted out, the crops are starting to get bigger, I see a difference in how things are lookin’ out in the fields. Ray praised Frank for being observant and thanked him for volunteering and sharing. Ray expounded on Frank’s comment, yes, things are starting to change here, and as we plant other vegetables in our production going forward, you will really start to see things grow. And today, before we move into the field, I want you to try and take a look around out here. All of you will take a short “observation walk” around the farm and fields. For the next 10 minutes, I want you to be silent; there will be no talking. I want you just take a look around and really think about and observe what is really going on out here. Pick up the grass and leaves, examine things, what do you see? What do you smell? I want you to observe what is really happening here. Use all of your senses - smell, touch, sight- what is out here. Does that make sense?

Ray then urged the youth onward – for the next 10 minutes, go at it! Youth, a bit unsure of what they were supposed to be doing, set out and wandered the farm for the next 10 minutes, picking up leaves here and there, bending down to assess the budding kale, broccoli, radishes, and other winter crops growing in the fields. After 10 minutes passed, youth trickled back into the post-harvest handling area and regrouped in the circle to debrief and call out what they saw,

- I saw dew on the kale in the bayou field! (Frank)
- I saw a dead bird next to the road! (Anne)
- I found a yellow flower growing underneath that big tree but it didn’t smell like anything. (Jimmy)

After a few more responses, Ray wrapped up the observation walk, encouraging Crew Members to continue to observe and pay attention to what is happening around you. The observation walks took place periodically throughout the program (roughly 6 to 7 times).

The “observation walk” was a deliberate program component utilized to expose youth to the natural elements and changes occurring on the farm. Other activities were built into the curriculum to teach youth about nature and farming. Examples included lessons about what is in the soil, the crops we cultivate, the history of the land, and symbiotic relationships between insects, plants and the earth.
7. Working outdoors

Youth had different levels of experience working outside in nature. The diversity of youth in the program led to different levels of interest and experience in the outdoors coming into the program. Some, like Kevin Bishop and Julie Johnson, explained in their job interview that they wanted to learn about farming, but for others, such as Kristen Brown and Kim Robinson, it was the very first time they would be working and spending time outdoors. When asked in their exit interviews, “how did you like working outside”, youth were mixed in their review. Table 6.2 offers a selection of responses from youth relating to the outdoor work.

Table 6.2: Participant perspective of outdoor work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Perspective of Outdoor Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brett Samuel</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>“Well it was really hard for me sometimes, like when it was hot out, and I don’t really like playing in the dirt. I’d never done that before, and I would be like, “oh lord, I am dirty and I don’t like this”, but you get used to it after a while”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Bishop</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>“I liked it a lot. I am a person who loves being outside, so it was good for me…. Here [the work] was all connected in someway, you know? We were connected to nature by working outside with the land, so it was a good experience being able to do that. I think it makes you feel differently than if we were just stuck inside somewhere like in school or something”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne Macmillan</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>“The bugs and the scuffle hoeing – I didn’t like that. It was too much nature sometimes. The camping trip, ugh, I was too paranoid from all the things like the ticks, and getting bit up at nighttime”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie Smith</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>“You know, I really enjoy it. I don’t know how it affects people in general, but I like hands on things. Working outside, you get close to nature. It makes me feel free in a certain sense because nature is wild, like you can release yourself a bit. Like I remember when it was raining really hard one day, and everybody was sort of hesitant but I liked it, jumping around in puddles in the mud, its like a release you get to experience by being outside working here”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Individual interview with youth participants at conclusion of program

Anne and Brett explained they did not enjoy the various levels of the outdoor work. Brett felt it was hard because it was hot out and he didn’t enjoy playing in the dirt. For Anne it was the bugs and the scuffle hoeing (a scuffle hoe is a tool used by youth to till up the soil) and overall too much nature sometimes. Other participants enjoyed working outside because of how it made them feel. The sweat and heat, and being connected to nature through the work was valued. Kevin valued the experience because he
loves being outside and it made him feel differently than in school because he was not stuck inside somewhere. Katie explained that she enjoyed the work and getting close to nature because it made her feel free...because nature is wild and you can release yourself. The differences in youth reflections on nature revealed the mixed perspectives of the outdoor, physical labor.

Youth faced harsh conditions—sun, rain, wind, heat, dirt, humidity, insects, snakes, spiders, and fire ants—of spring and summer in Southeastern Louisiana. The program was designed around the natural landscape of an urban park. The farm/campus is adjacent to original bayous, surrounded by cypress trees and other natural flora and fauna found in Louisiana wetlands. Heather Warren (Director, founder) sees the role in nature and farm work as something that puts youth on balance with one another. Heather explained nature and farming played into the concept and design of the program, and how each youth is experiencing nature, the farm and space for the first time.

“Nature is bigger than society... that metaphor plays out here [on the farm]... it’s like a level playing field that way. Nobody really knows how to farm, nobody really has spent a lot of time outdoors, facing the heat and sun in New Orleans... Its kind of a new landscape for them, and it’s this whole natural environment that’s actually far bigger than human interaction.”

Heather implies that nature plays a significant role in the work and the type of change the program is aiming to cultivate in two ways. The first is through an ecosystem metaphor that plays out on the farm through the cultivation of crops and young people through farm work. The second is that each Crew Member is equally bad at farming, entering this new landscape on equal footing, encountering the heat and sun in New Orleans for the first time. The idea of human interaction according to Heather reflects that the space allows people to grow in their own way through experiences and connections with nature and other people on the farm.

8. “How to weed”

Before youth began the agricultural task for the day, Ray and Crew Leaders briefed youth on what they would be doing for the morning in the fields (that is similar to most Saturday’ mornings in the program). Ray explained on February 16th.

the majority of our work this morning will be spent in the fields weeding and making sure our crops our getting the care they need so we have things to sell at market when we begin next week.
Before venturing out into the fields, Ray first demonstrated the task and connected the task content back to the ecosystem. For example, the first weekend in the program (February 2nd) Ray asked the youth, *why do we weed?* Ray allowed the youth to ponder the question for a few seconds and continued, explaining *weeding is important in cultivation of plants to ensure our produce have enough nutrients and opportunity to grow. We remove the weeds to help our crops grow up to be strong and healthy because weeds take nutrients out of the soil, which are important to help the plants bear fruit.*

Ray also instructed the youth on how to properly remove weeds from the ground. Down on this hands and knees in the dirt, Ray pulled a weed from the earth with little ball attached to the end of it. He explained,

> the majority of the weeds we encounter out here are called nut-sedge, which is a grass that produces offshoots from a small nut that lies a few inches under the soil. The best way to weed this thing is to go after the nut, so you take your fingers and dig into the soil to find the nut and pluck it out. If you only pull on the actual grass, the blade with snap off and the nut keeps producing the grass.

Ray went on to explain the importance of doing the task *the right way* to make all of our *jobs a lot easier.* He stressed *pace and efficiency* in weeding, and recognized that *it can be difficult to get the nut-sedge out of the ground, so for today, just focus on being efficient.* He concluded saying that pace was important but *the more you weed, which you will do a lot of over the next five-months, your pace will come.*

Ray demonstrated how to weed the first week youth were on the farm, so a second demonstration was not necessary as youth embarked out into the fields.

Weeding was the predominant agricultural task youth engaged in on the farm in the spring and summer portions of the program. When asked later, whether there was anything “you didn’t enjoy about your work or was anything difficult for you”, participants often reflected on weeding the fields. Youth understood the importance of weeding to the process of the farm, but they did not enjoy it. Holly Sutter explained,

> “I kind of didn’t enjoy weeding, weeding the farm. I know that if it wouldn't have been done, we couldn't have sold or grown [our crops]. It is a small task that I don't think many people like, but it helps in the long run. So I really learned to accept it” (Holly).
9. **Agricultural work**

Participants also spent Saturdays and other working hours in the fields transplanting, planting, leveling beds, removing rocks from the soil, trellising tomatoes, harvesting, washing and preparing produce for sale at the market. These tasks rotated depending on what needed to happen, week-to-week and within the crop cycle, to ensure the plants were on schedule to produce fruit. Each task was integral to the cultivation and involved varying intensity of physical labor and technical skills.

**Planting and transplanting**

Planting and transplanting occurred occasionally in fieldwork. Youth worked with different types of crops, planting seeds and starters in the soil. Starter plants were incubated in a greenhouse near to the farm. On a two or three occasions in the spring, youth transplanted plants from soil-starter kits into the beds in the fields. Other fieldwork involved planting seeds directly into the soil. Youth planted seeds in a small herb garden one time early in the spring of the program.

**Trellising tomatoes**

Trellising involved staking tomatoes using wooden posts. The tomato plant is secured to the post by tying one end of the twine to the base of the post, and the other to the stem of the tomato plant. The trellis is used to assist the growth of the tomato. Tomatoes naturally grow as a vine, and as the plants begin to bear fruit, the plant cannot withstand the weight. The trellis supports the plant as it grows, and trains the vine to weave around the stake and twine. Trellising the tomato plants was a labor-intensive task. Youth cited this as a demanding chore in fieldwork because of the technicality, repetition and precision it required getting the tomatoes anchored properly to the stakes.

**Tending to the soil**

On occasion, youth were tasked with leveling and clearing soil. Clearing the soil was similar to weeding. Youth bent over and kneeled onto the earth to remove submerged stones, seashells, and other debris from the soil. Similar to weeding, when the soil was dry and cracked, it was harder to remove the debris, so youth were provided with a small spade or other hand tool. In addition to clearing the soil, at
times youth were responsible for leveling the beds containing the crops. Rain and water displaced soil, compromising the rows and integrity of the vegetables, and youth shoveled and raked the soil to reshape and add dirt to the beds.

**Harvest and post-harvest**

Harvesting typically began on Thursdays with Crew 1. On Fridays, Crew 2 and 3 worked to complete the remaining harvest and prepare the crops for sale at the market. Crews 2 and 3 usually had to work feverishly on Friday picking, washing, weighing, bagging and sealing produce to ready it for the next day’s market sales.

The harvested vegetable and crop cycle determined the amount of labor in harvesting. Larger vegetables such as tomatoes, potatoes, eggplant, and zucchini were easier to pick and required less precision and patience in removing the fruit from the plant. Leafy greens such as arugula, lettuce, green and purple kale, and rainbow Swiss-chard required more care in harvesting. Youth used a pair of small scissors to delicately snip off the leaves from the plant, and diligently layer them one-by-one within a bucket or crate. After the leaves were harvested, they were carried into the post-harvest handling area for preparation for sale.

In post-harvest handling, youth washed and packaged the produce. Lettuce and greens were washed in industrial salad-spinners, while other produce were cleaned and rinsed in one of the three compartment sinks. The larger produce did not require packaging, so after washing they were placed in cold storage on plastic pallets. After the lettuce and salad mix was dried out in the spinner, a portion was weighed out on a metal scale. The mixes were then placed in clear, plastic cellophane bags, and stored in the cold storage unit for sale at the next day’s market.

The look and presentation of the greens and produce was an important element of harvesting and handling. Customers at the farmers markets were picky about the appearance of the produce, so youth were instructed to take extra care when handling the vegetables.

The post-harvest handling of the produce was a highly sought after assignment. Youth seemed to like this aspect of the work because it took place in the post-harvest handling area in the shade, and it did not require participants to be out in the dirt, digging in the fields. Because the tasks were more specialized,
Ray and Kathy, the agricultural team of the staff, were selective in who they would appoint to “post-harvest handling”.

10. **Intentional pairings for farm tasks and fieldwork**

The partnering and pairing of youth in agricultural tasks was intentional. Typically, Ray paired participants with peers in individual crews. The rationale behind the pairings varied. Staff often conferred during weekly staff meetings on how to best use and structure the time youth spent together in the fields. In attending the weekly meetings, I learned the objective in pairing youth in fieldwork was to get different types of people interacting. Staff paired participants based on strengths and limitations in fieldwork; to encourage and build connections between diverse youth; and to mix personalities concerning youth’ temperament and openness; and to push youth toward specific programmatic goals, adapting as needed.

At times, Ray and Crew Leaders matched participants based on strengths related to fieldwork. For example, Kevin Bishop, one of the strongest fieldworkers in the program, was periodically paired with fellow Crew Member, Kristen Brown, who often struggled in fieldwork to keep pace.

In some instances, pairings were designed to encourage youth to open up. Early in the program, for example, Heather Warren matched Brooke Jefferson with Crew 1’s ACL Will Stafford. From personal observations and reflecting on Brooke’s Real Talk, Brooke was a very quiet, reserved young woman, while Will was very outspoken, boisterous, and confident about speaking to anyone. Heather used Will’s personality to help Brooke break out of her shell through interacting and conversing in the fields.

The pairings were also used as a response to emerging issues staff witnessed and encountered in work and activities on the farm. On another occasion early in the program, Crew Leader Kyle Lott explained in a staff meeting that he overheard participant Jonathan Tyler making a comment to a peer implying “they all look alike”, in reference to a white Crew Member in the program. This prompted the program staff to utilize pairings in fieldwork to attempt to overcome this issue. The next few sessions of morning fieldwork, Jonathan was paired with Allison Marx, a white female, to increase interaction and foster a relationship. Not every pairing was this selective and intentional, but at times the program staff looked to capitalize on the opportunity to connect diverse youth through the work.
Crew Leaders observed the youth at work and in their interactions in these pairings. The teamwork during farm tasks acted as a platform for Crew Leaders to understand their youth Crew Members and diagnose how to alter/influence youth perspectives and encourage the types of change they were seeking.

11. **Teamwork in the fields— weeding together to grow something meaningful**

After the partners were fixed, youth set out into the fields in rubber boots and gardening gloves, carrying plastic buckets and pushing wheelbarrows. In crews, over the remainder of the morning youth weeded two of the largest fields on the farm. Weeding and agricultural tasks were usually scheduled for Saturday mornings to avoid the heat of the midday sun. As the program season advanced, the weather got warmer and the heat became more difficult for youth working in the elements. The sun baked the fields, causing the soil to become dry, hard and cracked, which posed challenges to digging up the weeds. However, on this particular day in the weather was cool and ground was damp. Still adjusting to the task of weeding, youth worked at an erratic pace. They filled their plastic buckets with handfuls of nut-sedge and other weeds, dumping the buckets into wheelbarrows, and hauling them off to a designated composting area. This was the typical routine for weeding.

Agricultural tasks were always completed in individual crews (operating in pairs) led by the Crew Leader and Assistant Crew Leader. Time in in the fields served as an opportunity for youth to chat, open up, and learn about one another to help pass the time. I overheard youth discussing issues in the field related to the *program and people on the farm, events and activities in school, and things they were planning to do when they finished the workday*.

I frequently participated in fieldwork activities with the youth, observing and documenting what was happening in my field notes. I offer an excerpt from an experience weeding with youth in the field to recap a conversation between Crew Members Jeff Logan and Will Stafford of Crew 1. Will (black male from the 7th Ward attending Madison High) and Jeff (white male from Gretna attending Adams High) were different people but they connected through the fieldwork and the work together in their Crew:

*Will and Jeff talked about how they have been hanging out outside of the program. Will (black) and Jeff (white) discussed playing the card game “Magic” with another former Crew Member/Alum’s (Dan Harris) in his basement. Will discussed home life, how they use to play at his house but now lives with his father because mother moved in with boyfriend who Will doesn’t get along with, which is why they play at Dan’s house. Jeff made joke about how they should*
invite Will’s mother’s boyfriend to play Magic with them and maybe they could go back to playing there, Will laughed.

Fieldwork provided a platform for youth to engage. Simple interactions and conversations in the field helped build connections between peers. They used the work as an opportunity to joke, laugh, and learn about each other, which led to a relationship off the farm. Not every participant formed this type of friendship that extended outside of the workplace, but Jeff and Will present a single example of how fieldwork fostered conversations grow relationships.

Participants explained performing the work together in crews and pairs made the time pass and the job more enjoyable. Another Crew Member Lisa Charles explained in her exit interview why she enjoyed fieldwork:

“I really enjoyed the fieldwork, even the hard days in the sun with all the weeding. [What I liked about it was] the bonding, we had a chance to be together and have fun and bond... Of course working in the sun is hard, but I still had a couple people that were always there around me, doing it together, and we could have fun and talk a lot. And when it was really hot, you know, we would help each other. My ACL was always reminding me to make sure I drank enough water, and not pay attention to how hot it was. So the people around you are going through the same thing as you, like it’s a group effort” (Lisa).

Lisa took advantage of the time together in the fields to have fun and talk a lot. In an interview, alum and former Crew Member Dan Harris recalled what it was like during his time in the program, explaining similar sentiments, whether it was “weeding or working with each other picking food or whatever, you got to talk to the person while you’re working”. Dan explained the consistent interfacing with peers “kind of like forces you to talk to everyone and like actually open up. Not just like stand off in the corner, which helps you get more comfortable and learn about other people. We go through the program together, so I think it [was] important for us to learn about each other”.

The bond built with peers in the work was an important factor in keeping youth engaged and involved in the program. In her later exit interview, Crew Member Anne Macmillan described a feeling of “family” that was fostered through the hot, hard work in the fields.

“Even though its hot and its hard, you are sweating and feeling like you are bleeding to death, even though all that, once you come back out of the field, you start talking and you are with your people here, all that heat and everything is worth it. Its like doing all that in the heat together, and coming back talking to people that feels like family… that’s why you do it” (Anne).
Anne felt engaging in the work with her “people” made it more meaningful and encouraged her to want to stick with it and complete the job.

Fieldwork occurred nearly everyday over the five-month program, typically lasting between two and three hours. Youth revealed that working side-by-side was an important factor to cultivate relationships with peers. Allison Marx connected the relationships built in the fieldwork to her desire to want to “be there” and support the team in accomplishing the goals:

*If I quit or don't show up, they [my crew] will still be struggling, you know, I wanted to help. It is also like the food and the goals [of the program]. I want to be there when we reach the goals. I want to help, and like, when a lot of people are not there, it would be really hard. You know that you matter in the field. When a lot of people are absent, the fieldwork would be like ten times harder. So if I am not there, then it would be harder for them, so the only person I would be helping is myself. It is not like they would benefit from me leaving. So that made me stay and want to stay (Allison).*

Allison recognized that her Crew needed her to get the work done. Growing the food for the community and meeting the goals of the program to support the people increased Allison’s desire to commit and work hard with her Crew.

12. **Seeing the world through different colors - diversity and multiple perspectives**

Through these intentional pairings, youth interacted and mingled with a diverse group of young leaders. Several mechanisms encouraged youth to open up to one another through Real Work and urged participants to learn from the unique perspectives of peers. Program guidelines (explained in detail in chapter 4, section 4) were integral in providing language to support pairings in the work, and encourage youth to recognize and value varying perspectives they brought into the program. One of the key guidelines encouraged youth to try on things and consider multiple-truths about things in the world may be possible.

To introduce this guideline, Kyle Lott offered a metaphor for how the ecosystem utilized diversity and encouraged participants to recognize the multiple-truths and unique perspectives each individual brought into the system.

After lunch on a Saturday early in the program, Kyle gathered all the youth on the farm together before the afternoon’s activities. He began by asking the youth to look at the trees and grass out in the field. As the youth observed the landscape, Kyle asked them to quietly reflect and think about what you see out there. Then, after roughly 30 seconds, Kyle asked for volunteers to explain what they saw. Brett
reflected that I see the grass is long and needs to be cut!, while Katie was more descriptive, seeing lush green grass and the wind blowing the leaves. Kyle followed up, asking does everyone see the green grass that Katie does? The youth nodded. Kyle then explained that I don’t see green grass out there. To me the grass looks gray because I am colorblind, so what color is the grass? Kyle utilized this metaphor to explain to youth that it is possible that you see the green grass and I see gray grass but does that mean you are right and I am wrong? Kyle explained that there are things in the world that have multiple-truths, and it is important for us to recognize that not everyone may see things the same way you do. We should try on other people’s ideas and understand where they are coming and recognize that we don’t all see things the same way.

This metaphor was reflective of how the staff harnessed diversity and multiple perspectives as an educational tool to encourage you to recognize that we all see the world through different colors.

13. The Closing Circle

Saturday’s concluded at 2:30 pm. Youth eagerly awaited the call to circle up to close out the day. Staff alternated in duties of opening and closing activities. On this particular day, Heather was in charge of closing things out.

Heather came down the stairs from the upstairs office with Erin right behind her carrying a stack of papers. It was also payday for youth, and the checks would be distributed before youth departed the farm. As Heather approached, Kyle organized the “Closing Circle” hollering out if you hear me, clap one time! Only a few youth clapped, so Kyle continued in his southern drawl, again bellowing if you can hear me, clap two times! This time most of the youth responded with a simultaneous clap! Kyle shouted would everybody please circle up in the outdoor classroom. Participants moved quickly into the classroom and formed a circle, excited for their first payday and that the end of the day had arrived.

Heather began, good job today everyone. Would someone like to close us out on what we did today? Crew Member Bryan Miller, always one to step up, shot his hand up and offered a recap of the days events, explaining in chronological order the activities participants engaged in. Following Bryan’s recap, Heather asked for a one-word reflection from everyone in the circle on how they were feeling at that moment or about the workday. The one-word reflection was used frequently as a closing ritual to get
everyone in the circle to reflect and think about what occurred during the workday. One-by-one youth and staff moved around the circle offering one word. Some Crew Members used generic reflections like tired, hungry or hot, while others applied a bit more depth describing feelings of excited, energized, or proud related to the experiences of the day on the farm.

After the one-word reflections, Heather asked Ray to give his assessment of the performance in the fields. Each Saturday (and some Thursdays and Fridays after fieldwork) Ray offered a “grade” for the youth on how hard they worked during morning weeding in the field. Ray is known by staff for high expectations of the youth in the field. He determined the grade for all youth in the field as a team, based on hard work, pace in the fields, how quickly youth transitioned in and out of tasks, and the general level of energy and focus in the field. Ray never singled out an individual Crew Member in his assessment unless it was for something positive, often giving a shout out to an individual for great job helping Kathy in managing the team washing and bagging the lettuce in post-harvest handling or excellent pace in the field during a difficult day trellising tomatoes. On this day, Ray did not have a lot of accolades for any single performer. Instead, he jumped right to the grade for the performance, submitting a grade of a low ‘B’ to the whole team, saying (paraphrased from my field notes):

*Our pace could have been much better in the fields. We had a lot of ground to cover, and we got most of what we needed to done, but I think overall we could have moved a lot quicker. I want you all to really focus on improving your pace when we are weeding. The efficiency is starting to come. It takes time to get it down, but I think you all can improve the pace and help support each other in the work. As the weather starts to heat up, it will get tougher, so just be aware and really help each other push your pace.*

Following Ray’s assessment, Heather shared instructions related to paychecks and taking home produce. She turned it over to Erin, the administration lead for the program, who reminded youth to sign the clipboard indicating you received your paycheck after you receive it. Erin then encouraged everyone to make sure you grab some of this delicious produce! We have some amazing daikon radishes and some yummy greens for you to take home to your families. Much of the donated produce (i.e. 40% of the production total) during the program was taken home by youth to their families. After Erin’s announcements, Heather officially closed out the day with a quote.
Quotes and parting words were common to send participants home on the bus. On this day, Heather explained, *this is one of my favorite quotes. It is another one from Rumi, a famous 13th century poet, who said “friend, our closeness is this; wherever you place your feet, feel me in the firmness under you”. Have a good rest of the weekend everyone!*

After, Heather explained that with the quote she wanted to reflect the connections and support youth were beginning to build with each other.

**Part II: Real work: it’s not just about the money**

Part II describes the role of youth in the work, and what relevant, meaningful work is on the farm.

14. **Relevancy in the work – They come for the money, but that is not why they stay**

Youth participation in the farm work is necessary to sustain the program and maintain the living plants and soil to grow and sell produce. Their work was important to sustain the farming and meet goals. In exit interviews, when asked, “what made you want to do the program”, roughly 80% responded that the reason they wanted to participate was to earn money because they viewed the program as a job. When asked whether they would have “done the program if they didn’t earn money, nearly the same proportion (approximately 75%) explained that they would not have done it without getting paid. Many elaborated on this idea, sharing that it was the money that drew them in, but the other elements made them want to stay.

Participant Brett Samuel explained in his exit interview that “the money was nice because it really helped me want to do this program” and followed up stating that after he was on the farm he “maybe would have even done it as a volunteer”. Other participants expressed similar feelings. Jeff Logan explained “now I might say I would have done it without getting paid, but it would have been harder to say that at the start. In the beginning, back then, I don’t know if I would have [have done it without getting paid]”.

Allison Marx felt the money was really important because of the “hard work” and it was a point of “pride to get money”. Allison explained she wouldn’t do the program without getting paid “because of the fieldwork and everything. It was hard work. Also, I feel like being paid teaches you that for all your hard work, you will get rewarded. I feel like it gives you a lot of pride to get money”.
Participant Rachel Webster agreed with Allison sharing “I wouldn’t have done it if I didn’t get paid” but she felt there was a lot more to it than just the money. Rachel continued, “it’s the people and the place, like you feel welcome to be here and that everyone really wants you to be here, so for me I didn’t ever want to not show up and let people down, like we are all part of a team like a big family...The money is like a bonus and just to be able to say I have a job, you know that is important”.

Staff agreed, explaining that money is an important reality. Crew Leader Erin Lee explained her perspective, referencing Kyle Lott’s thoughts and supporting youth perspectives above:

“I will repeat Kyle’s quote in that “they came for the money but that’s not why they stay”. I never want to underestimate the power of money, especially for the lower 20% [socioeconomically], so I know there is a level that we need to acknowledge of youth needing money. Whether that is for contributing to their family, or school uniforms, or whatever, I think a lot of times money for teenagers what they earn from jobs is talked about as just pocket money for them to buy CDs. I really don’t think in New Orleans we are talking about that. There is a real financial need from a poverty standpoint; so young people do actually need to be paid. All these other benefits they are getting from the farm, resources, training, job skills development, I still don’t think I am willing to give up the fact that for a lot of young people it is still about the money, especially in a community with so few good jobs for them. There are so few jobs” (Erin).

The money proved to be an important factor in getting many youth into the program. As Erin explained, for a lot of young people it is still about the money. The money encouraged youth to apply and stay in the program, and played an important role in keeping youth involved.

15. Relevant and meaningful work – seeing the fruits of our labor

On Friday, March 1st, after youth spent a day in the fields harvesting, I discussed the day’s experience with participant Frank Jones. Frank was particularly excited about the work he was doing that day. Youth had harvested salad mix, radishes, and kale, and prepared it for sale at the market the next day. It was the second month of the program, and youth were beginning to see what Frank called the fruits of our labor. Frank reflected on the day’s events explaining,

I want to understand and see the real impact my work is having. Someone is going to eat this (holding up a radish), so that gets me excited. I care more about all the work going into it knowing that I get to see how this turns out. Today, we really are starting to see the fruits of our labor.

At the conclusion of his work on the farm, Frank returned to this idea in his exit interview, referring to it as a sense of accomplishment. Frank explained,
"When you pull a weed up out the ground, you see that it is gone and there ain’t no sub-weed to it or second guessing about whether that weed is still there... so I guess being able to see that the work I was doing was accomplishing something. You know in other things, like if I study hard for a test or something and I did my best or thought I gave it my all, there is still a chance that I didn’t do well and I didn’t accomplish what I wanted, but on the farm what you put into it is what you will get out. It’s like you know that you did that, and when you harvest you see like “oh this came up and is something we can eat now". Like this thing could have died but it didn’t because we took care of it and now we are getting produce from it. So stuff like that mattered” (Frank).

The work youth engaged in over the course of the program required a lot of time in the fields, which allowed them to interact with the plants and see with their own eyes how things changed over time. As Frank explained, the plants could have died, but didn’t – because we took care of it. This brought Frank and others a sense of accomplishment. Crew Member Jeff Logan expressed a similar sense of achievement and pride in his work. Jeff narrated an encounter with a particularly hot, difficult day in the field:

> There was one day in our crew early on. Our crew approached this field, which was all dry and cracked dirt, and just full of weeds, and our job was to take the shovels and dig these big trenches. It was one of the afterschool, it was a Thursday I think, so we were digging and I got calluses and blisters on my hand, and I was just digging, digging, digging for like the entirety of that day after school. And like, it was probably one of the hardest if not the hardest days that I worked because we dug these giant trenches. I was so happy when I was finished digging because all we had to do was just level them, and disburse the dirt, and then make sure they were like shelves and even, but I was very proud of myself and my work. I earned myself a few blisters, and right after that it was my brother’s birthday and we went out to eat, and I was just drenched in sweat. I just remember that I felt good about what I had accomplished, and all that hard work. My back hurt for a couple days after that.

The work was meaningful and relevant to youth. It evoked feelings of camaraderie and the ability to be part of something – to contribute to a team, combined with the need for involvement in caring for living plants. One key informant, Mary McKnight from Jefferson High School, explained her view that the work is very real for the students and they feel relevant doing it:

> “The fruits of their labor are very real, tangible things. Something happens to the kids when you bring them into that space. They get support from that environment, but also get something from feeling like they are part of something greater than themselves and that what they are doing and their labor really means something. They are able to recognize the larger cause and their role in why they are there. The work is different and they need to feel relevant…. they get to make a difference while getting paid, which not everyone has the chance to experience... They need to feel relevant and they don’t in schools. I wish we could find a way to make them feel like this in the classroom” (Mary).

Mary was the school-based program contact and intimately familiar with the work on the farm. Four of her current students – Katie Smith, Brett Samuel, Kristen Brown, Kevin Bishop – and several others from Jefferson had experienced the program in previous cohorts. Youth Participants in exit interviews supported
Mary’s perspective, seeing the fruits of labor, feeling accomplished, and the opportunity to engage in meaningful work. Jenny Elliot explained the “work is not just doing something, but doing something that is meaningful”:

“We are not just doing work, but our work is meaningful because we are growing food that we are selling and we are making money for our farm to keep it running, so not just doing something but doing something that is meaningful. Its like, people helping and giving people a structure where they are supported, like in that type of an environment. Like I say its meaningful because its not like we just grow plants, but we are growing things to help the farm, to help keep it going, like we don’t get a lot of outside support so we gotta do what we do to keep things going” (Jenny).

All the hard work and growing things to help the farm made Jenny feel relevant and that the work was meaningful because we gotta do what we do to keep things going. The work involved participation and contribution to a team to achieve greater goals. Youth were necessary in caring for the plants. This made their labor and contributions meaningful and that led to a sense of accomplishment and relevance.

16. Chapter Wrap Up

Real Work is distinctly a key change mechanism in/within /comprising the ecosystem. This chapter describes how it functions to cultivate change in participants, addressing the research question of what elements of the system cultivate change in youth participants.

The daily schedule and the morning and afternoon rituals – the opening and closing circles, the observation walks, and the icebreakers and energizers build connections within youth, encouraging them to open up, participate and take more from the experience. The Real Work creates a functioning, interacting, living ecosystem cultivating food. It – draws youth in by offering pay – but that is not why they stay. They get opportunities to engage in relevant, meaningful tasks. By finding meaning in the work, and connecting to peers through it, all youth reported a sense of accomplishment in the process. They see the fruits of their labor, and how the small things, like weeding, while mundane, are necessary for life and work.
Chapter 7. Change Mechanism II: “Real Talk” on the Farm

“We can only see ourselves through our own eyes – this experience is about helping you grow”

– Crew Leader Kyle Lott on Real Talk

1. Introduction

On February 16, 2013, in preparation for the first session of Real Talk, the program staff ran “Real Talk training” in the outdoor classroom. All the crews –about 30 to 35 people total -- gathered plastic chairs together in a large circle. A small white board was setup for staff to jot notes and draw participant’s attention to certain concepts. The training took place on the first payday Saturday after lunch. It was very early in the program season. Youth participants were learning the ropes and how things worked on the farm. The majority of the original 31 participants were present that day. Heather Warren led, with other Crew Leaders nearby. Heather began the session by asking, “Who has done Real Talk before, here or elsewhere?” and “What is it?” Only three or four youth raised hands. Will Stafford (ACL), jumped in to explain that Real Talk is a way for us to learn our violations and what we are doing right in the program.

Heather followed up asking all youth, “Who in your life tells you if you’re doing something wrong?” No one responded, so Heather continued:

Real Talk is about communicating effectively and powerfully. Everyone has had a time in life when they’ve been scolded for doing something wrong. The goal of Real Talk is not to scold you but to enable you to become powerful communicators and take the skills of it back to your schools and community. We can all be better communicators and convey that message to others around us. The goal here is to help you understand that affirmation and constructive criticism help us to learn about ourselves and others.

Heather concluded, delivering two quotes to the crowd. Heather said she selected these quotes for relevance to Real Talk, and because latter of the two (i.e. Rumi) is a favorite poet:

“It is not from ourselves that we learn to be a better person” – said Wendell Berry, 20th century ecologist/writer.

“If you’re irritated by every rub how would your mirror be polished?” – said the 13th century Persian poet Rumi.

Road Map of Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the process of Real Talk, and how it functions to encourage leaderly growth in youth participants. This chapter helps to answer research question 2, which asks what particular elements of the system cultivate change in youth. Real Talk functioned as a primary
change mechanism within the ecosystem, utilizing Crew Leaders to provide feedback to youth on performance. The use of Real Talk as a feedback mechanism also assists in answer research question 3: how the designed structure of response and adaption in the organizational system influenced change?

This chapter is organization in 9 sections, spanning the vision/goals to the format and schedule over 5 months, to detailed content of selected “Real Talk” sessions.

- In section 1, I introduce Real Talk through the eyes of program founder and director, Heather Warren.
- Section 2 depicts a scene from the Real Talk Circle to describe the setting and what the Real Talk experience felt like for youth participants.
- In section 3, I disclose how Real Talk functions by unpacking the 3 variations of Real Talk, and how each lays out over the program calendar.
- Section 4 recounts scenes from two Real Talk sessions with Crew 1, from the beginning and the end of the program, to reveal Real Talk language and exactly how is delivered and received.
- In section 5, I focus on the open forum of Real Talk within the Crew, and the role it played in fostering connections between Crew Members.
- Section 6 details a session of Intensive Real Talk to reveal the process, content, and experiences participants encountered when receiving and delivering Positives and Deltas to peers.
- Section 7 contrasts two cases of youth – Bryan and Jonathan – and the variations of personalized content each individual received to encourage change.
- And finally, in Section 8, I analyze how individuals responded to Real Talk by dissecting the Deltas expressed to a selection of participants. I present description on how individuals reacted differently to the content received in Real Talk.

**Data Sources and Methods**

This chapter includes various scenes, a program calendar, and thick descriptions of different Real Talk sessions. Content analysis of records helps describe scenes from Real Talk and fill in tables depicting Real Talk language (Positives and Deltas and specific terms/phrases).
To construct the scenes and calendar, and to conduct the content analysis, I utilized various sources from my data inventory.

• Program documents: I reviewed program schedules using content analysis and use these data to recreate schedules and events. Much of these data are taken from Individual Crew Records. Crew Leaders documented the Positives and Deltas for Standard Real Talk throughout the program in this form that was kept in a binder for each Crew (see appendix x with blank form).

• Interviews: I interrogated data from interviews with youth participants and staff. I include quotes and information drawn from exit interviews with program participants, alumni, and staff. These are drawn from transcripts from recorded interviews.

• Field notes and participant observations: I analyzed field notes from personal observations over a year. I participated in, and observed each Real Talk, rotating from crew-to-crew each week. I use these data to recreate scenes during and related to Real Talk. These data offer direct quotes and enrich Real Talk scenarios.

(Note: all terms in italics represent exact phrases used during Real Talk drawn from the researcher’s field notes based on direct observation. Quotation marks are used to quote direct phrases from participants and staff from interviews and quotes documented in field notes. Pseudonyms replace all real names of staff and youth (except the author’s)).

2. **The Real Talk Circle**

   A scene from the farm following Real Talk training later that afternoon with Heather Warren’s crew reveals the quality of communication and spirit of the Real Talk.

   On February 16th, the first Real Talk session for the crews took place utilizing the Standard Real Talk format. Heather worked with her crew for the past two-weeks in the fields and around the farm. Heather guided her crew through weeding and planting, a financial training workshop, and other various tasks participants engaged in during their first weeks on the farm. Heather was still getting to know her crew, but this Saturday marked the first opportunity for Heather to reflect on performance and offer feedback.
Heather circled up her crew in chairs under the old oak tree next to the bayou. It was a cold, blustery Saturday in mid-February in Southeast Louisiana. Heather’s crew huddled tightly together (10 youth facing each other) awaiting their first Real Talk session. In all Real Talk formats, youth were arranged in a tight circle with the Crew Leader assuming a place anywhere within the structured ring of chairs. The two other crews were scattered around the farm and Ecocampus at the same time.

Heather began the session by reiterating the rules of Real Talk. She explained the importance of active listening to her crew and asked them to really hear what I have to say during this process. She stressed nonverbal communication, requested focus, and asked to let her know they were listening by maintaining eye contact and squaring yourself to me. Many youth nodded in the circle acknowledging what Heather voiced.

Heather asked for a volunteer. Rachel Webster raised her hand. Rachel was the newest member of Heather’s crew (replacing a previous Crew Member who dropped out because of a family move). Heather kicked it off by greeting Rachel, “Welcome to Real Talk, Rachel”, immediately engaging her with eye contact. Rachel joined eyes with Heather, nodding to show she was listening and ready to go. Heather glanced down at her notes she prepared in advance of the session with her Assistant Crew Leader, Will Stafford, and dove into Real Talk by beginning with Rachel’s “Positives”. Real Talk always started with a series of Positives followed by the “Delta”. In Rachel’s first Real Talk session, Heather delivered these Positives:

You are jumping right into things here. It hasn’t taken you long to feel comfortable, and you are doing a great job getting used to the farm. I can see you learning more about work everyday and you are very open to trying new things here. You did an excellent job at market. You did a great job sampling and seem to have natural customer service skills.

“And”, not “but”

Without pause, Deltas immediately follow. Heather rolled right into Rachel’s Delta placing an emphasis on the conjunction “and” in the transition, stating:

And I would like to see you bring more of the side of yourself you showed at the market to the farm. I know you are capable so really try and open up to everyone here.

The use and emphasis on “and” in the transition to the Delta was to convey to youth that Positives and Deltas are a package. Staff explained this was deliberate, and they do not want to negate Positives by
implying, “you are really good at this **but** you are not very good at this”, so the language used in the delivery was selective and intentional.

3. **Format of Real Talk**

Modeled after a similar youth development program element called Straight Talk, Real Talk is a structured mechanism of “listening and speaking” where participants explore what it means to communicate effectively (Gale, 2001). The mechanism is used throughout the organization between Crew Leaders and Crew Members, as well as between members of the program staff. Three formal structures for RT are used for the youth program.

At roughly 1:15 pm on a designated “Real Talk Saturday”, each Crew Leader gathered his or her Crew Members in a set location on the farm or Ecocampus. The three most typical locales to conduct Real Talk were in the outdoor classroom, under the old oak tree in an open space next to the bayou, and under the roof in the post-harvest handling area. Each site provided shade from the sun and offered privacy, as all crews conducted Real Talk concurrently. The staff ensured crews had separation during the sessions to allow youth to be fully invested and present in what Crew Leader and peers were saying and hearing. In these three locations, youth were always seated with Crew Leader, Assistant Crew Leader and fellow Crew Members in a tight circle of chairs. The number of chairs in the circle differed based on how many Crew Members were present that particular Saturday. The number of participants varied week-to-week and crew-to-crew. A typical session ranged between 6 and 10 depending on the size of the crew and time of year. (Some participants quit or were fired, others were hired in, and often times a Crew Member or two was absent on a given Saturday.) I observed these Real Talk sessions every other week in the spring and every week in the summer through the entirety of the program.

Real Talk is built around the system of delivering and receiving “Positives” and “Deltas”. Positives and Deltas are described by staff as a package of statements designed to promote change in youth by providing information on performance from the program. I view Positives and Deltas as the paramount feedback mechanism within the program ecosystem. In each Real Talk, youth receive at least two Positives and one Delta. From reviewing and observing Real Talk, I define Positives as constructive statements conveyed to a Crew Member by a Crew Leader or fellow Crew Member, while Deltas are statements
(delivered to Crew Members by a Crew Leader or peer) acknowledging where an individual needs to grow and improve. The organization derives the word Delta from the Greek symbol and letter Δ (Delta), which represents change. Deltas in RT are used for “constructive criticism” of a particular sort: to bring awareness to a participant of where, what, and how they could advance in the work environment. The program standards – (professionalism, commitment, respect, hard work etc. presented in appendix D-- guide the creation of Positives and Deltas. Within each of the three Real Talk formats, youth heard multiple Positives and Deltas. 8 of the 11 Real Talk sessions occurred in the Standard format, 2 were Intensive, and 1 “self-reflective” (Figure 7.1).

Thus, the Crew Leader verbally and personally delivered the bulk of the Positives and Deltas to his/her own Crew Member, and constituted the majority of Real Talk that youth received throughout the program. Other times, youth developed and delivered this feedback to their peers. The structure of Positives and Deltas was the same for all of the three formats, but different individuals create, deliver, and receive the “Real Talk”.

3a. **Standard Real Talk**

Standard Real Talk accounted for eight of the 11 sessions over the course of the program. In this format, the Crew Leader offered one-way feedback to each Crew Member, delivered in Positives and Deltas. Crew Members practiced active listening by receiving Real Talk in this format. Youth learned how to “receive” feedback through eye contact and body language. A typical session of Standard Real Talk lasted about 1 to 1.5 hours depending on the number of youth Crew Members present that particular day. To create Standard Real Talk, the Crew Leader observed and documented reflections over the one or two weeks leading up to the Real Talk Saturday. Before the session, the Crew Leader and Assistant Crew Leader (a former Crew Member) sat together and constructed concrete Positives and Deltas for each youth participant, based on observations from the previous week(s). The Crew Leader generated the content, but the Assistant Crew Leader offered input and reflections. In Standard Real Talk, youth regularly heard more than two Positives but always only a single Delta.
3b. **Intensive Real Talk**

Intensive Real Talk is a two-hour long version with more youth participation. It occurred twice over the course of the program. In Intensive Real Talk, each Crew Member delivered and received Real Talk from all Crew Members – both staff and youth. In Intensive Real Talk, youth communicated and encouraged growth in peers within the workplace, while continuing to receive Real Talk from peers by practicing active listening. Program staff deliberately structured Intensive Real Talk to occur during the middle and end of the program (i.e. the fifth and tenth sessions).

Heather Warren explained the scheduling is strategically designed to make sure youth feel comfortable with the Real Talk system, and with their Crew before requiring participants to deliver Real Talk to peers. In Intensive Real Talk, youth were allowed 20 to 30 minutes to reflect on and write down two Positives and one Delta for each Crew Member, Crew Leader, and the Assistant Crew Leader. Intensive Real Talk also involved all the crew gathering into a tight sitting circle. It began with a volunteer offering to be the first to receive Real Talk from their crew. In the circle, each participant delivered his or her RT to that volunteer (looking him/her in the eye). Then, the process moved to the next person in the circle until each participant heard two Positives and one Delta from all crewmembers. Intensive Real Talk required about two hours to complete, for all 8 to 10 participants (depending on the number of youth in the specific crew plus the Crew Leader and ACL).

3c. **Self-Reflective Real Talk**

In Self-Reflective Real Talk, Crew Members created personal Positives and Deltas. Similar to Intensive Real Talk, it was scheduled in the latter part of the program to allow youth to gain more exposure to the Real Talk process and increase their comfort with each other. Heather Warren explained in an informal conversation that Self-Reflective Real Talk was the most challenging for youth: it is difficult for young people to articulate content about themselves and be honest in their interpretation. Thus, Self-Reflective occurred only one time during the program in April. In this version of Real Talk, youth reflected and critiqued individual performance within the setting of the crew. The process encouraged youth to think independently about strengths and areas for improvement. In the beginning of the session, Crew Members were allowed 20 to 30 minutes of private time to reflect and write down two Positives and one Delta for
themselves, based on how they viewed their individual performance at work up to this point in whole the program. After each participant wrote his or her individual assessment, the crew gathered together in a circle of chairs. A volunteer began by reading his or her Positives and Delta aloud to the group.

Immediately after each Crew Member read their Real Talk Positives and Delta, the Crew Leader provided direct feedback to corroborate and expand on the self-described (each youth’s) Positives and Deltas. Self-reflective Real Talk was complete after each individual youth in the crew shared aloud to each other, and the Crew Leader gave feedback—there was no general discussion. Other members of the crew did not comment on each other’s Real Talk statements – only the Crew Leader provided feedback. This session lasted about 1.5 hours.

3d. Schedule for Real Talk within the Program Calendar

Real Talk occurred routinely within individual crews throughout the program on payday Saturdays. It happened every other Saturday during the spring (January 31st to May 22nd, 2013), and every week in the summer (May 29th to June 22nd, 2013). In total, Real Talk occurred 11 times throughout the five-month program. I observed Real Talk sessions every other week in the spring and every week in the summer through the entirety of the program.

The schedule below presents the frequency of Real Talk across the program calendar. The program began on January 31st with the first Real Talk session occurring on February 16th. The blue “Standard” sessions occurred eight times, the orange “Intensive” sessions happened twice, and the purple “Self-Reflective” once. The final session occurred the on June 21st, the day before the program ended.

Figure 7.1 below depicts the schedule. Formats varied depending on the program curriculum.
Data Source: Recreated using program schedules taken from programmatic documents.

Figure 7.1: Real Talk schedule in the program calendar.
4. First Real Talk for Crew 1 (extended from scene 1 “Real Talk Circle” in section 2)

Table 7.1 below displays the Real Talk statements received by each member of Heather’s crew (Crew #1) from Heather, that first session in mid-February. It was early in the season, and Heather’s crew consisted of nine Crew Members and one Assistant Crew Leader. The content in the table is drawn from programmatic documents kept by the organization, specifically what I refer to as the Standard Real Talk “log”. Over the course of the program, Crew Leaders logged Real Talk utilizing a prefabricated form. The form consisted of a table with rows and columns to note: 1) the date, 2) the participant’s Positives, and 3) the participant’s Delta (see appendix D for the form and real sample entry). The Crew Leader wrote the name of the participant at the top of the page. A separate form was used for each participant. In advance of the session, the Crew Leader would complete the form and bring it to Real Talk. After Real Talk was complete, each Crew Leader placed the form in a green binder, which created the log. The content below are the direct words and phrases Heather noted for her crew in the log. Crew Leaders delivered a minimum of two Positives and one Delta, however as table 7.1 demonstrates they frequently provided more than two Positives.

Table 7.1: Heather Warren’s log from the first Real Talk for Crew 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To Participant</th>
<th>Heather delivered these ≥ two “Positives”</th>
<th>And this “Delta”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jenny Elliot</td>
<td>(1) Super smart – financial training, noticing small details Knowledgeable about many things – field work, experience here before (2) Enthusiasm and curiosity</td>
<td>And you should… “Step back at times”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff Logan</td>
<td>(1) Smart, communicates ideas - good questions and participation at financial training (2) Creative and funny, “electric moccasins” (3) Kind and humble</td>
<td>Open up!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Alexander</td>
<td>(1) Interacts with a lot of people - helped others in the field during potato planting (2) Contributes ideas without being overbearing (3) Excellent pace in the fields – strong capacity for farm work</td>
<td>[show more] Professionalism in work: rocks in bucket*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim Watson</td>
<td>(1) Positive, laidback demeanor (2) Thoughtful, good listener (3) Got paper work in – increasing ability to be responsible (4) Focused work in the fields</td>
<td>Increase your pace!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kevin Bishop
(1) On top of things, paperwork
(2) Open with people when approached
(3) Organized, thoughtful without needing attention
Jump in more! , don’t second guess

Kristen Brown
(1) Bonding with people at work – before, and during break times
(2) Sweet – lookout for people, generous spirit, pride
(3) Always have a smile on your face
[have] More confidence in yourself, come out of your shell

Julie Johnson
(1) Responsible and proactive – committed
(2) Strong work in the field today
(3) Thoughtful participation – sharing out ideas in circle
Open up!

Brooke Jefferson
(1) Proactive about communicating – texting
(2) Visit to LOOP – didn’t hesitate to jump into games
(3) Dedicated and enthusiastic
Stay present; financial training**

Rachel Webster
(1) Jumping right into things here. Feeling comfortable, great job getting used to the farm. Learning more about work everyday, open to trying new things here.
(2) Excellent job at market, sampling, natural customer service skills
Bring more of the side of yourself you showed at the market to the farm. Try and open up to everyone.

Notes: * references a situation where Walter placed rocks in peer’s bucket while clearing the field and soil of stones and seashells so he did not have to carry them in his bucket, which Heather cited as unprofessional/inappropriate behavior. ** references Brooke inattentiveness during a financial training, where youth learned about how to read their paycheck

Early on, Positives often targeted a personal characteristic or acted as a compliment for a young person such as “you have a positive, laidback demeanor” or “you’re super smart”. It was common for youth to receive praise in Positives and encouragement in a Delta related to opening up. Youth heard Positives for feeling comfortable within the program, and were applauded for being open with people when approached. The Deltas also were personal – they encouraged participants to open up, jump in more, and to have more confidence in yourself. Youth heard other content related directly to programmatic standards, recognizing them for hard work for excellent pace in the fields and other contributions at market like sampling and customer service skills. Youth received Positive RT statements related to the commitment standard, calling out a participant’s dedication and enthusiasm. They were acknowledged for modeling professionalism related to completing paperwork on time and being proactive. Deltas generally reminded youth to focus and be mindful of behavior, such as Walter Alexander’s Delta to show more professionalism in his work. Heather cited an example from agricultural work where Walter’s conduct was inappropriate.
When youth worked in the fields weeding, they carried plastic buckets to place their weeds in. Attempting to be funny, Walter placed rocks in a peer’s bucket. The reference to fieldwork demonstrates the common link to an action within the context and setting of the farm. Heather provided each Crew Member unique, personalized feedback observed through interactions on the farm within the program ecosystem. Both Positives and Deltas often were cited in reference to a specific action inside the program ecosystem.

RT on the farm – Scene 2

Earlier in section 2, the “scene 1 from the farm”, I presented the first Standard Real Talk session with Heather Warren’s crew (early on February 16th). I now revisit Heather’s Crew during the last Standard Real Talk of the program in June to reveal the similarities and subtle changes within the context of Real Talk from the beginning and end of the program.

On June 21st, Heather’s Crew had dwindled in size to seven participants. Tim Watson and Walter Alexander quit, and Brooke Jefferson was fired for excessive violations. Crew Member Ben Davis joined Crew 1 for the summer program beginning at the end of May and was present for this Real Talk. The final session of Real Talk for the spring cohort took place on a Friday afternoon, the day before graduation. It was a hot day in late June on the farm. Youth were coming off the camping trip from earlier in the week. The air was full of excitement and anticipation for next day’s graduation. Heather really knew her people at this point. They were together in the sun and rain in the fields, at the market, and visiting sites around the city for the past five months. Participants were on the farm for 32 hours a week in the summer and received Real Talk on a weekly basis. The frequent interaction provided a lot of time for Heather to observe and reflect on how Crew Members were changing and responding to the system. This marked the final session of Real Talk.

On June 21st, Crew 1 casually filled the circle of chairs perched underneath the shade of the outdoor classroom setup for the final Real Talk. In usual fashion, Heather asked for a volunteer. Rachel Webster, expectedly volunteered to go first and prepared for Heather’s feedback. Heather delivered the following Positives to Rachel:

You are a force of positivity, warmth, compassion – you always make things fun! I notice you are speaking up. You have great insights and have been asking a lot of questions.
Heather acknowledged Rachel for personal contributions to the crew for being a force of positivity, warmth and compassion, indicating the continued use of “complimentary Positives” over time despite the pending conclusion of the program on the following day. (Complimentary Positives are further defined in Chapter 8). Heather praised Rachel for speaking up by asking a lot of questions and sharing her insights, signifying the consistent connection to language like “share” and “ask questions” as Crew Leaders directed youth to open up. For Rachel’s Delta, Heather encouraged her to “push yourself” by believing in her own abilities and dreams, and sought to inspire her with a quote.

*Continue to believe in your own abilities and dreams – “hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die, life is like a broken-winged bird that cannot fly”.*

The information delivered in Positives and Deltas to Rachel from the final Real Talk session revealed subtle shifts in content from the first to the final Real Talk. And, it also demonstrated how Real Talk works overtime as a system. In the final session, Rachel now received positive feedback from Heather for opening up (that was earlier offered as Delta): Heather thus recognizes her contributions to the crew through a complimentary Positive. Crew Leaders often utilized Real Talk to reveal to youth their ability to change and overcome a challenge by first noting an action observed in the ecosystem as an area for improvement, and later commending a participant for absorbing the Delta and acting on it. In her first Real Talk, Heather had commended Rachel for her willingness to jump right into things and praised her for being very open to trying new things, but now Rachel was asked to carry these traits into other areas of her work and open up.

In each session (in Feb and in June), the message of opening up remained consistent. Rachel is called out in the first session through Heather’s use of a contextual Positive – great job sampling and natural customer service skills, which recognized Rachel’s contributions from the Real Work of the program. (Contextual positives reflect directly on experiences in work and are explained in greater detail in Chapter 8). Rachel’s first Delta (from February) asked her to bring more of herself to the farm and program, encouraging her to open up to everyone here. Her final Delta differs: Rachel is told to believe in herself and reach for her dreams.

The summary content from the final Real Talk for Crew 1 (Heather’s crew) is presented below in Table 7.2.
Table 7.2: Heather Warren’s log from the final (standard) Real Talk for Crew 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Two Positives</th>
<th>One Delta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jenny Elliot</td>
<td>(1) Always willing to do what needs to be done – cooking, cleaning</td>
<td>Don’t lose sight of that person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) You see me the way I see myself - thanks for the hug</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff Logan</td>
<td>(1) Strong completion of program - dedication, hard work, and attitude</td>
<td>Open up to the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Skit: most amazing impression of Ray I’ve ever seen – humor, observation skills, insight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Bishop</td>
<td>(1) So fun – playing cards, making pizza</td>
<td>Try to walk in someone else’s shows before you judge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) So wise – advising Josh</td>
<td>See your own beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristen Brown</td>
<td>(1) Adventurous spirit – camping trip into the woods!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Way you make others feel about themselves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie Johnson</td>
<td>(1) Ninja skills – poise, focus, intention</td>
<td>Take the bull by the horns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Incredible competence – pizza, skit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Webster</td>
<td>(1) Force of positivity, warmth, compassion – you always make things fun!</td>
<td>Continue to believe in your own abilities and dreams – “hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die, life is like a broken-winged bird that cannot fly”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Speaking up – insights and asking questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Davis*</td>
<td>(1) Really appreciated your Real Talk</td>
<td>Come back, stay connected to us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Strength and focus is inspiring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Best of luck in school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1) Sources are the author’s original field notes based on direct observation; 2)* Ben had joined the Crew recently for the summer program and was not present in February (RT 1, table 7.1)

The scene from Heather’s Crew shows the variation for each Crew Member. Heather responded to each individual based on what they needed to hear. In the final session, she also aimed to impart some final wisdom to push them forward as each person departed the program ecosystem.

In table 7.2, Heather gives continued attention to opening up in Positives and Deltas. Rachel is acknowledged for speaking up in a Positive, while Jeff is encouraged to open up to the world.

Complimentary Positives – poise, focus, and intention – are continued, as well as contextual - always willing to do what needs to be done – cooking, cleaning. These terms were common in every Real Talk session across the program. Crew Leaders focused on actions related to programmatic standards and the work (see Chapter 7) and utilized consistent language to encourage youth to open up. Complimentary Positives were employed to build up confidence in youth and recognize Positive contributions to the program, while contextual Positives acknowledged successes in their work on the farm.
Heather references different activities and engagement on the recent end of the year camping trip, where they did spend 3 days and 2 nights in a state park, engaging in outdoor activities, cooking, bonding and performing skits based off program experiences. (The camping trip is explained in Chapter 4, section 8). Many of the Positives (contextual and complimentary) reference interactions with youth and Heather’s observations from the trip. She comments on Crew Member’ successes and the enjoyment the group experienced together. She admires Jeff for his impression of Farm Manager Ray Billings as the most amazing impression of Ray I’ve ever seen. She commends Julie for incredible competence during the pizza and skit. The program and work, from beginning to end, provided Heather opportunities to get to know the youth, discover how they needed to change, and utilize Real Talk mechanism to express feedback in a constructive way.

In the final session, the content of remarks also indicated greater depth and understanding of Crew Members. Heather identified a clear direction she wanted to push her Crew. It was the conclusion of the program, and because of the number of hours Heather spent weeding, planting, and conversing in the field with the participants, she was intimately familiar with her crew. It was the final session of Real Talk, and they had engaged in 10 previous sessions together. As they concluded the program and time together; Heather encouraged the youth to continue to push themselves to grow. She utilized the final session to inspire – take the bull by the horns and believe in their abilities and dreams.

The Real Talk for brand-new Crew Member Ben Davis reveals the greater depth of understanding of other youth by Heather. Ben was one of two new Crew Members who had just joined the program in the summer, so he had experienced fewer interactions and exposure to everyone and all activities embedded in the ecosystem. Heather thus had limited contact with Ben and her remarks reflect this. She said to him: come back and stay connected (i.e., to the program after it is complete). Heather did not offer a final send off for him as she did with her other Crew Members. Ben’s limited time, and exposure to his Crew Leader and other activities influenced the quality of the relationship. Heather’s understanding of how Ben needed to change was limited because of the time he spent in the system.
5. The role of the Crew and relationships

Real Talk was conducted and structured each time within the same Crew of youth, consistently led by an individual, adult Crew Leader. The previous “scenes” and description of Real Talk illustrate: sessions of Real Talk followed a routine structure - every other Saturday in the spring and every Saturday in the summer – which helped to promote relationships. Each of the 11 sessions occurred within the crew, and the majority of the 250 hours were with the same group of peers.

Evidence from personal observations, reflections from youth participants (during exit interviews and other formats) and program content (logs) illustrate the how these Real Talk offer a forum and a space for peer relationships that played a role in cultivating change in participants.

“We did Real Talk together, so we learned about each other and all our positives and improvements, so if any of my peers were to judge me it would have been somebody on my crew, so they were with me that entire time. I was comfortable with those people and trusted them” (Frank).

This quote from Frank Jones’ exit interview captures the essence of Real Talk exchange in a Crew. Frank shares a common experience of participants transitioning through the program with a single group of youth. Through the process, youth learned about each other and all our positives and improvements. All of the 853 Positives and 253 Deltas given by Crew Leaders occurred within the crew, meaning that all Crew Members were present as others were being evaluated together –they function as part of a microsystem within the larger program ecosystem.

Frank described how Real Talk was something that crews did together and that he was comfortable with those people and trusted them. Crew Member Bryan Miller corroborates Frank’s sentiment explaining that working with the same group of people made it feel like “family”.

“One of the advantages of having the same group of people—it was better because your crew becomes a family—they become from strangers to your brothers and sisters that you have to work together with and reach a goal” (Bryan).

Conducting Real Talk within the crew each time reinforced the relationships youth formed with one another in the work and activities on the farm. Frank’s trust and Bryan’s feelings of family bloomed through interaction with the same group of people within the ecosystem over time. Other youth expressed similar sentiments when asked about Real Talk, their crew, and relationships with peers. In her exit
interview, Jenny Elliot explained that in Real Talk she used it to build up peers because she wanted peers to become a better person.

“Real Talk, for me, it was like to give [other people] my understanding of them, trying to like build up a relationship with another person by telling them this, this and this about themselves, its not just like I am telling them that to just tell them, I am telling them that because I want them to know...because I want you to become a better person” (Jenny).

Alumnus Ben Watson believed Real Talk functioned because of the trust and relationships within the whole environment.

“I think we just get to know each other here so you want to help each other out. I think our relationships were strong so you trust everybody, and the rules and violations we had... it’s just our whole environment. We could trust each other”.

Youth felt a bond within their crew that was strengthened through the Real Talk process. In exit interviews, 100% of youth participants explained that they “liked working with their crew” with many expressing that they had the “best crew”.

6. **“Intensive” Real Talk**

Here, I present and discuss a scene from Intensive Real Talk (within a crew, between peers). Intensive Real Talk offered another forum for youth to build connections, but this time they weighed in on how peers were progressing in the ecosystem. In this format, youth delivered Real Talk to each other. Despite the familiarity with each other, the connections and love participants felt for their peers, some youth had trouble delivering Real Talk themselves. It took place later (April: see figure 7.1).

Intensive Real Talk sessions began in the same fashion as Standard Real Talk. Crew Leader Kyle Lott trotted his Crew out under the old oak tree next to the Bayou. Seated in a circle on hay bales and in plastic chairs hauled from the Ecocampus, Kyle instructed his Crew to compose two Positives and one Delta for each of fellow Crew Member in their notebooks. Kyle explained that in shaping your reflection think back to times you spent together sweating side-by-side in the fields, and how you really have an opportunity to support the growth of a member of our team through the Real Talk process.

After roughly 20 or 30 minutes had lapsed, Kyle offered some reminders before each Crew Member was to deliver reflections. He encouraged each participant to remember what Real Talk is about, asking, how do we grow? then responding, we grow through other people. He continued explaining that we
can only see ourselves through our own eyes, so this experience is about helping you grow. Kyle then repeated the guideline Step up/Step Back, and encouraged youth to be willing to engage and be adventurous in the process, and to let your peers know you are listening through eye contact.

Following Kyle’s thoughts, Intensive Real Talk started. Kim Robinson was the first to receive her Real Talk. Kim received Positives and Deltas from peers consistent with the language Crew Leaders used in Real Talk standards such as hard worker and positive attitude in Positives, and try new things and open up in Deltas. Peers utilized the opportunity to praise Kim, delivering Complimentary Positives for her cheerful mood, good vibes, and positive energy. In the Intensive Real Talk sessions, youth often adopted and reiterated language heard from Crew Leaders in Real Talk. The Real Talk format provided an opportunity for language to be heard and reinforced through the open forum.

Some youth were better than others at delivering Real Talk and creating meaningful Positives and Deltas to support peers. Kim hears from Michelle that she has an attitude when there is extra work, while James simply suggests that Kim get new boots. The content delivered in Positives and Deltas to Kim varied, but each participant was given an opportunity to voice their opinion in Real Talk and contribute to Kim’s growth.

The content in table 7.3 below displays the Positives and Deltas that youth conveyed to Kim, Frank Jones and James Foster (all in Crew 3).

Table 7.3: Excerpts from Intensive Real Talk, Crew 3, April 13th

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crew Member/Recipient</th>
<th>Positives</th>
<th>Deltas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kim Robinson’s Real Talk:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Michelle -</td>
<td>Hard worker, fun to work with, always positive energy</td>
<td>You have an attitude if there is something extra for us to do, stay positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From James -</td>
<td>Cheerful mood, always speaks up</td>
<td>Get new boots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Frank -</td>
<td>Good vibes, always positive and improve the mood of the group</td>
<td>Don’t let people take advantage of how nice you are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Jimmy -</td>
<td>Positive attitude, giving person for sharing food</td>
<td>Try new things and open up, like with food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frank Jones’ Real Talk:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Jimmy -</td>
<td>Good friend, reliable, sharing circle showed you are always caring</td>
<td>Sometimes you look sad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From James -</td>
<td>Not afraid to ask for help, evolving, you are really growing and I recognize you are learning and</td>
<td>Know when its time to step back</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These Real Talk exchanges delivered between the youth are not equally targeted / relevant to guide a participant toward change. It is not clear how he/she could (or should) try to improve from this peer feedback. I observed two sessions of Intensive Real Talk: in both, I noted many youth struggled to identify two pertinent Positives and one Deltas. It seemed challenging for most to clearly articulate useful comments for peers to grow. Frank’s comment to James—*be more lively at work, open up to other people, be excited about what you are doing*, and Kim’s to Frank—*first to raise hand in circle, admit your faults, always willing to receive help*—were among those more pointed and effective in delivering something helpful. Jimmy’s Deltas for all, were repetitive and lacked context from the work place.

Youth explained in exit interviews that the process of delivering Real Talk to peers felt nerve-wracking (Kristen Brown), uncomfortable (Steve Young), and *soooo hard to think of something bad about a person you really care about* (Allison Marx). In my observations, the content delivered to peers was not as significant as the process. Some youth struggled in the documentation phase and looked a little lost despite the continued guidance from Kyle. But, everyone was involved and attentive in the actual delivery of the content. The opportunity for youth to participate and convey Real Talk to fellow Crew Members—peers they knew and grew accustomed to over time—was important in recognizing the role within the system. As Kyle explained, youth were encouraged to use the opportunity to support peers but the involvement in the process seemed equally important.
7. **Real Talk as a system feedback loop**

I present two cases of individual youth – Jonathan Tyler and Bryan Miller who show contrasting trajectories – to demonstrate how Real Talk mechanism allowed Crew Leaders to respond to the needs of each Crew Member. These two cases portray how Real Talk provides tailored feedback but it is highly contingent on the ability of the Crew leader to observe and respond to the individual needs of each youth Crew Member.

**Jonathan: at risk**

Jonathan Tyler was a 19-year-old, black male from a crime-plagued ward of New Orleans. Jonathan’s mother was locked up when he was young, and until recently, Jonathan’s grandmother raised him in a tough, urban neighborhood. Jonathan’s mother reentered his life and played a significant role in ensuring her son was at work on time everyday. Jonathan arrived at the program from the disconnected end of the leadership spectrum. He was classified as potentially disconnected because of issues in school and a history of legal run-ins. He was kicked out of three high schools in New Orleans, and in general, Jonathan struggled with formal education. Through key informant interviews and observations, I learned of Jonathan’s challenges with education and learning disabilities. He lacked confidence in himself and was often ridiculed for his inability to perform in school. Jonathan’s low self-confidence influenced his performance. I observed Jonathan in the beginning of the program as a standoffish young man, who seemed to lack self-confidence. When youth were asked to focus, write, or concentrate on something, Jonathan always checked out. The challenges from school impacted Jonathan’s concentration and confidence in his abilities and activities on the farm.

**Bryan: engaged leader**

Bryan Miller (introduced in Chapter 5) exemplified many leaderly qualities upon entering the program – all-star student, good grades, a scholarship to a major university, and involvement in numerous activities at school. Bryan was an 18-year-old, black male from a suburb of New Orleans attending Washington High School. He came from a stable, supportive family and demonstrated to be a very driven
young man. I observed Bryan to be very social with natural likeability and leadership skills (taken from field notes). He got along with all youth and staff. He thrived in most elements of the work and was a respected member of his crew. Bryan’s challenge related to consistency and commitment. He struggled with attendance at times due to over involvement in activities outside of work.

**Comparing cases – Bryan and Jonathan**

Bryan and Jonathan present two distinct types of participants. Both participants were black males, nearly the same age, hailing from the same city, however each participant led a very different existence, entering the program on opposite trajectories. Bryan and Jonathan’s work and engagement in activities on the farm exposed individual strengths and areas for improvement. Each participant was a member of Crew 2. Crew Leader Erin Lee tailored Real Talk to respond to the unique, diverse needs of each, based on her observations and interactions with them. The table 7.4 below displays the language each Crew Member received from Erin during these sessions.

**Table 7.4: Real Talk content, Crew Leader Erin Lee for Crew Members Bryan Miller and Jonathan Tyler**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Bryan Miller</th>
<th>Jonathan Tyler</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 16th</td>
<td>Positives</td>
<td>(1) Attitude – friendly, willingness to make sure everyone feels comfortable, playful, nice, talk to everyone (2) Participates, adds opinion and input – naming crew</td>
<td>(1) So on top of paperwork! (2) Funny! Comfortable and easily able to get to know you. (3) Making friendships. Great work in the field with Katie.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>Keep awareness about tight friendships from outside work, could make others feel excluded</td>
<td>Your opinion does matter here; focus in, share, and people will listen!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2nd</td>
<td>Positives</td>
<td>(1) Fieldwork – asking for verification of quality of work – how does this look? (2) Cheerful, pleasant to work with – I was cold and you distracted me with our conversation, got to learn about you (3) A little competition on pace was fun – good way to motivate self and others</td>
<td>(1) Very quick pace – raking and flattening beds with Jeff, difficult and efficient work! (2) Positive vibe, funny and friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>Posture, knees bent, no pressure on back</td>
<td>Stay down to earth and find out how it relates to your job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 16th</td>
<td>Positives</td>
<td>(1) Wildly friendly – love getting to know you (2) Commitment to program, wanting to work Thursday for makeup. Pride.</td>
<td>(1) Market performance: Strongest restocker – noticed when to replenish, aesthetics, food safety, clean and neat. (2) Anticipating what is next, helpful with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Positives</td>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>March 30th Positives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>Don’t be nervous to take initiative</td>
<td>Pay attention and eye contact with speaker– market job description</td>
<td>(3) Communicating to Bryan and Lauren when something would run out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) Farmers market – thriving in market environment, learned role quickly brought prior skill,</td>
<td>(1) Accepted challenge to meet people at homeless café – opening up more</td>
<td>(3) Teamwork – offer to give peer a ride to work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) How to talk to customers during interaction – that’s $5 out of $10, $5 change</td>
<td>(2) Excited to be a greater – customer service</td>
<td>(4) Asking a lot of questions – cooking class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Helpful to Katie in inventory – Teamwork</td>
<td>(3) Improving in eye contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>Talk and work eyes on the prize</td>
<td>We always encounter jobs we don’t want to do, but focus on the goal and how you can reach it within the work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) Way to be here! Recommitting to crew, glad to have you back</td>
<td>(1) Perfect attendance! Dependable, reliable, trustworthy – importance of showing up and professionalism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Congrats on coming graduation – shine so bright</td>
<td>(2) Props for Leo for seed bed – solid field worker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Worked harder in the rain yesterday than I’ve ever seen you work – pace, effort, attitude</td>
<td>(3) Excellence at popup</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(4) Funny sense of humor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>Awareness about what you are saying – you don’t know how you could affect someone else by your words.</td>
<td>Let us get to know a deeper part of you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) Volunteer days – no violations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Friend to everyone – back me and all of us up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Ready for college – know yourself, challenge yourself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1st</td>
<td>(1) Speaking up in closing circle – opening up, comfortable</td>
<td>(1) Irony – attendance award – missing you!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Confidence in your abilities and technical skills – lettuce and arugula prep</td>
<td>(2) Excellent convo at lunch – count on you for anything, hard work every moment (cleaning glasses)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Greeting people and adults, welcoming them to the farm – initiative</td>
<td>(3) Humor and attitude great – interviews after game</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Perfect attendance</td>
<td>(4) Attentive, interested, engaged at butcher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>Hang back in hands on tasks – don’t be afraid to make mistakes</td>
<td>Continue to push yourself – seeing real growth, keep going</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) Great to have you back – you were missed!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Hot but dedicated in field</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Take pride in your work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Proactive role, always speaking up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 8th</td>
<td>I challenge you to think about where you can grow in the last few weeks here – light a fire, ignite it</td>
<td>Advocate for yourself – speak out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positives</td>
<td>(1) Working with Julie on Wednesday on peppers – higher skill ag task – really stepping up in ag tasks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Service skills at lunch – polite/manners, grace</td>
<td>(1) Sorry about your eye—take your time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>背 (2) Deep professionalism by overcoming this challenge and showing up – dedication.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) You didn’t have the #1 problem other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 21st</td>
<td>(3) Humor and attitude great – interviews after game</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positives</td>
<td>(4) Attentive, interested, engaged at butcher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Jonathan’s Real Talk Feedback

Through observing Jonathan mingling with peers, in farm work and activities, and through direct interaction; Crew Leader Erin learned the ingredients required to push Jonathan’s leadership’ qualities. Erin often targeted his self-confidence, offering complimentary Positives—to him as a person—for being funny and comfortable and easy to get to know. Erin utilized complimentary Positives to show Jonathan she cared for him and that he possessed important qualities. She also targeted Jonathan’s hard work early on, highlighting the great work in the fields, very quick pace, and market performance, but to a lesser degree.

Overtime, Erin began acknowledging more of Jonathan’s program contributions through contextual Positives, more focused on the work. She targeted his commitment and professionalism, recognizing him for being dependable, reliable, and trustworthy, and continued to focus on his hard work. Jonathan’s Deltas were to open up and share. After hearing Deltas in previous weeks related to opening up, improving focus and maintaining nonverbal communication, at his next session of Real Talk Jonathan was applauded for his ability to improve and change. Erin noted his willingness to step up and for accepting the challenge to open up to new people, while also recognizing him for improving eye contact over the past two-weeks. Erin recognized Jonathan’s strength in hard work, his dedication and commitment to the program through perfect attendance, to build up Jonathan’s self-confidence and reveal to his ability to overcome challenges through Real Talk. The feedback for Jonathan was structured around the programmatic standards, but remained flexible to respond to emerging challenges exposed in the work, Erin targeted Jonathan’s self-confidence to build him up and make him feel welcomed within the ecosystem up until the very end of the program. In his final Delta, Erin expressed trust and know that your crew wants and needs you—This was an important element for encouraging change for Jonathan—Erin had to let Jonathan know continually that he was part of the team and they needed him present in the work and ecosystem.
Without the consistent interaction through Real Work, and Erin’s ability to build a relationship and learn about Jonathan, she would not have the ability to utilize the Real Talk platform to encourage Jonathan and get him to “buy into” the values expressed by the program. Assistant Crew Leader (ACL), Katie Smith explained how hearing something meaningful about himself in Real Talk was important for Jonathan. Katie worked side-by-side with Jonathan throughout the program, and she explained the growth she witnessed in Jonathan through Real Talk.

“I think Jonathan really did change [because of Real Talk]. Hearing something Positive about yourself is important. Like for Jonathan, he gives a perception to people sometimes because, he maybe thinks this about himself, that he couldn’t ever do anything right. Maybe its because of his struggles in school, but in his Real Talk, he heard that people really think he can contribute something, so I think that really did a lot for his confidence” (Katie).

In Katie’s perspective, what her peers heard in Real Talk stuck with them because people “do not always get to hear what they are good at from people they respect”. Hearing something real and authentic from someone youth trusted made the observation more meaningful. Jonathan reflected on how he felt during Real Talk further validating Katie’s observation.

Jonathan: “They said [for my Delta] something’s I need to do like step up. And they said that I was really laid back and that I just did whatever”. Interviewer: Did you know that about yourself? Jonathan: “No”. Interviewer: “How did you feel?”. Jonathan: “I felt good to hear something nice like that”.

**Bryan’s Real Talk Feedback**

The words remained consistent within Bryan’s feedback but the message was unique to his personal needs for growth. Erin’s interactions with Bryan in the workplace allowed her to deconstruct the personal areas for growth. Despite Bryan exemplifying many characteristics of leadership, Erin applied the system to respond to the ways she could help Bryan to advance. He received complimentary Positives for his attitude and willingness to make sure everyone feels comfortable early on. Erin expressed his strength in being open and willing to talk to everyone. Though Bryan clearly had a lot of strengths, Erin nevertheless harnessed complimentary Positives to build him up and make him feel welcome/valued within the ecosystem.
Contextual Positives targeted Bryan’s contributions to the team and his ability to commit and recommit to his work. Bryan’s Deltas demonstrate the change Erin sought to bring about. Bryan was encouraged to be mindful of how tight friendships from outside work could make others feel excluded and was challenged to think about where he could continue to grow in the program. Erin challenged Bryan to hang back in certain tasks (i.e. “step back” in leadership) relating to his tendencies to be the first to speak and lead. Erin honed Bryan’s Real Talk to target the specific elements of his personal character she believed would best promote change in Bryan.

In Bryan’s exit interview, he explained the role that feedback in the system played for him and what he was able to take away from the feedback provided by Erin.

“I guess it was like, uh, meaningful from the people who really cared about us. You know, Real Talk really helped me to try to do my best coming here because some days were really great, but my Delta, my mind was like okay this is my Delta and I really should improve on this, so tomorrow I should come do my best and try to improve on that Delta.

Bryan’s explained that he wanted to internalize his Delta and continue to improve on the feedback he received in Real Talk.

These two cases show how Real Talk can provide tailored feedback that reinforces leaderly growth, but that is highly contingent on the ability of the Crew leader to observe and respond to the individual needs of each youth Crew Member.

8. **Real Talk offers a pathway, but alone is not enough**

Real Talk appears to be an effective feedback mechanism to convey to youth how they are performing in the work environment, and to cultivate positive, valued changes in participants. As the case of Brett shows, the Real Talk system illuminates a “pathway” (or information about their potential pathway) – to positive change. Real Talk, however was not always enough, as the case of Lisa below.

Each Real Talk session offered youth a new opportunity to acknowledge areas of change and reflect on individual growth. In crafting each participant’s Real Talk, Crew Leaders reviewed previous notes in the log, which documented how youth had performed in the ecosystem up to that point. If a participant needed to continue to improve, a Delta was often reiterated, while if evidence from the participant’s performance indicated improvement, the Delta was acknowledged as a strength signifying the
participant’s ability to overcome a personal challenge. Table 7.5 below offers four examples of the use of the Positive and Deltas system across crews and time.

Table 7.5: Four cases of Evolving Positives and Deltas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jonathan Tyler – Crew 2</th>
<th>Kevin Bishop – Crew 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>March 16th</strong></td>
<td><strong>February 16th:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Delta:</strong> [need to] pay more attention and [maintain] eye contact with speaker—market job description.</td>
<td><strong>Delta:</strong> jump in more, don’t second guess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>March 30th</strong></td>
<td><strong>March 2nd</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positives:</strong> Accepted challenge to meet people at [homeless café] —opening up more</td>
<td><strong>Delta:</strong> don’t hold back, find your center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excited to be a greeter [and this is an element of] customer service [that you used to avoid]</td>
<td><strong>Positives:</strong> [I want to give you props for]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[As a greeter] Improving in eye contact!!</td>
<td>Speaking up more and asking questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frank Jones – Crew 3</th>
<th>Lisa Charles – Crew 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>March 30th</strong></td>
<td><strong>April 27th</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Delta:</strong> [...You are letting conversation interfere with your work. You need to learn to] work and talk simultaneously</td>
<td><strong>Delta:</strong> [try to] understand what causes you to feel negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>April 27th</strong></td>
<td><strong>June 1st</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positives:</strong> ...Awesome job multi-tasking while talking to Holly on Friday, internalizing Delta from last Real Talk</td>
<td><strong>Delta:</strong> Take control of your destiny, rise above your challenges. Create safe space more, these things [your challenges from outside the ecosystem] don’t matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>June 8th</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Delta:</strong> don’t dwell on negative thoughts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Schoop’s field notes and program staff logs.
Note: To deliver the Delta, the Crew Leader said something like “I noticed that you….”

Table 7.5 (4 cases) displays selected excerpts of Standard Real Talk illustrating how crew leaders reiterated Positives and Deltas to show youth how they responded to the opportunity to grow.

On March 16th, Erin recounted an example where Jonathan Tyler missed an explanation of his upcoming market duties from Market Manager, Kathy Anderson. Then that morning at the farmers market site, Jonathan’s lack of attention during the explanations led to a real problem for the Crew and Market Leader, Kathy Anderson. Namely, Jonathan forgot his assignment on the job and no one else had been trained for the task. This in turn meant wasted time/delay, reducing the efficiency of the work for his Crew, and leading to extra time for instruction at the market site. In her “Delta”, Erin asked Jonathan to be mindful – pay attention to instructions and use eye contact with speaker to let them know you are listening.
Erin reinforced that Jonathan’s actions (i.e. lack of mindfulness) hurt the people around him. Two weeks later, on March 30th, Erin returned to this lesson to show Jonathan that he had improved in listening, paying attention, and connecting/reaching out through specific, substantive example when he worked as a greeter at the local homeless soup kitchen. Erin returned to the Delta by letting Jonathan know he was *improving in eye contact*. Jonathan never became an expert in public speaking and nonverbal communication, but he improved. The message was tailored around these two specific events to show Jonathan where his performance affected the Crew and an example where he grew. The fact that his Crew Leader, a superior and trusted adult, noticed and publicly acknowledged this improvement apparently fostered his confidence and advanced self-efficacy, which was revealed through an interview with Jonathan’s mother. Jonathan’s mother explained she was seeing changes in Jonathan that she had not witness before:

“He is able to communicate more better with people, which is something he never really liked to do. He never would talk to people on his own, but not he ain’t afraid to go up to anybody now and talk. I didn’t ever see that in him before. He also like workin’ now. He don’t ever want to stay at home. He workin at [grocery store] now. He love workin’.” [Ms. Tyler]

Ms. Tyler attributed the growth in Jonathan — the enjoyment in work and desire to speak more to people — to experiences within the ecosystem.

The examples of Kevin and Frank are similar to Jonathan. Their Crew Leaders (Kyle and Heather, respectively) similarly noticed — and documented in their records — an area for improvement (i.e., the Delta) and later returned to it when the Crew Member *internalized* the Delta:

Kyle to Frank: [You did an] *awesome job multi-tasking while talking to Holly on Friday,*

*internalizing that Delta from our last Real Talk.*

Heather to Kevin: [I want to give you props for] *speaking up more and asking questions.*

**8a. Significant change — case of Brett Samuel**

I return to the case of Brett Samuel (as highlighted in Chapter 5) to explain change supported by Real Talk. Brett Samuel was a participant who demonstrated significant growth. Brett was a 16-year-old black male from Central City in his junior year at Jefferson High School. He was hired from the middle tier
of the leadership spectrum, demonstrating involvement in school activities but not indicating high levels of achievement.

In getting to know Brett over the course of the program, I observed significant growth in self-confidence and leadership. He started shy, standoffish, timid, and struggled to look me in the eye when he spoke and evolved to a boisterous, open, and engaging young man, who was not afraid to take risks and put himself out there when asked to speak and step up.

As Brett’s strengths and abilities emerged and were recognized—mostly in Real Talk session Positives—and by peers and staff; he internalized his successes, ability to change, and to take control over his own life. Real Talk was essential in offering Brett evidence of where he was advancing. The 7.6 below presents content from the Standard Real Talk Brett received from his crew leader Erin Lee.

**Table 7.6: Summary of Erin Lee’s Standard Real Talk for Brett Samuel throughout the program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Positives</th>
<th>Delta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| February 16th| (1) Deep thoughts and opinions on things, and I know from talking with you that you have a lot of interesting things to share.  
(2) Good communication w Jonathan during field work when you were working together. | Very bright personality, encourage you to share it. |
| March 2nd    | (1) Props (i.e. kudos) for volunteering for the first public speaking opportunity and being willing to join the Assistant Crew Leaders and learn how to do a site tour.  
(2) Continue to recognize you have great opinions and insights to bring to the team. | Still need to show personality! I continue to encourage you to share it with us and open up. |
| March 16th   | (1) Nice job welcoming and helping Rachel into our family. Thanks for being willing to trade positions in task in fieldwork.  
(2) Ability to leave your stress at school. You are really taking advantage of being here. | Wandering at end of market – didn’t come back for clean up – be aware and accountable to yourself at work |
| March 30th   | (1) So passionate about getting involved at the café feeding the homeless. Very engaging and polite with the guests.  
(2) Katie (Crew ACL) recognized at the café how committed you are to improving and bettering your future. Taking a lot of initiative and not afraid to share what you felt in the post-activity reflection. | Need to raise your voice when you speak. When we were at the café, could not hear you. Important to communicate properly in the working environment, sometime noisy, don’t hold back – speak up and let us hear that beautiful voice. |
| April 27th   | (1) Adventurous at [ropes course] despite fear of heights – trying so much, pole jump – really took in goal of the day to push yourself.  
(2) Positive attitude being outside in the mud, no complaints. You seem to really be enjoying everyone and making friends in crew. | Speak up! |
June 1st  
(1) Volunteering for tour at community lunch – excitement, taking advantage of all opportunities. 
(2) Dance break in the field. Enjoying apprenticeship. 
(3) Building close relationships, speaking up! 

Pace – consistency from start to finish, compare post-harvest to field work 

June 8th 
(1) Brett and Kristen doing own thing while rest of group lagging behind – hard work. Care deeply about this work. 
(2) Leading a table discussion – taking advantage of every opportunity. 
(3) Step up at community lunch – introduced yourself. 

Trust yourself 

June 21st  
(1) Such a good time in canoe with you, panicked but trusted Allison. 
(2) Excellent job at breakfast – Brett’s coffee. 
(3) Patience – skit 

Read the “I talk from you” – remember your real talk and what you did here 

Data Source: Data drawn from individual Crew Member records as documented by Crew Leader.

The content offers Erin’s perspectives on Brett, explained in Positives and Deltas. Brett routinely heard Deltas related to trust and confidence – open up, show us your personality, speak up, and trust yourself. Week-to-week Erin would return to previous Deltas and submit evidence to Brett of how he was advancing by – “taking advantage of being here”, “taking a lot of initiative and not afraid to share what you felt in the post-activity reflection”, “building close relationships, speaking up!” Over time, the content Brett received in Real Talk encouraged his growth and made him realize his ability to overcome challenges.

I offer an excerpt from “Self-Reflective” Real Talk from Brett on May 11th (recounted from field notes) to further express the role of Real Talk in indicating to youth how they were overcoming Deltas. In this scenario, youth were asked to write out two Positives and one Delta to evaluate personal performance on the farm. Crew leader Erin Lee gathered Brett and 8 fellow crewmembers together in the outdoor classroom after a morning of fieldwork. Each crewmember was given time to jot down Positives and Deltas, and then Erin brought everyone back together. Erin began with one of Brett’s Crew Members and worked around the circle arriving to Brett, who vocalized his personal assessment to Erin and the Crew.

Brett explained his Positives, “I am more comfortable speaking in groups, and I am speaking more and sharing my opinion”, and he adds that his Delta is to “communicate better in small groups, and speak louder”.

Erin replied: “I admire your determination and bravery [on the ropes course]. Your attitude is awesome. You are very friendly, and I agree that you are improving on communication and opening up but can still grow in the areas you mentioned”.

This specific method of Real Talk deepened the process of self-reflection, while still allowing youth feedback on performance from a trusted, external observer. Brett first explained his Positives and then
Delta. Following Brett’s personal assessment, Crew leader Erin Lee chimed in to affirm Brett’s perspective, admiring Brett’s determination and bravery, and his improvement in communication and opening up but corroborated Brett’s view by asking for continued growth in the areas he mentioned.

The process reveals how Brett transitioned overtime from being timid and afraid to voice his opinion to a young person growing in confidence, taking control of his personal trajectory. Brett explains that the relationships with Erin and peers helped him internalize feedback.

“Well people was being real with me I could be real with them. The things people said to me were always very supportive, and I think Real Talk was a way we could do that without having to worry about what people was gonna think of us. In other places people don’t really tell you the truth, especially if its bad. Like my friends never would tell me something like that, but in Real Talk people I trusted would tell me things about myself that were important for me to know” (Brett).

The continual feedback and recognition of growth – delivered in Positives and Deltas during bi-weekly Real Talk – was an effective tool for cultivating change in youth overtime. The use of Deltas allowed youth to track how they overcame personal challenges. Real Talk offered an individual prescription of areas for participants to improve, as explained in the above cases of Bryan and Jonathan. Overtime, “Deltas” were cited as something, “I changed and improved on”, leading youth to begin viewing it as a strength. Youth received documented proof from an external observer on how they were improving.

8b. **Real Talk brings attention to challenges, but cannot force change**

Lisa Charles’ case was different. Lisa did not seem to internalize her Deltas and alter her pathway. Lisa’s Real Talk excerpts are in Table 7.5 above. Lisa reveals the limitations of Real Talk and the change within the ecosystem. The mechanism helps participants grow but it wasn’t always enough to make the desired change happen.

Lisa was a young woman who was extremely advanced in her high school, graduating a year early and beginning college at the age of 17. Lisa came from a broken, unstable household. Her mother was recently home from prison, and Lisa seemed to be influenced by her mother’s presence. Lisa often arrived to work wearing her emotions in her expressions - seeming sad and disinterested in participating and being on the farm. On April 27th, I noted in field notes what I observed after spending a day working with Lisa and crew at the market.
Lisa had a very poor attitude about being at work all day. She is a very quiet girl and her demeanor at times upon arrival to the farm, during programming is very somber, and expressionless. Lisa’s mother recently returned to New Orleans from Chicago, and was apparently there in jail. From meeting Lisa’s mother on farm, she was a very loud, overbearing figure, who potentially emotionally abuses Lisa? The mother often seems angry about something. Lisa does very well in school, excels will graduate early and is attending college but home life could be influencing attitude in work.

The excerpt from my field notes explains the challenges of the external environment for Lisa. She seemingly was doing well in school – good grades, graduating early, and was an athlete in track and field. But something prevented Lisa from fully embracing the farm and activities. Lisa’s attendance was poor, missing the maximum of 8 days without getting fired.

Table 7.5 above indicates Lisa received three separate Deltas in subsequent Real Talk sessions focused on overcoming this personal challenge – “understand what causes you to feel negative”, “take control of your destiny, rise above your challenges”, and “don’t dwell on negative thoughts”.

Lisa’s inability to overcome this challenge of negativity revealed that perhaps it was not the time for her to “change”. Real Talk offered Lisa a path to advance leaderly capabilities, but it was up to her to follow. Lisa did not reference why at times she carried a poor attitude and negativity with her to work in her exit interview. Interestingly, Lisa expressed in a focus group that the program was **amazing** and that she really **enjoyed** her experience, however in the exit interview she did not reveal much about herself personally or how she changed as a result of her participation. (The focus group responses may have been influenced by the presence of peers, as everyone reflected positively on the experience). Later in her exit interview, Lisa was ambiguous and contradictory about her “change”, noting that she had

- **achieved her goal of learning about agriculture**,  
- **enjoyed the field work**, and  
- **enjoyed meeting new people**.

When asked why she felt this way, Lisa fell silent –she chose not to elaborate. Her responses felt programmed. It seems that she was telling me what she thought I wanted to hear. I noted little enthusiasm behind her responses. I attempted to probe and delve into Lisa’s experience, but it did not move beyond surface-level.

When asked directly about Real Talk, Lisa explained:
“Real Talk was beneficial to me because it kind of told us what we could improve on and what we were good at but at the same time, we were sitting there listening to everybody else so you got to learn that way too.”

Lisa may have found it beneficial, but did not respond to the change Kyle pushed her toward of having a better attitude and opening up. Kyle created Positives for Lisa, but they may not have been enough to push her to change her attitude. This may have been a result of a lack of connection with Kyle, or Kyle’s not crafting Deltas in such a way that pushed Lisa to alter her behavior. Change in the program was not isolated to Real Talk, however Lisa did not demonstrate to internalize the Deltas the same as other participants.

In general, we see that Crew Leaders get to know the youth on the farm through the Real Work (Chapter 7), and learn about their lives outside the program ecosystem. They can use Positives and Deltas to encourage change based on what they see. In this case, issues – real life problems beyond the ecosystem dominated Lisa’s experience. I cannot say that the program did not affect Lisa, but she did not respond to Real Talk. Real Talk brought Lisa’s attention to the issue(s), but for several possible reasons –

- disinterest/lack of concern for what Kyle thought of her,
- negative influence from her home life dominated her thoughts,
- never opened up to the idea of change because of past experiences,
- was not bought into the ecosystem, or
- a lack of Kyle connecting/utilizing Real Talk to push Lisa.

Lisa was unable to overcome her issues with attitude and negative demeanor. Perhaps change came (or will come) later for Lisa, and this experience planted a seed that takes more time to grow; nonetheless, the external environment was a factor in her attitude that prevented her from embracing change. This is consistent with the challenge of Commitment revealed in Chapter 7 in that external issues—home environment, community—played into the pathways of change youth charted.

Lisa’s story brings attention to the external environment that influences change. Individuals, and an ecosystem for change, are susceptible to external forces.

9. Chapter Wrap up

This chapter describes the inner workings of the Real Talk change mechanism. It helps to answer research question 2, which asks what particular elements of the system cultivate change in youth, Real Talk
functioned as a primary change mechanism within the ecosystem, utilizing Crew Leaders feedback to shape leaderly change in participants. Real Talk functioned as a system of response, allowing Crew Leaders to observe youth in the Real Work and offer feedback to encourage youth to adapt behavior. In this way, Real Talk functioned as a designed system of response and adaptation (i.e. a feedback loop), which assists in answering research question 3: how the designed structure of response and adaption in the organizational system influenced change.

This chapter draws from field notes, participant observation, Real Talk program documents, exit interviews with program participants, and interviews with key informants to explain Real Talk.

Description of the various formats and how they align on the program calendar explain how the change mechanism functions.

Scenes from Real Talk sessions aim to convey the quality of the various sessions, and how Crew Leaders used language to propel youth toward leaderly change. The individual cases of youth –from multiple sources of data, over time explain how the mechanism functions to reinforce this change.

Real Talk occurs on a routine, ritualized basis within the individual crew as part of the formal program structure. Led by an observant Crew Leader, youth receive individual, tailored feedback and personalized attention through Positives and Deltas.

The structured system provides youth with (hopefully) meaningful encouraging, direct, individualized feedback from a trusted adult staff member. The feedback –even the “Deltas” (things to change) - are actually all overwhelmingly positive. Positives and Deltas seem to advance self-confidence that enables youth to build other capabilities, namely self-efficacy.

The actual language in Real Talk conveys this change over time, to encourage further growth within the program ecosystem. Individual cases of youth Jonathan, Brett, Kevin, and Bryan show how different youth benefit from the mechanism. Acting as a guide, Real Talk offers different a pathway for each individual youth to illuminate their path toward leaderly change. Not all youths, however – Lisa – were able to find and follow the path.

This chapter helps to address the research question of how to pursue meaningful change within youth by unpacking the mechanism of Real Talk and explaining in detail how a routine forum for communication with specific, tailored language can advance leaderly change in youth.
Chapter 8.  Change Mechanism II: The Language of Real Talk

1.  Introduction

In this chapter, I present an analysis of the aggregated content for all standard Real Talk sessions for all 31 participants for the entire program season. The purpose of this chapter is to offer a context for the qualitative description and analysis in Chapter 7 “Real Talk on the Farm”. The content within the Real Talk—the Positives and Deltas--helps uncover the purpose and functioning of Real Talk mechanism. It demonstrates the language being used to guide participants toward “leaderly” change. The language helps to define leaderliness and the positive changes the program aims to encourage.

Chapter 7 gives detailed description of Real Talk formats, scenes, and routines to show how the mechanism functions to cultivate leaderliness. In chapter 8, I build on this description and analyze the specific content youth “heard” in Real Talk. This is a lot of attention to the individual words Crew Leaders use in Real Talk. The purpose of this analysis is to 1) present and describe the language Crew Leaders used, and 2) use the language to help determine what leaderly change (advancement of positive youth capabilities) was within in this case. This helps to address my research question 1: what individual factors and experiences influenced change within youth in the ecosystem, and research question 2: What particular elements cultivated valued changes.

Road Map of Chapter

This chapter consists of 8 sections:

• In section 1, I introduce content analysis and the purpose of the chapter.

• In section 2, I explain the research approach – Content Analysis, how it was utilized in this chapter, and the Real Talk log that I interrogated for the analysis.

• Section 3 presents the manifest portion of the content analysis to reveal frequency word counts of the most common words heard in Real Talk.

• In section 4, I describe the latent content analysis and findings, which express the most common themes within the Positives and Deltas of Real Talk.

• Section 5 discloses the findings from analysis of the content across individual Crew Leaders to show the commonalities.
• Section 6 focuses on the complimentary and contextual Positives and Delta categories, which were created based on the findings from the latent content analysis.

• In section 7, I give attention to the focus on “mindfulness” within the Real Talk content and explain its meaning.

• Section 8 presents the findings from the content analysis related to “opening up”.

2. Content analysis method

I provide a comprehensive portrait of Real Talk through quantitative content analysis (frequencies, word counts). Using the quantitative content analysis, I examined the Positives and Deltas recorded in advance of Real Talk in logs kept by the individual Crew Leader.

The logs documented the Positives and Deltas of each participant over the course of the program. For example, Crew Leader Erin Lee delivered Real Talk to her crew. In advance of her Real Talk session, Erin wrote each individual Positive and Delta, for each participant, in a separate Real Talk form, which she planned to deliver to her Crew Members during Real Talk. Erin’s Positives and Deltas for her crew, along with fellow Crew Leaders Kyle and Heather, were kept in a green binder throughout the program that composed the Real Talk “log”. I present an example of the form in appendix D.

The three Crew Leaders documented a combined 1084 statements – 831 Positives and 253 Deltas – in the log over the five-month program. I compared words over time within the log and differentiate between the Positives and Deltas.

To examine and compare the content within the log, I completed two levels of quantitative content analysis. I aggregated all these data into a text file, conducted simple word counts, categorized them and examined these data using latent and manifest content analysis (source – Berger, 2000).

• For manifest analysis, I focused on only obtaining word counts and the frequency of the common words appearing within Real Talk content. This analysis simply counted the number of words appearing in the Positives and Deltas.

• For latent analysis, I needed to unpack the Real Talk content further to understand the message the Crew Leader wanted to send in the Positives and Deltas. This was not revealed in the word counts. I interpreted the intention and meaning behind the (written and spoken) Positives and Deltas for
the Crew Member, then coded each individual statement (each Positive and Delta within the log) based on the theme.

Additional clarification of methods and content

- Each word in the individual statements was first counted to obtain frequency and common appearance of language (i.e. manifest analysis).
- I disaggregated text data by Positive and Delta statement.
- I coded the statements by themes to interpret the intention of the Crew Leader (i.e. latent analysis).
- I include only relevant words to inform understanding of the RT process (i.e., I excluded words like “to”, “and”, “have” etc.).
- In the log, the Crew Leader wrote Positives and Deltas in shorthand. For example, Heather wrote, “smart, communicates ideas and open up”, so the statements in the log do not disclose the language the Crew Leader used to verbalize the Positives and Deltas to the Crew Member.

3. Manifold analysis: Total word frequency

The simple word counts (i.e. the manifest analysis) is a preliminary analysis to support the interpretive latent analysis. Manifest content analysis of Standard RT sessions summarizes the words used by Crew Leaders for Positives and Deltas. A total of 7010 words were used to transmit 831 Positive statements, and 2197 words for the 253 Deltas. (Recall, Real Talk calls for two Positives and one Delta per session, however Crew Leaders often provided more than two Positives). Table 8.1 provides the most common, single words appearing within the Real Talk log, by Positive and Delta.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words used in “Positives”</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Words used in “Deltas”</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>Speak</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Push Yourself</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Step Up/Back</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment/Dedication</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Aware</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Share</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step Up/Back</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Pace</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall

The most frequent words across both Positives and Deltas were “work”, “lead”, “speak”, and “step up/back”. The word “lead” was found 50 times/831 Real Talk Positives and 21 times/253 Real Talk Deltas. Positives and Deltas referenced “work” on the farm, market and elsewhere. “Step up” and “step back” (a core element of the program guidelines explained in Chapter 5) were found in 27 of 831 Real Talk Positives and 14 of 253 Real Talk Deltas.

Positives

The five most common words appearing in Positives – “work”, “market”, “lead”, “crew”, and “task” – relate to youth’ work in the program. Crew Leaders utilized the setting and work on the farm to craft relevant Real Talk statements.

Deltas

The five most common words appearing in Deltas were “speak”, “work”, “lead”, “push yourself”, “step up/back”. Other words are “aware”, “share”, “people”, “pace”, “open up”, and “professionalism”.

4. Latent analysis: Interpreting Positives and Deltas in Real Talk

Word counts and frequencies introduce the language the Crew Leaders used, but the appearance of words within the log did not reveal the intention of the Crew Leader. In this section I share my findings from the latent content analysis.

This analysis exposed the meaning and message of the Positives and Deltas. Interpreting each statement was required to uncover the true intention of the Crew Leader, and obtain the frequency of themes within the Real Talk content. For example, the statements, (1) your pace in the field today was excellent, and (2) you were strong today in the fields each reference an experience in fieldwork where a Crew Member received praise related to “Hard Work” (a program standard and common theme revealed in the latent analysis). In statement 1, the word “pace” is present, which is linked to Hard Work and was
discovered as a common word to appear within the Real Talk content through the manifest content analysis. Statement 2 is also linked to Hard Work, but the statement had to be interpreted in order to grasp the underlying meaning of the Crew Leader – the focus on strong work in the fields. The latent analysis was required to abstract the meaning.

The latent content analysis allowed statements to be interpreted and coded by the reader of the text to consider the intention of the speaker or writer (Berger, 2000). After multiple readings, I coded each statement into common themes. This process was guided by the word frequencies from the manifest analysis (like in the example of hard work and the common word “pace”) and the program standards.

The majority of the Positives and Delta in the log contained statements that focused on more than one theme. For example, a Positive such as “smart, communicates ideas” (taken from Heather’s Real Talk on February 16th) was coded for two themes: once as a “complimentary Positive” - acknowledging a trait in a young person for being “smart”, and the second code for “communication” – acknowledging growth in a Crew Member’s communication. The codes were created based on the focus of the statement after multiple read-throughs of the text. I used 24 total codes to represent the themes of the content.

Below I present the counts and percentages of the 24 themes drawn from latent content analysis in Table 8.2. I coded each Positive and Delta statement in the Real Talk log (831 Positives and 253 Deltas) with the 24 codes. Because some statements had multiple meanings such as “smart, communicates ideas”, it required multiple codes. The Positives were coded 882 times, and Deltas were coded 370 times for a total of 1252 codes applied to the 1084 statements in the log.

Table 8.2 presents the findings from the latent analysis. I provide the frequency of each of the 24 themes applied to the Real Talk content, and the percentage of the total each theme represents in Positives, Deltas, and Positives and Deltas combined.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/Focus of Statement</th>
<th>Proportion of All “Positives” (%/n) N = 882</th>
<th>Proportion of all Deltas Codes N = 370</th>
<th>Proportion of All Positives and Deltas Combined N = 1252</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Complimentary”*</td>
<td>28.3 % (n = 249)</td>
<td>0.5% (n = 2)</td>
<td>20.1% (n = 251)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>9.0% (n = 79)</td>
<td>10.8% (n = 40)</td>
<td>9.5% (n = 119)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard Work</td>
<td>10.1% (n = 89)</td>
<td>4.1% (n = 15)</td>
<td>8.3% (n = 104)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>6.7% (n = 59)</td>
<td>8.7% (n = 32)</td>
<td>7.3% (n = 91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Positives (n = 31)</td>
<td>Deltas (n = 1252)</td>
<td>Total (N = 882)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Up</td>
<td>4.8% (n = 42)</td>
<td>13% (n = 48)</td>
<td>7.2% (n = 90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>3.5% (n = 31)</td>
<td>9.2% (n = 34)</td>
<td>5.2% (n = 68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness</td>
<td>0.2% (n = 2)</td>
<td>14.1% (n = 52)</td>
<td>4.3% (n = 54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>5.1% (n = 45)</td>
<td>1.1% (n = 4)</td>
<td>3.9% (n = 49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Push Yourself</td>
<td>0.7% (n = 6)</td>
<td>11.6% (n = 43)</td>
<td>3.9% (n = 49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>4.7% (n = 41)</td>
<td>1.4% (n = 5)</td>
<td>3.7% (n = 46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>3.5% (n = 31)</td>
<td>3.0% (n = 11)</td>
<td>3.4% (n = 42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>3.4% (n = 30)</td>
<td>3.0% (n = 11)</td>
<td>3.3% (n = 41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask Questions</td>
<td>3.6% (n = 32)</td>
<td>1.6% (n = 6)</td>
<td>3.0% (n = 38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>2.6% (n = 23)</td>
<td>3.2% (n = 12)</td>
<td>2.8% (n = 35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showing Improvement</td>
<td>3.2% (n = 28)</td>
<td>0.5% (n = 2)</td>
<td>2.4% (n = 30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>1.1% (n = 10)</td>
<td>4.9% (n = 18)</td>
<td>2.2% (n = 28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try Something New</td>
<td>1.6% (n = 14)</td>
<td>2.4% (n = 9)</td>
<td>1.8% (n = 23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate</td>
<td>2.2% (n = 19)</td>
<td>0.3% (n = 1)</td>
<td>1.6% (n = 20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill</td>
<td>1.6% (n = 14)</td>
<td>1.1% (n = 4)</td>
<td>1.4% (n = 18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interacting With People</td>
<td>1.4% (n = 12)</td>
<td>1.1% (n = 4)</td>
<td>1.3% (n = 16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen</td>
<td>1.1% (n = 10)</td>
<td>1.1% (n = 4)</td>
<td>1.1% (n = 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonverbal Communication</td>
<td>0.5% (n = 4)</td>
<td>2.2% (n = 8)</td>
<td>1% (n = 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>0.5% (n = 4)</td>
<td>1.0% (n = 3)</td>
<td>0.6% (n = 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>0.7% (n = 6)</td>
<td>0.0% (n = 0)</td>
<td>0.5% (n = 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>0.1% (n = 2)</td>
<td>0.5% (n = 2)</td>
<td>0.2% (n = 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100% (N = 882)</td>
<td>100% (N = 370)</td>
<td>100% (N= 1252)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: Based on content of all Real Talk sessions for 31 youth over 5 months. Recoding and analysis by the author.

* “Complimentary” is recoded from Positives and Deltas where Crew Leaders used language directed at complimenting/recognizing a participant’s personal strengths and characteristics. I introduce this term to capture the complimentary nature of those Positives and Deltas.

The interpretation of Positives and Deltas in the latent analysis by proportion of total phrases/terms uttered during Real Talk confirms the findings in word counts. It also provides more detail within the content as to how Crew Leaders were focusing on creating leaderly change.

Overall

The findings demonstrate the common usage of “complimentary” positives, representing 20.1% (251/1252) of the total Real Talk content. “Leadership” is also present within both Positives and Deltas, representing 8.0% of the total content (119/1252). Table 8.2 also shows tendencies of Crew Leaders to use both Positives and Deltas to focus on programmatic standards – hard work (8.3%, 104/1252) and professionalism (7.3%, 91/1252).

Open up, which asked youth to share, speak, and be more open with peers and staff, was targeted within 6.0% of all Positives and Deltas, which is consistent with word counts for “speak”, “share”, and “ask” in the manifest analysis above. “Ask questions” (3.0%, 38/1252) relates to statements where youth were praised for asking a question in the program, and connects to pushing youth to be more open and
vocal through participation and action. The overarching concept of “communication” (5.2%, 65/1252) was also prevalent in the interpreted Real Talk statements.

**Positives**

Complimentary Positives represented 28.2% of all Positives (249/882). Leadership was targeted in 79/882 Positives representing 9.0% of the total. The other three most frequent Positive statements focused on the program standards – hard work (10.1%, 89/882), professionalism (6.7%, 59/882 Positives) and commitment (4.8%, 42/882). As revealed in the opening “scene from Real Talk” in mid-February in Chapter 5, Crew Leaders utilized Positives to recognize youth for actions that aligned with program values. Hard work, professionalism, and commitment are each core values within the program.

Positives also focused on “teamwork” (5.1%, 45/882), where youth were encouraged for actions that supported the crew and for working together.

**Deltas**

Crew Leaders tend to focus Deltas toward “mindfulness” (most common, found in 14.1%, 52/370 Delta statements) – encouraging a participant to understand his/her actions in relation to the program standards. Crew Leaders used Deltas to inspire participants to “push yourself” (second most common in 11.6% 43/370 Deltas) – asking youth to continue to strive and move forward in advancing their abilities within the work and program ecosystem.

**Table 8.3: Common interpreted Positives and Deltas by crew leader per Standard Real Talk session**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Heather Warren Crew 1</th>
<th>Erin Lee Crew 2</th>
<th>Kyle Lott Crew 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 16th</td>
<td>Complimentary</td>
<td>Open up</td>
<td>Opening Up,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Complimentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2nd</td>
<td>Complimentary Opening Up Step Up</td>
<td>Open Up</td>
<td>Hard Work Opening Up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 16th</td>
<td>Speak Step Up</td>
<td>Step Up, Mindfulness</td>
<td>Opening Up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Hard Work Speak, Focus,</td>
<td>Complimentary</td>
<td>Hard Work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data source: Based on content of all Real Talk sessions for 31 youth over 5 months. Recoding and analysis of the logs by the author based on Crew Leader.

5. **Consistency across Crews**

To further validate the findings from content analysis, I organized and compared the interpreted statements from the latent analysis across Crews 1, 2, and 3, and over time. I reviewed the data for each session of Standard Real Talk from all three Crew Leaders. Table 8.3 displays the findings outlining the most common Positive and Delta by Crew Leader from each Standard Real Talk session.

As Table 8.3 illustrates, the content remained consistent across Crews throughout the program, as each Crew Leader targeted similar areas of change in Crew Members. Crew Leaders persisted with complimentary Positives throughout and targeted programmatic standards – hard work, professionalism, and commitment. Youth were pushed to open up, speak and share more throughout the program in Deltas.

Patterns also emerged in this portion of the content analysis. The early focus on *opening up* by each Crew Member shows the emphasis on getting youth to feel comfortable within the system. As the program progressed, statements focused on *opening up* were still utilized, but in the early stages of the program, it was consistent across Crew Leaders.

Heather, Kyle, and Erin all utilized the *step up* concept early in the program. Toward the latter part of the program (June 1st to June 21st), Crew Leaders began emphasizing “push yourself”, (consistent in the latent analysis) which asked youth to continue to improve and advance growth in the program. This was particularly prevalent at the end of the program, as Crew Leaders looked to impart an element of sustained growth in youth as they completed the program.
The appearance of “Complimentary” Positives across the program demonstrates consistent use and importance for Crew Leaders to recognize individuals for what they brought to the program.

6. **Positives: the use of Complimentary and Contextual Positives**

From conducting the content analysis and reviewing the Real Talk sessions across Crews, I categorized Positives into two distinct types – complimentary and contextual. I categorized the Positives based on the data from the Real Talk log to reveal how Crew Leaders were directing youths to change using language in “Positive” statements. The two types acted as a system to reinforce the change the program seeks to cultivate in young people. Confidence is built in participants through complimentary Positives that recognized a valued personal trait, while simultaneously contextual Positives targeted a participant’s ability to exemplify program standards in their everyday work on the farm.

The first type I call a “complimentary Positive”. Complimentary Positives acknowledged an individual for possessing a personal characteristic or trait that was valued within the program ecosystem. I discovered these statements peppered throughout the Real Talk sessions. In the “opening scene from Real Talk” (Chapter 7, table 7.1) with Heather’s crew –Heather tells Jeff he is “creative and funny”, and “kind and humble” to acknowledge positive traits Jeff possesses. These statements were present across Crews and Real Talk sessions throughout the program. I use the term “complimentary” to describe these Positives because the language within the statement implies the Crew Leader is aiming to identify an individual’s personality and traits. These statements approve and validate a youth to seemingly boost confidence and recognize the value they bring to the organization.

The second type I call a “contextual Positive” – it recognized youth for a specific task they performed well in the context of the program ecosystem, rooted in the programmatic standards. These statements were taken from events on the farm, in the work of the program – such as Heather acknowledging Tim for getting his *paper work in* which she linked to his *increasing ability to be responsible*, and Heather praising Brooke’s professionalism for being *proactive about communicating* by texting ahead to notify she would be late. Each contextual Positive focused on a specific action performed by Crew Members on the farm or elsewhere in the program that their Crew Leader linked to a programmatic standard in Real Talk.
The complimentary Positives represented 249 of the 882 Positives (28.2%) youth heard during Standard RT in the program, while the contextual Positives made up the remaining 663 Positives (75.2%).

As Table 8.3 above shows, Crew Leaders utilized each type of Positive throughout the program. Table 8.4 below offers specific examples overtime to indicate the difference in the two types of Positives.

**Table 8.4: Examples of complimentary & contextual RT statements by recipient**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crew Member</th>
<th>Crew Leader</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Complimentary (Personal)</th>
<th>Contextual (Program)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allison</td>
<td>Erin Lee</td>
<td>Feb 16th</td>
<td>Glad you had a good Mardi Gras and so glad you are part of our crew and work here in New Orleans</td>
<td>Participating more and stepping into leadership role in crew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Rogers</td>
<td>Kyle Lott</td>
<td>March 16th</td>
<td>Happy to have you part of my crew, so alive and perky today, looking good with your haircut and glasses</td>
<td>Awesome market performance, support each other and offering feedback on the system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny Elliot</td>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>May 10th</td>
<td>So glad to have you back here. I can tell you are happy to be back, and we really missed you</td>
<td>Hard work – attention to detail, persistence on Thursday (working into break)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: Real Talk logs from each Crew Leader.

I isolated the Positives here to explain the function of each, however I view the Positives to work in unison with one another to build self-confidence in youth, advance self-efficacy, and cultivate other capabilities. While contextual Positives focused on reinforcing the programmatic standards, the complimentary Positives concentrated on building up the individual person, encouraging and praising youth to show that they matter. Erin acknowledged Allison for simply being part of our crew and work, while in the same session recognized her for participating more and stepping into leadership. Kyle was happy to have Joe part of his crew and believed Joe was awesome in his market performance for supporting his peers and offering feedback on the system. Heather is excited for Jenny to be back on the farm and commends her hard work and attention to detail. Each example demonstrates the connection between the two as a core element of the Real Talk system.
7. **Mindfulness**

One common “Delta” category is “mindfulness” (14.1%, 52/370 Deltas) in table 8.2. These Deltas cut across multiple standards. They encouraged youth to be more “mindful” of choices, actions, and opinions in the context of work in the program, and how they were responding to events and activities. Mindfulness connects to getting youth to recognize and be mindful of behaviors within a professional environment to advance individual capabilities. Crew Leaders targeted a particular behavior or action within the ecosystem, unique to the individual, and encouraged participants to recognize how it was being viewed or received. In examples from the Real Talk documents relating to mindfulness, Crew Leaders pressed youth to:

- “think more deeply about what behavior is appropriate in the work place”, which asks youth to consider how their actions are affecting people around them, and reminds a young person of the expectations within a professional environment;
- “be mindful of your decisions here and the consequences” asked youth to consider the ramifications of their actions relative to their pay check and other people in the work environment;
- “don’t be dismissive of others views. Learn to value another perspective” brings youth to consider “multiple truths”, which is a core guideline within the program (further outlined in Chapter 4).

The Crew Leader targeted a youth with a specific message of mindfulness to promote individual change. Real Talk Deltas offered youth personal feedback and places they needed to improve. Here, youth are encouraged to be mindful of actions, decisions, and appropriate behavior in the workplace. Utilizing the lens of the programmatic standards, Deltas focused on mindfulness to deliver personal feedback to participants based on actions in the program. By raising awareness of how they could improve and change within the system, Crew Leaders offered youth a personalized pathway to individual change.

The Deltas targeting mindfulness pulled from participant performance in the system. Youth received mindfulness feedback from a trusted Crew Leader – Crew Leaders interacted and worked side-by-side with youth on the farm in all activities and work throughout the program. The interactions within the ecosystem and the process of Real Talk assisted in constructing relationships with Crew Leaders and peers. Youth worked in crews and with the same Crew Leader throughout the five-month program in all activities on the farm. The interactions presented regular opportunities for Crew Leaders to learn how each individual
participant could improve within the system, which in turn made youth more mindful of areas of improvement.

8. Opening up

The language *open up* was consistent across the program, utilized by all Crew Leaders during every Real Talk session, as depicted in Table 8.3. Open up represented 7.2% of the total Real Talk content (90/1252 Positives and Deltas) and was the second most common delta (13%, 48 out of 370 Deltas). Early on, the importance of opening up was frequently emphasized. As revealed in the opening “scene from Real Talk” (Chapter 7, Table 7.1) youth received Positives for modeling this action in the program such as when they *didn't hesitate to jump into games or asked good questions and participated*. Participants were acknowledged for *feeling comfortable and contributing ideas*, while others were encouraged (via Deltas) to “open up”. *Open up* was a statement used to encourage youth to speak out and feel comfortable within the program environment. Crew Leaders aimed to encourage youth to *come out of your shell* and open up to other participants and the activities on the farm (as Heather explained to Kristen in the first Real Talk session).

In considering how youth open up, I return to the case of Kevin Bishop (previously presented in chapter 5). In the opening session of Real Talk, Kevin Bishop was praised for being *open with people when approached*, and Heather also pushed Kevin to *jump in more* in his Delta. Heather focused on Kevin’s strength in speaking and engaging with people when he was approached, and asked Kevin to be more forthcoming with his engagement in other settings and situations – to open up and engage, speak, and share with staff and peers in activities and work on the farm. As the content analysis showed, this language was utilized frequently in the program. Rachel Webster’s Delta to *bring more of the side of yourself you showed at the market to the farm and try and open up to everyone* asked Rachel to repeat a specific action and open up to people. The contextual Positive was reflected on as an example of a situation when Rachel opened up, and Heather used it to draw out Rachel in other settings in the program. In revisiting Rachel’s Positives, she was praised early on for *jumping in, feeling comfortable*, and for her performance at the market in *customer service*. These actions were valued by Heather and used to encourage Rachel to *open up* further in other settings.
9. **Chapter Wrap Up**

In the content analysis, I explored the frequency of content and language youth received in Real Talk, and presented data on the consistency of Real Talk terms over time and by Crew Leader. I dissected common Positives and Deltas to show the common leaderly changes Crew Leaders sought to cultivate.

Positives focused on a personal trait (i.e. complimentary Positive) or a programmatic standard (i.e. contextual Positive). Deltas usually targeted programmatic standards, encouraged youth to “open up”, and/or pushed participants to overcome a challenge by being mindful of the effects of their behavior on other people in the ecosystem.

The consistency in language demonstrates that seeming a major purpose of Real Talk was to encourage relationship building between youth participants. The content was consistent across time and Crew Leader.
Chapter 9. Change Mechanism III: Real Accountability

1. Introduction

By design, “Real Work” on the farm and “Real Talk” is supported by the program’s accountability system and programmatic standards. Youth are held accountable to their actions and performance within the space on the farm through a system of Violations, Pay Withholdings, and Earnbacks. I refer to these mechanisms of change as “Real Accountability”.

Real Accountability includes the paid wages youth receive, the official program standards, the “flexible rigor” of Violations, Pay Withholdings and Earnbacks, and the Firing and Rehiring process.

Road Map of Chapter

Building on “Real Work” and the mechanism of “Real Talk”, I present an analysis of the program’s accountability system in 4 sections to further expose how leaderly change is cultivated.

• In section 1, I begin by explaining the pay structure and potential earnings – the “Real Pay” youth receive.

• In section 2, I introduce the program standards and explain the components of the accountability system – the Violations, Earnbacks, and Pay Withholdings, and how they are documented by Crew Leaders and program staff.

• Section 3 analyzes the “Individual Violation Records” which house data on youth Violations, Pay Withholdings, and Earnbacks. I also describe processes of Firing and Rehiring, and examine individual factors related to Real Accountability.

• Finally, in section 4, I portray individual cases of youth, and how the Real Accountability shapes their pathways.

The contents within the 4 sections display data for youth participants on,

• youth attendance, punctuality and participation,

• earned wages and hours, and

• trends in Violations, Pay Withholdings and Earnbacks.
These data reveal the youth experiences with the accountability system, and the difficulties encountered over the five-months on the farm. The data presented in this chapter is drawn from:

- field notes,
- programmatic documents – namely Individual Violation Records,
- (my own) exit interviews with youth participants,
- discussions with school-based key informants and program staff.

The findings presented in this chapter address my research question 2: what particular elements cultivated valued changes, and research question 3: how the designed structure of response and adaption (i.e. the feedback loops) in the organizational system influenced change.

2. Real Pay

The accountability system is built on the youth pay schedule. Youth are paid biweekly in the spring, and weekly in the summer. Table 9.1 outlines the hours and potential earnings for participants in the spring and summer.

Table 9.1: Potential earnings by weeks and hours worked

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weeks of Program</td>
<td>14 weeks</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>18 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours per week</td>
<td>9 hours</td>
<td>32 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours Worked</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages/hour</td>
<td>$6.48</td>
<td>$6.48</td>
<td>$6.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages Per Check</td>
<td>$117 (biweekly)</td>
<td>$208 (weekly)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible Earnings</td>
<td>$830</td>
<td>$830</td>
<td>$1660</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: Individual Violation Records and programmatic reports of earnings for each youth.

During the spring program, youth (still in school) work 9 hours/week: 2 hours on a Thursday or Friday, and 7 hours on Saturday. They do this for roughly 14 weeks, totaling 128 hours. After the school year is complete (late May), youth can work an additional 4 weeks, 32 hours per week (Wednesday thru Saturday, 8 hours per day), for a total of 128 hours. Youth can thus spend up to 256 hours in program activities during the five-months (depending on the attendance, start date, and whether they finished the program).
The program pays youth to perform work and engage in training/educational activities. Youth earn a stipend up to $1660 for the 256 hours of work ($6.48 per hour) in total throughout the five-month program. Youth are eligible to earn $117 (before taxes) biweekly in the spring, and $208 (before taxes) weekly in the summer. The net earned income for participants is determined by adherence to the program standards and the amount of hours youth work.

**Wage context**

Youth earn $6.48/hour through the $1660 stipend. Because participants are paid in a stipend, they are not subject to minimum wage laws. Participants of the program are considered interns under Federal law because the program is educational. Interns receive training and practical experience, which allows the program to pay them a stipend. The average workday (as depicted in Real Work, Chapter 6) involves less than half the working hours performing physical labor in the fields. The majority of the working hours for youth are spent in training and educational activities.

The Federal minimum wage in the United States is $7.25 per hour. Louisiana is one of five states in the US that does not have a minimum wage law, thus the Federal minimum wage applies. Typical jobs in New Orleans pay teenagers minimum wage: these are usually fast food outlets, grocery stores, restaurants and retail shops.

3. **Program Standards**

On the first Saturday of the program, youth sign a contract documenting their willingness to adhere to the “Program Standards” whenever present on the farm and representing the organization (on site visits, field trips, at markets). This accountability system is built on these nine standards representing the values of the program:

- Commitment,
- Responsibility,
- Hard Work,
- Sustainability,
- Professionalism,
- Respect,
- Community,
- Integrity, and
- Safety
Table 9.2 below is reproduced from the program document “2013 Standards and Violation Chart”.

This depicts expected behaviors by program standard (The scanned original is provided in appendix D).

### Table 9.2: 2013 Standards and Violations Chart – Values and Standards of Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>Expected Behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Arrive on time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be at all scheduled work times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No leaving the job without notice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Wear your t-shirt or uniform.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bring a hat and water bottle each day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Vandalism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Littering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard Work</td>
<td>Work with a positive attitude and your best effort, steadily through the completion of the assigned task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keep pace with your crew.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>Care for tools, equipment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Care for the soil and produce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Care for self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>Call in advance if you are going to be late or absent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dress appropriately for the work environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Come to work with all necessary materials (notebook, any required paperwork, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Respect the wider community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respect the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respect one another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>No Sunglasses (except during field work).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t bring or use electronic devices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Smoking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No swearing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>No being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No verbal or physical abuse towards anyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No lying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>No fighting, stealing, or sexual harassment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No possession of weapons, drugs, or alcohol.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: Program document “Standards and Violations Chart”.

Each standard has specific rules/indicators (column two). Youth are expected to know and follow them all.

These “Standards of Behavior” help promote and reinforce desired behavior changes in program participants.
Violations, Withholdings and Earnbacks

The accountability system uses three main components to encourage behavior change in youth: “Violations”, “Pay Withholdings” and “Earnbacks”. The system is tied to the youth pay schedule: two-week cycles in the spring and a one-week cycle in the summer.

Violations are given to participants when they commit an offense or perform an action that is in breach of the Program Standards. The first Violation in a given standard category earns a participant a “Warning”. For each subsequent Violation in the same category over a two-week period, youth receive a $10 deduction in their paycheck called a “Pay Withholding”. A participant can earn up to six Violations (one warning and five Pay Withholdings within a single program standard) before losing their job. Youth have an opportunity to “Earnback” the lost funds taken in Pay Withholdings by not accruing any further Violations within that category where they previously received a Pay Withholding.

For example, if a participant first earns a Warning and then a second Violation in the Commitment category over a two-week period, they receive a $10 Pay Withholding from their check. If the same participant avoids further Violations in the Commitment category in the following two-week period, the category is wiped clean and the previous $10 Withholding is earned back and applied to their next paycheck. Violations, Withholdings and Earnbacks are reported out at the end of Real Talk, the same day that youth receive paychecks.

Eddie Benson helps to further clarify how the system of Violations, Pay Withholdings and Earnbacks functions. I recount a sequence of events that transpired for Eddie on March 15th and 16th. Eddie was a 16 year-old, white male attending the private school, Adams High. (This scene is recreated from field notes and with data taken from programmatic documents called “Individual Violation Records”, which Crew Leaders used to track the youth Violations during the program).

1. On Friday March 15th, Eddie used a curse word in the fields. Eddie’s Crew Leader Kyle Lott was pulling weeds in the row adjacent to where Eddie was working and overheard the foul language. The use of the curse word earned Eddie a Violation in the Professionalism category. It was Eddie’s first Violation in Professionalism, so he only earned a Warning.
2. The next day, Saturday, March 16th, Eddie was late to work and failed to phone ahead to let Kyle know. Eddie’s actions earned him two Violations – one in Professionalism for not calling ahead and one in Commitment for being late to work.

3. In his haste to get to work, Eddie also forgot his work shirt. For forgetting to bring part of his uniform, Eddie earned his first Violation in the Responsibility category, which led to a Warning but no Pay Withholding.

4. On March 15th, Eddie received a Warning in Professionalism for cursing in the fields, so his Violation for not calling ahead on March 16th earned him a $10 Pay Withholding in Professionalism reflected in his upcoming paycheck.

5. For the Violation in Commitment for being late to work, Eddie received second Pay Withholding for $10, as this was Eddie’s second Violation in the Commitment category during the two-week pay period.

6. In the previous two-week pay period at the beginning of March, Eddie earned a Violation in Respect for disrespecting a peer in the field.

On March 30th, Eddie received Real Talk from Kyle. After Real Talk, Kyle reported out the Violations to Eddie, explaining you earned two Violations in Commitment, two Violations in Professionalism, and one Violation in Responsibility which was only a warning, so in total you received $20 in Pay Withholdings from your pay check this week. Kyle then reported out Eddie’s Earnbacks, explaining you had a $10 Earnback in Respect from your last paycheck because you did not earn any Violations in the Respect these past two weeks. Eddie received a $20 deduction in his paycheck and a $10 Earnback. In total he lost $10 from this week’s check. Eddie earned $107 for his two-weeks on the farm.

Documenting Accountability

Crew leaders and staff observe and document violations. They consistently monitor youth participation and interactions in the Real Work on the farm. Typically, the Crew Leaders assign violations witnessed during work or in an activity. The individual Crew Leader is responsible for recording and documenting violations for their specific Crew. Violations are documented in a Crew Leaders notebook and
later transferred into a central binder containing the Individual Violation Record for each participant to track violations over time. (An original Individual Violation Record is located in appendix D).

Every Wednesday in the spring (and Tuesday in the summer) a weekly staff meeting took place on the farm. Time was allocated to discuss Violations that staff (i.e. not the Crew Leader) witnessed during the previous week. For example, Nicole Williams (the social work intern) explained that on April 10th, I saw Lauren sleeping during the workshop, and Brett was using his phone on the bus on Saturday. Erin Lee, Crew Leader for Lauren and Brett, then documented these violations in the Individual Violation Record for Lauren and Brett. All staff monitor and document Violations: on the farm, bus, during field trips, outings, and in other settings.

The time was also used to discuss potentially controversial Violations. At times staff questioned whether an action, such as Crew Member Frank Jones sagging his pants in fieldwork, warranted a Violation, and if so, which category the Violation should fall into. Any uncertainties Crew Leaders had within the Violation system were brought to the staff meeting for deliberation. Each staff member had an opportunity to weigh in, and a collective decision was taken about any Violation in question. Heather explained the goal with the system was not for the staff to police the youth, but rather to create an environment with clear expectations that allow participants to hold themselves accountable to the culture and community we aspire to create here (Interview with Heather Warren).

In the documentation and discussion of the Violations, at times staff felt conflicted about taking money from the youth. Some staff felt that it might be unethical to take money from youth who potentially need it for personal living expenses and/or to support their families.

4. Real Consequences

This section outlines in detail the analysis of the “Real Accountability” system from program records of Violations, Pay Withholdings, Earnbacks, Firings, and Rehirings. Real Accountability functioned as a feedback mechanism: it was a direct response to a participant’s actions based on performance in the ecosystem. Youth seemingly felt the “real consequences” for their actions through pay deductions.
Analysis of Individual Violation Records

I conducted content analysis of each of the 31 Individual Violation Records for the youth participants. I counted all Violations within each standard category to generate frequency counts (i.e. the total number of times a Violation, Earnback, and Pay Withholding was delivered to youth participants). The total violations earned in 5 months equaled 363 by 31 participants.

To obtain the frequency, I take Violations directly as recorded by the Crew Leader. In the form, standards were listed out on a grid, and space was provided for Crew Leaders to document the date, the “description of behavior” of the Violation, and whether the Violation was a Warning or a Pay Withholding.

After totaling the numbers per standard category, I analyzed the “description of behavior” using manifest content analysis to determine the three most common violations per standard category. The language used by the Crew Leader was clear and did not require interpretation because he or she indicated directly what category the Violation fell under. For example, on March 15th, Erin Lee recorded a violation for Anne Macmillan noting the description of behavior as *late* with $10 written underneath the Commitment category. This was recorded as a Violation in Commitment, and thus was counted in my manifest analysis in the *late to work* description of behavior within the Commitment category. I conducted the same form of analysis for each Violation. An example of an Individual Violation Record is located in appendix D.

Table 9.3 below reveals the total number of Violations by standard category, and the three most common Violations in each category to reveal what participants received Violations for.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Standard</th>
<th>Percent of total violations (N =363)</th>
<th>Frequency of three most common violations by category (i.e. description of youth behavior)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>39.1% (n =142)</td>
<td><em>No show/missing work (n =67)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Late to work (n =65)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Leaving early (n =7)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>16.5% (n = 60)</td>
<td><em>Not calling ahead (n =31)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Forgot an item related to work (n =15)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Examples – <em>work shirt, water bottle, a form or document</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Unprofessional behavior in work environment (n =11)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Examples - <em>throwing a ball, talking during an activity, combing hair at the market</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most frequent Violation was “Commitment”: 142/363 (39%). Within “Commitment”, the most common Violation was for no shows (not attending work) in 67 of 363 Violations (18.5%). The second most common Commitment Violation was being late to work 65/363 (17.9%). Third was Professionalism, 60/363, 16.5%) - about half for youth not calling ahead (31/60) to inform their Crew Leader that they would arrive late.

Attendance and timeliness proved to be the most challenging aspect of the program for youth.

These two issues in Professionalism and Commitment represent 56% of all violations (202 / 363). In other standards categories, youth received Violations in,

- **Hard Work** (46/363, 12.7%) for not following directions/failing to complete a task (15/46) and for having a slow pace or performance in a task (12/46).
- **Community** (42/363, 11.6%), the common violations were for using your phone (17/42) during work, and cursing on the job (14/42).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Violations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hard Work</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>Not following directions/failing to complete a task (n = 15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Slow pace/performance in tasks (n = 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sleeping in an activity (n = 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>Using phone (n = 17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cursing (n = 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shades on (n = 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>No water bottle (n = 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No work shirt (n = 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Littering (n = 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>Disrespecting a peer (n = 24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Examples – name calling, teasing, not being supportive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Public display of affection (n = 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Playing in circle (n = 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>Misusing tool or property (n = 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Littering (n = 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Breaking a light throwing football (n = 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Individual Violation Records, a programmatic document used by each Crew Leader to record each individual participants Violations and Earinbacks. This is found in Appendix D.

*Note: some of the indicators representing a Violation are similar and overlap with other categories, however the Violations were determined by the Crew Leader and program staff. The table reflects the verbatim listing of Violations as reported by the Crew Leader in Individual Violation Records.
Responsibility (31/363, 8.5%) related to forgetfulness and lack of preparation for no water bottle (14/31) or no work shirt (12/31).

The 31 participants earned a total of 363 Violations in 5 months, ranging from a minimum of 3 for one person to a maximum of 28. (Data for each individual participant (frequency, most frequent violation) is presented in Table C.2 in appendix C.)

No observable changes in the types of Violation (i.e. increases and decreases in frequency by category) could be discerned over the program duration. The most common Violation each week of the program across all Crews was Commitment.

Pay, Withholdings and Firings

The amount of money youth earn is determined by their hours, their performance and adherence to the program standards. When youth earn multiple Violations within a standard category, they receive a Pay Withholding. When participants overcome an issue, they “earn back” the lost money from previous Pay Withholdings. When youth did not overcome the issue, the money was not earned back.

Table 9.4 below illustrates the amount of money graduates lost. I use data on graduates because these were the youth who were in the program most consistently over the five-months. I provide data (mean, median, mode, and range) for lost earnings (Pay Withholdings less Earnbacks) by gender and by race. These reveal the commonalities across groups.

Table 9.4: Total pay loss (Pay Withholdings minus Earnbacks) by gender and by race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total Graduates (N = 25)</th>
<th>Female (n = 12)</th>
<th>Male (n = 13)</th>
<th>White (n = 4)</th>
<th>Black (n = 21)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Losses</td>
<td>$620</td>
<td>$260 (12)</td>
<td>$370 (13)</td>
<td>$150 (4)</td>
<td>$470 (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>$0-$120</td>
<td>$0-$120</td>
<td>$0-$120</td>
<td>$0-$120</td>
<td>$0-$120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>$24.80</td>
<td>$21.67</td>
<td>$28.46</td>
<td>$37.50</td>
<td>$22.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>no mode</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>$5</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>$15</td>
<td>$10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Individual Violation Records, a programmatic document used by each Crew Leader to record each individual participants Violations and Earnbacks.

Graduates

Table 9.4 documents pay losses incurred by program graduates. The mean loss for total participants was $24.80, ranging from $0-$120.
The Violations functioned as a feedback loop delivering participants information about performance. Most youth self-corrected—they responded to a Violation by earning back the lost pay in succeeding weeks. Another 8 of the 25 program graduates—men and women alike—did not lose any money during the program. They earned the full $1660. 7 of the 25 graduates—men and women—only lost $10, netting them a total of $1650. The remaining 10 graduates earned (and lost) varied amounts depending on how they individually responded to the accountability system.

Race and Gender

Findings from the analysis of losses shows that most youth lost no wages (mode: $0, median $5). In considering losses by gender, females (mode: $0, median $5) tended to lose less than males (mode: $10, median $10).

Black youth made up 21 of the 25 graduates. Most lost only $10. Two black youth (Jenny Elliot: $120 and Will Stafford: $110) represented nearly half (49%) of the total losses for all the black youth.

One white male (Joe Rogers) lost a lot ($120). The mean losses was skewed by the losses that Joe, Jenny and Will earned. Eliminating these outliers cuts the mean losses from $24.80 to $12.27 for all participants.

“Commitment” Violations

A concentration of Violations in the Commitment standard demonstrates where youth struggled the most with Real Accountability. When youth earned too many Violations in Commitment (from excessive tardies and absences) they were fired from the job. Table 9.5 below portrays the total number of Pay Withholdings and Firings for all the youth for the entire program, by program standard category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Standard</th>
<th>Pay Withholdings (N= 224)</th>
<th>Number of Firings (N = 12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard Work</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Individual Violation Records reveal that for all program participants (31), the 363 Violations led to 224 Pay Withholdings. Of these 224 Withholdings, 114 (50.8%) occurred in the Commitment category. Related to this, 11 of the 12 Firings were based on their accruing six Violations for no shows and being late to work.

In hiring, the staff explained that they aim to hire youth that are not already over-committed, however outside activities often led to youth being late and not showing up. Common teenager activities such as drivers-education, ACT exam classes, doctors’ appointments, and other extra curricular activities were cited by youth as influencing their ability to make it work.

Others had extraordinary circumstances (doctors appointments related to pregnancy, death in the family, issues in the household) influencing attendance. Regarding tardiness, participants gave several reasons for being late.

- Bicycle: Joe Rogers, relied on a bike, which seemed to delayed arrival.
- Lack of control: Others depended on parents or family members, or the school bus, for transport.
- Sleeping in: Eddie Benson and Lauren Belle found it challenging to get out of bed in the mornings on the weekend

The accountability system is designed to reveal the problems that youth struggle with in performing “real work” –just showing up is one big factor.

In this case, it is not because the youth are “at-risk” but because of many commitments, and external activities competing for time.

**A second chance –rehiring after firing**

The Rehiring process allowed participants to recover their position within the program after being fired. The Rehiring committee is made up of a group of peers and one representative from the adult staff. In
Chapter 4, One Spring on the Farm, I offered the example of Bryan Miller to explain the Rehiring process. Bryan was fired from the program in May of 2013 for excessive Commitment violations, namely absence. I recount Bryan’s experience here to reiterate the intricacies of the Rehiring process. Bryan completed the rehiring process in this order.

1. Bryan first wrote a letter to the rehiring committee explaining his case. In the letter, Bryan was asked to outline why he was fired, and what he planned to do differently to avoid the patterns that led to his firing, if he is offered his job back.

2. Bryan then attended a hearing in front of the rehiring committee explaining his case. (The rehiring committee was made up of a representative from each different crew. The representative is elected to participate through a blind, democratic vote within the crew. Two staff members are also part of the committee, making up a total of five members).

3. After the hearing, Bryan was dismissed, and a member of the committee read the letter aloud. After the committee digested the letter, they deliberated and voted on whether Bryan should be offered his job back.

4. Bryan was offered his job back, so he worked his first day back on the farm without pay. All youth going through the rehiring process must work a full volunteer day. During the volunteer day, participants could not incur any violations or they would not be given their job back. Bryan successfully completed the rehiring process without any violations during his volunteer day. This took place over 5 days, as Bryan was required to submit his documents and complete the process within the allotted 5-day period.

After a person was fired, participants received one week to complete the Rehiring process if they desired to return to the farm. Of the 11 firings, 7 participants applied for Rehiring, and all 7 were accepted back into the program. 4 youth who were fired opted not to go through Rehiring, and 1 youth (Will Stafford) was fired near the end of the summer program and did not have the option of Rehiring. 1 participant, Tim Watson, quit the program in early April and attempted to go through the Rehiring process but was unsuccessful. The Rehiring committee was willing to give Tim a second chance to come back for the summer portion of the program, but Tim earned several Violations on his volunteer day back on the
farm. Table 9.6 below indicates the details of participants in the 2013 cohort who quit, lost their job, and/or came back through Rehiring.

**Table 9.6: Youth participants in 2013 cohort who were fired or quit**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Crew</th>
<th>Date of Fire/Quit</th>
<th>Reason for departure</th>
<th>Rehired</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tim Watson</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>April 4th</td>
<td>Quit</td>
<td>Applied, but did not complete process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooke Jefferson</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>April 11th</td>
<td>Fired for excessive Violations in Commitment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Alexander</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>April 25th</td>
<td>Quit</td>
<td>Did not apply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryan Miller</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>April 26th</td>
<td>Fired for excessive Violations in Commitment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Wilson</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>April 27th</td>
<td>Fired for excessive Violations in Commitment</td>
<td>Did not apply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren Belle</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>April 27th</td>
<td>Fired for excessive Violations in Commitment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny Elliot</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>April 27th</td>
<td>Fired for excessive Violations in Commitment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Rogers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>May 11th</td>
<td>Fired for excessive Violations in Commitment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eddie Benson</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>May 18th</td>
<td>Fired for excessive Violations in Commitment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Foster</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>May 29th</td>
<td>Fired for excessive Violations in Commitment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim Robinson</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>June 5th</td>
<td>Fired for excessive Violations in Commitment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will Stafford</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>June 11th</td>
<td>Fired for excessive Violations in Professionalism and Commitment</td>
<td>N/A (too close to completion of program)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Individual Violation Records, and the author’s field notes to recount specific dates and occurrences.

5. **Commitment and Rehiring – second chances for three varying cases**

I present two cases of individual youth – Bryan Miller (highlighted in Chapter 6) and Jenny Elliot – to outline how different youth experienced Rehiring. Each was fired for “Commitment” violations.

**Bryan**

Bryan was hired from the “engaged” end of the leadership spectrum. Bryan was an 18 year-old senior in high school at Washington. Bryan Miller was fired mid-program (on April 26th, 2013) for excessive Violations in Commitment. Bryan earned a total of 10 violations during the program in Commitment, the majority of which occurred during the spring (8 of 10). Bryan received two violations for
being late to work and eight violations for missing work. 10 of 19 Violations for Bryan were in Commitment, costing Bryan a total of $90 from his paycheck due to Pay Withholdings.

Bryan was a very involved student but this led to a problem. Bryan’s involvement in other activities proved to be a challenge. He held leadership positions in his school and was preparing for college in the fall of 2013. In his exit interview, Bryan explained his issues with “commitment” stating that “I had a lot of commitments and it was just that my commitments took away time from [program name], so essentially I had gotten fired and then went through the rehiring process to get my job back”. His involvement in other activities undermined his ability to show up.

Bryan was very calculated in decisions about missing work; many of his absences were premeditated. He knew he would reach the limit for violations in commitment, and planned to go through the rehiring process after getting fired. He felt his other school activities were a legitimate reason to miss work. Program Staff understood that Bryan was playing the system, but because of the way it was explained to youth, there was not much they could do to change things. Heather explained that the process is designed to be flexible because our goal is to keep youth in the program, not have something that is so rigid that no one is able to complete the program but this was the first year we really saw kids working the system like that (informal conversation with Heather, field notes).

When I asked Bryan in his exit interview if he learned anything from his difficulties meeting the Commitment standard, Bryan explained, “When I go to college, I’m going to be trying to make sure I have a schedule because I have classes, but also want to do things in college, so [the experience] helped me really think about okay, if I’m gonna do this I need to know how does what I want to do fit in my class schedule or my schedule for school because that’s what comes first for me always. So I have to make sure my commitments are straight”.

The rehiring committee offered Bryan another opportunity to complete the program because he was a strong leader and brought a lot to the team. The Rehiring allowed Bryan to complete the program and graduate, but he acknowledged that he was overcommitting himself.
Jenny

Jenny Elliot, from the “at risk” end of the spectrum, represents the other side to the difficulties youth face in meeting the challenge of Commitment. Jenny Elliot was fired on April 27th, 2013 for excessive Violations in the Commitment category. Jenny missed six and a half of the possible 48 workdays. She received a total of 19 Violations; 12 in the Commitment – seven for being late and five for missing work.

Jenny’s firing stemmed from a single week in April. Jenny’s school was on spring break. Jenny missed both days of work – Thursday April 11th and Saturday April 13th. During her week off, Jenny explained it was really hard for her to get out of her house. She wasn’t coming to school, so she did not have direct transport to the farm from her house. Additionally, Jenny described a scene from home, mentioning there were a lot of people coming and going from her house. Her home situation was unstable – Jenny split time between her auntie’s and her mother’s house. During her spring break, Jenny stayed at her mother’s house. She explained the house was full of people and that she often was stuck watching other people’s children: parents were not taking care of them and left them at the house. Jenny’s home environment is full of negativity and apathy, which impacted her own motivation, many of them people ain’t workin’ and all they do is sit around and smoke weed all day.

A key informant (“Sally”) from Jenny’s school confirmed the situation. She recalled an occasion when she dropped Jenny at home afterschool. Upon arrival to her house, Jenny explained to Sally, I don’t want to go in there. Sally suspected issues at home influencing Jenny, which was not the first time. Sally stated that on a several occasions, the school sent Jenny home because they suspected she was high from smoking marijuana. Jenny’s household factors, according to Sally, were undermining her school attendance and performance, and provoking drug use. These issues likely extended to work attendance. Jenny acknowledged that her home environment was influencing her ability to get to work, related to being around people that did not work and having to watch other people’s children. Though Jenny did not state this to me or other staff, it was suspected that her lack of motivation may also be linked to marijuana use. It may have been unavoidable for Jenny due to her household situation.
The time off turned out to be a catalyst for Jenny. Jenny opted to go through Rehiring. During the process, the committee believed Jenny’s contributions to the program and her Crew was important. A fellow crewmember and ACL on the rehiring committee, Will Stafford, believed Jenny to be the most important member of his crew because of what she brought to the team. Will acknowledged Jenny’s personal growth and suggested her growing confidence was infectious because she was so supportive of other Crew Members. The committee felt it would be a huge loss to the crew and program if she were to leave, so she was given her job back.

In her exit interview, Jenny was asked what she learned from the firing and rehiring process, and what she learned from sticking with the program. Below is an excerpt from Jenny’s exit interview where she touches on the experiences of rehiring as a second chance to show them I am this person they thought I was:

I have had so many problems with my work too, like when I was at [the program] like being late or not coming. And I actually fixed those problems, like you know I got fired and rehired, so I knew that I had to be on my game to make sure I didn’t get fired again… I wanted to show them that I am this person that they thought I was, like I am a good worker, so that is what gave me that confidence that they was willing to take me back and I wanted to show them that I could finish this program (Jenny).

The flexibility of the program allowed Jenny, Joe, and Bryan a second chance. As Heather explained, the goal of the accountability system was to be clear and structured, and introduce rigor into the ecosystem while allowing youth to remain within to benefit from positivity and other mechanisms fostering change.

Each case indicates a diverse pathway, with individualized experiences and different external impediments influencing Commitment to the program.

- For Bryan, it was having to juggle the complicated schedule of an overachieving teenager.
- For Jenny, it was the negative influence of dysfunctional household and people by whom she was surrounded
- For Joe, it was lack of personal motivation and disinterest related to family dynamics / complications, or something else unidentified.
6. Chapter Wrap Up

Real Accountability is a chief change mechanism bringing flexible rigor and structure into the work environment. Violations, Pay Withholdings and Earnbacks teach youth about Real Consequences – the effects of failing to adhere to policies within a professional workplace. Paying youth as employees within the ecosystem, Real Accountability enforces Real Consequences, gaining adherence to programs standards that aim to cultivate leaderly, professional behaviors.

Youth encountered different challenges with Real Accountability. Many wrestling with Commitment, being late or not showing up. The challenge of Commitment reveals diverse experiences within Real Accountability and revealed the barriers youth face in adhering to an accountability system. All youth who were fired lost their job because of Commitment. The issues connected to Commitment often stemmed from youth being overly committed rather than being “at-risk”.

Pay Withholdings and total losses for participants were fairly consistent across race and gender. Most youth did not suffer any pay losses. Males accrued slightly higher losses than females. Three participants were significant outliers representing nearly half of the total losses to all graduates.

The mechanism functions as a feedback loop within the ecosystem by conveying information to participants about their performance. Violations are delivered to let youth know when they fail to adhere to a standard, which encourages a “response”. If youth react to the feedback positively, they are awarded an Earnback for responding to the feedback. When youth fail to respond, they continue to receive Violations and can eventually lose their job.

The Firing and Rehiring process offers youth an additional opportunity to adhere to the standards. By undergoing a rehiring process and meeting criteria to remain within the ecosystem, youth are provided another chance to advance their “leaderly” change and respond to the standards.
Chapter 10. Discussion: Youth Pathways and Tipping Points to Leaderliness

1. Introduction

The previous chapters describe five-months of the youth leadership development program. These findings explain reasons for mostly positive changes youth experienced (leaderliness) and the mechanisms that cultivated these changes. Here, I revisit my research questions and explain how the mechanisms work together: they form an ecosystem to foster “leaderliness”, working in ways best understood by complexity thinking. The complexity framing accounts for all interconnected elements of a program, organization, and setting that comprise the ecosystem and how it functions.

Below, I depict a revised conceptual framework to represent how I view the ecosystem and its elements. I use the revised framework to answer my research questions and discuss my main findings that demonstrate:

1. how to create an ecosystem for positive, valued leaderly change in young people, and
2. the value of viewing a program through an ecosystems approach to reveal how a system can work to cultivate change.

Roadmap of Discussion

In this chapter, I return to my overarching research question: How development organizations can pursue effective and meaningful change within youth? I address this question and other research questions in 6 sections.

• In section 1, I recap the research findings.
• In section 2, I present my new conceptual framework explaining the ecosystem.
• In section 3, I address and respond to the overarching research questions, which asks: How can development organizations pursue effective and meaningful change in youth, i.e., enhanced capabilities? I do this by presenting a revised conceptual framework of the ecosystem, and explain how the ecosystem functions to foster “leaderliness”. I make the case for complexity thinking and the value of the ecosystem approach for capturing and understanding change within a system.
• In section 4, I address research question 2: What individual factors and experiences influenced change within youth in the ecosystem? I also address diversity as factor in change, part of research question 1: What particular elements cultivated valued changes?

• Section 5 addresses: What particular elements cultivated valued changes? This spans Real Work, the natural environment, place and space. Real Talk and relationships within the ecosystem and Real Accountability - the system and its flexibility, rigor, and use of money.

• In section 6, I answer research question 3: how the designed structure of response and adaption in the organizational system influenced change? I discuss how Crew Leaders act as feedback loops in the ecosystem, how the Real Pay functioned to encourage leaderly change, and flexible rigor of the accountability system.

2. Unpacking the black box: what is the ecosystem?

My original conceptual framework outlined "pathways and factors shaping change" within a complex system. Applying the complexity lens, I focused on understanding how the entire ecosystem of the development organization and leadership program functions: the people, place, space, and various intentional and unintentional mechanisms that factor into how a youth pathway is altered through this experience.

The fine-grained analysis of the three core “change mechanisms” of Real Work, Real Talk, and Real Accountability demonstrate how these mechanisms function together to cultivate leaderly change.

Figure 10.1 below portrays the ecosystem. The large triangles are the mechanisms of Real Work, Real Talk and Real Accountability. These mechanisms are connected through feedback loops represented by the orange arrows. Other essential elements that fill out the ecosystem are people (represented by the circle in the center), places/spaces (markets, the farm, the Ecocampus, other external sites), and other programmatic elements including diversity, relationships and Crews, and the natural environment.
Figure 10.1: Visual model of program ecosystem

**Key**
- Change mechanisms = feedback loops
- Key = Crew Leaders

**People**
- Youth
- Staff
- Volunteers
- School Affiliates
- Other Stakeholders
- Parents/Guardians

**Real Talk**
- Fieldwork
- Rituals (circles, observation walks)
- System of Positives and Negatives
- System of Positives and Negatives

**Real Work**
- Ecocampus (Outdoor Classroom)
- Crops (kale, watermelons, carrots, others)
- Markets (Farmers, PopUp)
- Other External Sites (field trips, camping, ropes course)

**Natural Environment**
- Trees, bayou, insects, sun, weather, weeds
- Land (soil, earth)

**Diversity**

**Accountability**
- Crew Leaders

**Real Relationships**
- Crew Leaders
- Crew Leaders
- Crew Leaders
- Crew Leaders

**Field**
- Observation walks
- Rangers
- Card games
- Value cards
- Value cards
- Values/Standards of Behavior
- Role-Modeling

**Urban Park**
- (Outdoor Classroom)

**Markets**
- (Farmers, PopUp)

**Other External Sites**
- (field trips, camping, ropes course)
My framework is centered around the ecosystem’s ability to nurture “leaderly” young people, not just members of the workforce. The program is grounded in a human development approach; that is we aim to expand valuable beings and doings in the young people (HDCA, 2005; Sen, 1985) (i.e. their capabilities here exemplified in leaderliness – self confidence, interpersonal communication, etc.). I present this revised framework to demonstrate what the ecosystem comprises.

The Real Work (elaborated in chapter 6) is made up of the fieldwork (weeding, planting, and cultivation of crops), the curriculum, workshops, and activities, the games and other rituals like opening and closing circles and observation walks designed to encourage youth to “open up” and interact with each other. The Real Work provided all the activities and work for youth to engage in. The Real Work is supported by other elements of the ecosystem, namely the natural environment – the sun, wind, rain, heat, and insects, and the living plants youth cultivated in the work. There was Real Work to be done on the farm that meaningful and relevant for participants.

The Real Talk (explained in chapters 7 and 8) contains 3 formats (Standard, Self-Reflective, and Intensive) occurring on a bi-weekly basis. It consists of the system of Positives (2 positive comments) and Deltas (1 area for improvement) delivered to youth by Crew Leaders (Standard format), peers (Intensive), and by themselves (Self-Reflective) in a structured, open, participatory forum. The system of Positives and Deltas provided individual, tailored feedback to guide youth toward positive, leaderly change. The Crew Leaders targeted areas for growth and through simple, specific words like “open up” and “you bring something valuable to our team”. These little, iterative expressions over time are supported by the Real Work and how youth are performing in Real Accountability that work to guide youth positive change.

Real Accountability (chapter 9) consists of the values and standards of behavior – the “Program Standards” such as Commitment, Professionalism, Respect, and others (see table 9.2). The Standards establish the expectations of the youth participants within the ecosystem. Youth received Violations for failing to adhere to the Standards, which leads to Pay Withholdings from their biweekly paycheck. Acting as a feedback loop, if youth correct their behavior they Earnback the Pay Withholding during the following two-week paycheck. The paycheck supports the Real Accountability. It is an important factor in bringing
youth into the system. This change mechanism acts as a feedback mechanism, indicating to youth when they fail to meet expectations there are Real Consequences. Youth are encouraged to react to the feedback and overcome the individual challenge.

**People** are central to the ecosystem. The youth participants interact, engage, and help to construct the various mechanisms within the ecosystem. **Crew Leaders** act as **feedback loops**, monitoring and engaging with youth within the Real Work to observe and provide direct feedback in Real Talk Positives and Deltas and Real Accountability Violations, Pay Withholdings and Earnbacks to encourage youth to advance positive leaderly change. School affiliates are important to the program (recruitment, hiring) and maintaining the farm (volunteers). Parents/guardians and the household influenced (positively and negatively) how youth experienced the program.

**Diversity** within participants introduced variance into the ecosystem, allowing youth to learn from people that were different (household, school, race, gender) than they were.

**Relationships** and groups (i.e. Crews) exist to create and influence change within the ecosystem.

The **places** and **spaces** are also central elements of the ecosystem. These are represented in the diagram in the white space where the program mechanisms are positioned to demonstrate that this is where the program is taking place. The urban park, farm, natural environment, land, and external locations (markets, field trips) offered the settings for youth to engage and perform Real Work. The crops, plants, and weeds were integral to Real Work and experience. These distinct elements helped to shape the experience for youth, offering challenges related to heat, sun, and weather, while pushing youth to bond and build relationships.

All of the parts of this ecosystem work together to cultivate change. I present this revised framework to establish how I view the ecosystem to build on in the remaining sections of my discussion.

I address “**how the ecosystem functions**” in the next section to respond to my overarching research question – **how can development organizations pursue effective and meaningful change in youth, i.e., enhanced capabilities?**
3. **The program as an ecosystem: The value of embracing complexity to promote change**

In this section, I answer my overarching research question of - **How can development organizations pursue effective and meaningful change in youth (i.e. enhanced capabilities)?**

I discuss the research question and explain how the ecosystem functions, and how the complex systems approach was useful for understanding how "change" happens within a system. In figure 10.1 above, I portray the ecosystem, and here I explain how it functioned to promote valued, positive, leaderly change in participants.

**How the ecosystem functions**

A systems framing and ecosystem perspective addresses the different ways of understanding or representing a social, technological or natural system and its relevant environment (Leach, Scoones, & Stirling, 2007). An ecosystem approach recognizes the ways in which change can occur. Systems thinking asserts that context is critical for understanding how things change (Ramalingham et al, 2008). It embraces multiple interactions between agents and actors over time, and stresses the importance of individuality. It recognizes that change is nonlinear and unpredictable, and sensitive to initial conditions. A human built system that is aiming to cultivate necessary skills for life and work such as self-confidence, agency, and communication needs to be flexible and respond to the diversity of individuals within the ecosystem. I view my case through this systems framing approach to represent an ecosystem fostering change in youth.

This case demonstrates the importance of embracing the **whole ecosystem** to cultivate (positive) change. The ecosystem consists of the various elements and the chief change mechanisms illustrated in figure 10.1. These mechanisms are **interconnected** and **interdependent** – they are directly related to each other through feedback loops working to promote leaderliness. Each core mechanism of Real Work, Real Talk, and Real Accountability interacts through **feedback loops** (Crew Leaders, Real Talk log, Violations and Earnbacks, external information channels).

Youth within the ecosystem were diverse, and thus responded differently to the ecosystem. The ecosystem can respond to **unpredictable** events or alterations within and outside the program ecosystem.
The forces influencing leaderly change cannot be reduced, condensed or isolated to occur from one piece or element of the system. No single individual element is more or most important in cultivating change; rather each contributes to the whole system. This occurs through interconnected feedback loops to encourage leaderly change.

Typical development programs do not consider the whole ecosystem and how the parts come together to form a system that enables change to happen (i.e. Ramalingham, 2013). Social change is dynamical, and requires systems that are reinforced and setup to….

Role of Feedback Loops in the Ecosystem

Feedback loops are part of dynamic systems and any ecosystem. Feedback loops gather information from an element of a system and deliver it to another element that creates a response. It enables a recipient to adjust future output using the new information. They can be intentional and designed – like Real Talk in this ecosystem – or they can be natural and organic – such as the natural environment. Feedback loops are sources of information to provide an understanding of how and where fluctuation is happening within an ecosystem. They allow for self-correction using new information to enable a response to emerging conditions (Quinn-Patton, 2011).

Within my case, feedback loops worked in two directions. Feedback to youth in Real Talk and Real Accountability relayed information about their performance to encourage alteration of choices or behaviors within the ecosystem to produce a different outcome. The response/information received through the feedback loop functioned through the Crew Leader, who utilized what they were learning to continue to shape the youth pathways.

Real Talk was an opportunity for the Crew Leader to reflect on how the participant was changing in the forum. The documented Positives and Deltas within the Real Talk log functioned as a database to draw on to see how participants were responding over time. Crew Leaders used the information to continue honing in on a specific area of change, or they reflected back on a Delta that was internalized as a hurdle a participant prevailed over.
Similarly, with the change mechanism of Real Accountability, the staff had a concrete set of information outlining:

- how youth participants were responding to the through the continued tracking of Violations (i.e. were youth altering behavior based on the Violations)
- who was receiving Violations and Pay Withholdings, and why
- who was struggling with absences and “Commitment”, and why
- who was overcoming challenges by earning back pay.

This information provided warning signs of participants failing to self-correct. It offered staff a chance to assist youth in correcting behavior. The Crew Leader acted as the critical conduit for feedback, adapting program elements to respond to emergent conditions (community, program, weather). He/she collected information in real time, and relaying it to Crew Members or appropriate staff to generate a future response.

The Crew Leader’s role is to pay attention to the Crew Members growth. They function as a “cultivator” rather than a manager or supervisor as in other work environments.

**How feedback loops altered the program**

Feedback loops provided the organization with information about the participants – and external environment, such as the Mother’s Day Shooting, allowing Crew Leaders and staff to pivot in programming to adapt to changing conditions. Examples include:

- altering pairings in fieldwork to respond to an individual issue observed in the work, Crew Leaders paired youth together intentionally (such as the pairing of a white and black youth in fieldwork referenced in Chapter 6).
- introducing a new program guideline: guidelines (explained in Chapter 3) were programmed into the curriculum, but were also used as a response to something/events/ witnessed in the ecosystem. For example, the Real Talk language of *no blame, shame or judgment* was introduced during the program cycle after an encounter where youth were judgmental about another participant.
- conducting violence workshop in response to Mother’s Day shooting (explained in Chapter 6)
Utilizing feedback loops to alter programming and affect outcomes proved to be an important element in my case for influencing youth leadership development. The use of the violence workshop, for example, represents how a program can utilize a feedback loop to respond to an event. This demonstrates that the ecosystem works, and its ability to respond in real time based on how people are advancing (or stagnating) within the program.

**How to influence pathways: building an ecosystem for youth that responds to diversity**

The ecosystem functions to respond to **diversity** and different types of youth. Leaderly change occurred on an individual level, and the diversity that each individual youth brought into the ecosystem explains change is influenced by anything in an individual person's life and environment. The youth came from different neighborhoods, schools, and households. They were black and white, rich and poor, and had varied life experiences influencing their pathway. Diverse participants require different nurturing responses (i.e. personalized, tailored feedback).

The youth **pathway** in my case is defined as how they advance toward the leaderly objectives within the program. Little interactions within the ecosystem such as a relationship with a Crew Leader, a single Violation, witnessing the growth and development of watermelons in the field, a meaningful connection with a unique peer, or an encounter with a customer at the market were all potential factors that influenced the pathways of youth within the system.

Framing: Within the ecosystem, individual change was best explained through each participant’s individual “framing”. Initial conditions and an individual’s distinct experiences, background, and history shape the way they responded. Each of these experiences – organic and intentional - could lead to a tipping point for an individual. All of the elements are important in constructing an ecosystem that responds to different people.

The complexity paradigm explains that the initial conditions influencing change are wide, suggesting the pathways to change are as well (Resnicow and Page, 2008). In typical theories of change in international development, change is assumed to occur in linear, predictable ways, where things are kept constant overtime, and individual factors are controlled for (Chambers, 2008). Conventional approaches to youth development and workforce training follow this reductionist paradigm. Youth are viewed as potential
assets for investment. Investing inputs in human capital is thought to increase resulting outputs and overall productivity – increasing the amount of income a person can earn while adding to the production capacity of a given society (Nafukho et al, 2004).

My case reveals that change occurs on an individual level and supports the complexity lens, which suggests that the path to change in a system emerges from the multiple framings within it, as the “structure, substance and bounding of the system in question” is accounted for and is sure to differ for individuals (Leach et al, 2007). Change in the ecosystem on the farm demonstrates that it occurred gradually in some and rapidly in others. It can happen over time and is influenced by a number of factors.

**Tipping points: Small things lead to big changes**

The complexity paradigm implies that change is often sudden and unexpected; occurring from a build up of small things where eventually the scale tips leading to a cascading effect and sudden change that cannot be predicted (Gladwell, 2000). Within the ecosystem, I considered where and how tipping points might occur.

Tipping points –points where small things seem to lead to larger changes—were difficult to observe in 5 months of program experience, but not unknown. Some youth showed evidence of tipping points occurring. One example is Brett Samuel’s confidence and bravery developing from a jump off a pole during the ropes course. This shows how youth were influenced by specific events/moments.

Youth received consistent positive reinforcement through Real Talk to build up confidence. They opened up to each other through countless conversations and dialogue in games and activities, and it was not visible directly in the specific event that tipped a person. The small things mattered in encouraging youth to pursue a pathway toward leaderly change. Single words overtime in Real Talk are designed to build up a participant and lead to a personal change. Self-confidence grew in participants through this approach. Change like this is small and iterative but can tip a youth’s pathway.

Youth were susceptible to external shocks that influenced pathways:
• a pregnancy leading a participant (Michelle) to dropout of the program, large thing, large impact (but a small thing led to the pregnancy).

• a death in the family (Anne) leading to absences and missing the graduation ceremony, and

• an extended break from school leading sending on individual (Jenny) into a spell of absences that led to her firing and rehiring.

Creating a space where youth can be nurtured does not fully isolate them from the external environment. Building capabilities to support the youth while within the ecosystem is important, as people are susceptible and influenced by change from anywhere.

The tipping point may not have occurred for an individual within the ecosystem. The planting of seeds to foster change could or could not lead to drastic changes for youth – Lisa Charles (highlighted in Chapter 7) may not have reached her tipping point yet. Lisa did not respond to the Real Talk and demonstrate much evidence of leaderly advancement. Youth were different and responded/adapted in their own way to programming. Tipping points occur in different ways. They have not been experienced by all youth (yet). They may come later, or not occur at all, but by looking for tipping points and utilizing the complex systems approach, I was able to better understand how youth experienced the program and their personal growth process.

Each youth was different, meaning that the small iterative patterns like hearing the same positive feedback in Real Talk, or engaging in conversations in fieldwork with peers influenced change differently.

In the next sections, I answer my remaining research questions to discuss the findings.

4. Importance of diversity and individual factors—what matters?

In this section, I answer research question 2: What individual factors and experiences influenced the youth pathways to change within the ecosystem? More specifically, I consider the roles of gender, race, socioeconomic status, household, and school affiliation. Pathways refer to the personal experience of each individual in advancing toward leaderly change. I also address the role of diversity in this context in response to question 1: what particular elements of the system cultivate change related to diversity.
I answer these questions by first discussing leaderliness (from Chapter 5) – the positive change that occurred in youth through participation in the program, then address the importance of diversity and other individual-level factors.

**Outcomes promoted within and through the ecosystem: Leaderliness**

This case is about what it takes to prepare youth for the world – how to develop fundamental leaderly capabilities to enable young people to "be more and do more in ways that they have reason to value" – to build the capacity to live the life that they choose and value (Sen, 1999; UNDP 1990). Using Sen’s Capabilities Approach, and common notions of “soft skills”, the research considered how capabilities are advanced. I introduce the term **leaderliness** to represent a specific skill set to distinguish from the conventional views of “soft skills” and leadership.

My term is necessary because the "change" in this case is distinct from these understandings of "soft skills" and leadership. In chapter 5, I explained the advancement in these specific capabilities as **leaderliness**:  
- self-confidence – by opening up, stepping up and recognizing personal ability to overcome challenges and achieve goals leading to growth in self-efficacy  
- basic communication and interpersonal skills – conversing and interacting with diverse participants and adults in a professional environment  
- increased understanding and experience with professional behaviors - committing to a job, acting professional within a workplace environment, and learning the importance and challenge of hard work through physical labor.  
- increased knowledge of nutrition and health  
- increased knowledge of social justice

Before an individual can acquire "soft skills", "hard skills", or thrive as a leader, they first need a foundation to build from. These fundamental qualities (opening up to people, self-confidence, interpersonal communication, etc.) at the most basic level align with Sen’s capabilities – enabling an individual to pursue
things they value – and sets youth on a path of being more prepared for the world they face. Leaderliness is relevant in any context to succeed and advance other individual capabilities:

- In various developing urban settings, youth face challenges of survival. Whether seeking a “formal” job in a restaurant in New Orleans, or selling chickens on the side of the road in Nairobi, a young person needs basic capabilities to be resourceful, resilient, and respond to the complexity of the world.

- Trends in leadership and the future of work seek individuals who are “adaptable, self-aware, have the ability to collaborate, and work across large networks” (Petrie, 2011; Manpower, 2013). Leaderliness capabilities enable individuals to advance other abilities. People first need to be self-confident, able to communicate, work with diverse types of people, and show up to work on time, for example, before they learn to “work across large networks” and “collaborate” on projects.

- Skills important in entrepreneurship, “changemaking”, social entrepreneurship, and future leadership are linked to leaderly capabilities. To take risks, be empathetic, innovative, creative, and adaptable (Schumpeter, 1942; Dees, 1998; Drayton, 2006) and to oversee other, diverse types of people, youth need leaderly capabilities to respond to the “wicked” challenges of the world.

    Youth require this level of interaction with work and other people to change and grow – to develop the successful “soft skills”, “hard skills” or other leaderly capabilities required for work and life (Tough, 2012; Crosby, 2005). “Soft skills” are developed in real-life mechanisms for application in a “first person, present tense, experiential” environment (Crosby, 2005). The importance and value of experiential learning for education and knowledge transfer is not a new phenomenon (see Dewey, 1936; Freire, 1968). In these types of environments, youth learn by doing and trying new things.

    Other programs seek to create skills in youth through participation in a program. My case sought to develop experiences within an ecosystem that allowed youth to explore who they are and grow leaderly capabilities on their own pathway.

    These are the basic elements that all humans need to work, live and interact with and within the world.
The effects of individual factors on the advancement of leaderliness

These basic capabilities are integral and relevant for the development of any individual. I studied how, and if, personal characteristics influenced leaderly outcomes in the participants. Considering the advancement of change through an ecosystem perspective showed that everything about the individual is relevant and could alter an individual’s pathway within a program. Each person adapted and reacted to the ecosystem in their own way:

• Jonathan Tyler was a black male hired from the “potentially disconnected” category because of his challenges in school, the household he came from, and other personal level factors. Jonathan’s mother was a consistent force in shaping his individual pathway through the program, ensuring he was always on time and had a ride to and from work. In this instance, his household had a positive effect on his pathway.

• Joe Rogers was a white male from a middle-upper class home with access to a good school. Joe wrestled with Commitment, earning more Violations than any other Crew Member. Joe’s race, gender, household, and school may have played into shaping his experience, but it is difficult to see how, and where, these individual level factors influenced Joe’s challenges.

• Bryan Miller was a black male hired as an “engaged leader”. Bryan’s Commitment was influenced from being over-committed due to school and work. Bryan is an example of an individual whose pathway was impacted by his school engagement.

Jonathan, Joe, and Bryan are all males but different people (race, socioeconomic status, school) who each encountered and experienced the ecosystem in their own way.

Within the change mechanisms, patterns emerged regarding how youth experienced Real Accountability and the Violation system related to race and gender.

• Females received slightly less pay Withholdings than males, and on the whole, most youth (regardless of gender, race, or other individual factors) did not experience significant Withholdings.
• The “outliers” (i.e. individuals outside the averages) accounted for nearly half of all pay withholdings (Jenny Elliot, Will Stafford, and Joe Rogers), and were mixed in terms of gender, race, socioeconomic/household background, and school affiliation.

• Fired and Rehired youth were male (4) and female (3), white (2) and black (5), represented each of the 5 schools and all 3 hiring categories ("currently engaged", “currently unengaged”, “potentially disconnected”).

Individuals changed in their own unique way and personal factors played various roles in determining program outcomes.

Harnessing diversity in the ecosystem

Hiring and reflecting social and economic diversity is a programmatic goal. My findings support the relevance of diversity as a programmatic element within the ecosystem for cultivating leaderliness. The positive role that diversity played in cultivating leaderly capabilities was realized in:

• pairings in fieldwork: Crew Leaders utilized fieldwork to partner youth based on different personalities, race, and strengths and limitations within the work.

• formation of crews: balance was sought in the original organization of Crews between males and females, black versus white students, and the hiring spectrum.

• programmatic guidelines and curriculum: Dissent/or at least difference was required for participants to learn from. A diversity of ideas was introduced into the system utilizing physical attributes and past experience, and the curriculum and guidelines drew on diversity to encourage youth to develop an understanding of other people’s perspectives, that its ok to disagree, and try on other ideas.

Conventional approaches to youth development discount the importance of varied participants – by race, class, and gender. "At-risk" youth programming typically involves only other at-risk youth (Ivry and Doolittle, 2003). My case shows that it is important to create diversity of all sorts – not exclusively race and class and the "classic" considerations of what brings diversity into a system but on a broader personal
level. Individual personalities, characteristics, and levels of “engagement” were considered here and each person brought their own set of strengths and “Deltas” (i.e. areas for growth).

The diversity element brought variety into the ecosystem. It was an important tool in encouraging change and understanding of others.

5. Real Mechanisms for Change

In this section I answer my research question: what particular elements of the ecosystem cultivate valued change. I address the question by discussing the element and change mechanisms in the ecosystem: Real Work, the natural environment, Real Talk, relationships, Real Accountability and the role of the paycheck. I explain how each function and interrelate as illustrated in figure 10.1.

Real Work

Real Work (explained in chapter 6) was a chief change mechanism in cultivating leaderliness, as shown in figure 10.1. Real Work provided a unique platform for interaction between youth and nature within a quasi-professional environment. The Real Work was important to the change process. For Crew Leaders it is a platform to observe youth work and interact to understand the participants and shape Real Talk (Positives and Deltas) and Real Accountability (Violations and Earnbacks).

Within the Real Work, different elements were important to advancing leaderliness:

• team-based: this encouraged social interaction with peers and adult staff that frequently occurred during fieldwork. This cultivated interpersonal skills and relationships between youth.

• experiential learning – active, engaged, where they have a clear role in a process to achieve something meaningful.

• novel work: growing plants.

• there was actual, real work to be done. The food needed to be produced to help sustain the organization and pay youth salaries, while providing produce for the community. The goals were clear and asked participants to push yourself to help accomplish our goals together.
• youth were relevant. Their voice and contributions mattered to the process and cultivation. This “Real Work” led participants to invest in and thus experience more desired change.

Youth understood their role in the process, and as goals were attained, participants experienced a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction, leading them to buy-in to the change the program was steering them toward. By seeing the fruits of our labor, youth learn the value of rewarding hard work through the physical labor of cultivate living plants. Real Talk reinforced this (explained below).

The Real (natural) Environment

The natural environment (as depicted in figure 10.1) was important to advancing leaderly change by creating a unique setting and backdrop for the Real Work to occur. Here, nature is the farm, outdoors, and surrounding environment within the urban park. The setting introduced natural elements – heat, rain, sun, dirt, trees, weeds, crops, and insects – that helped to shape the experience for youth participants.

Engaging in work outdoors on a farm was a novel experience for the youth. It was different than typical places these urban youth frequent (school, home, the movies, mall, fast food restaurants), and distinct from traditional education and jobs training programs. The youth connect to the land, soil and crops. The crops provided something to care for and nurture – living, breathing plants that would die if they did not give them attention.

Learning outdoors and connecting with living things in nature offers an alternative, building experiential curriculum around surviving/battling nature/the wild (and thus oneself). The labor was demanding, and the intensity increased as the weather warmed across the program. The outdoor work contributed to the bonds youth formed and the development of work ethic. Camaraderie was built through sweat and hard work performed in the fields – the work was hot and hard. It was in the fields that youth engaged and conversed around the work.

This is different than other conventional activities in a workplace. Making food, stocking shelves, working a cash register (all common activities in youth employment) do not enlist youth directly in a process of production of a living being. This encouraged youth to form a connection to what they were doing physically.
The youth experience would have been different if it had not been performed outdoors (vs. inside) in nature (vs. a sports field), on a farm (vs. wilderness). Thus, the environment was an important element of the ecosystem and how the program functioned. Youth working with their hands, digging in soil, cultivating live organisms, selling produce at a market – this experiential, physical learning in nature and added meaning to the work. It contributed to the ecosystem but alone is not enough to cultivate change.

**Real Talk**

Real Talk (explained in detail in chapters 7 and 8) is a core change mechanism depicted in Figure 10.1. The Real Talk offered youth positive, constructive, structured feedback through the system of Positives and Deltas in an open, ritualized forum to guide them on their pathway to leaderly change.

Real Talk could improve the success of youth work-readiness, leadership, and jobs training programs—and organizations generally. In contrast, conventional workplaces—for youth and adult—employees seldom learn what they are doing right and wrong; rarely hear how coworkers and superiors are interpreting it. People (employees, trainees) typically learn of mistakes/challenges after the fact when it becomes an issue for a colleague or superior. This is typically addressed in the moment and without care for how an individual can improve. Another standard mechanism is written and oral performance reviews—these provide feedback on a biannual or annual basis. Typically employees do not hear positive compliments about individual performance, and learn areas to improve.

The **open** forum of communication can be utilized to build skills and create an open, fluid culture within development organizations, programs, or other institutions – one where people feel comfortable communicating with coworkers and superiors, understand the expectations, and see themselves as part of the mission of the community.

The feedback is useful for **informing** participants, staff, and potentially other stakeholders of how they are being evaluated/perceived within a professional work environment. This enables the recipient to receive feedback and adapt/respond to what they hear.
Organizations that are “social mission-oriented”, trying to instill cultures of “innovation”, or even those seeking growth/change need to convey expectations to employees and create openness for people to collaborate, build relationships and work cohesively in teams. The Real Talk can do that, thus helping ventures gain support for the mission, encourage people to communicate openly in a structured, safe space, and advance what they aim to accomplish. This system has been employed within other youth development programs (The Food Project in Boston, MA, Urban Roots in Austin, TX) but not applied to other forums.

Other applications in community forums with different stakeholders, or in shared space with multiple users could benefit from structured communication platform to connect with participants. This program did not involve community in the process but instilling a communication platform worked to cultivate change in these participants that could work elsewhere.

**Role of peer relationships**

Relationships built in Crews between youth were supportive and open. They bonded through the work that promoted commitment and teambuilding. Fieldwork provided youth time to converse, socialize, and learn about each other. Games and energizers deepened connections, as youth had opportunities to have fun and play together. The hours participants spent working, talking, playing together in small “crews” (i.e. groups) increased their familiarity. They opened up with each other while pulling weeds, leading them to form bonds and engage in other aspects. The relationships evoked feelings of family. The work was more meaningful because they were doing it together – and with the same group of people over time.

Crews are small, which was important for developing more intimate connections between youth. All the same activities could have been done with the whole group, however the small Crews fostered deeper relationships over time.

The connections were reinforced through other elements/change mechanism within the ecosystem, demonstrating how it worked together to cultivated change. Youth formed bonds with Crew Members not just through the meaningful Real Work, but through talking about their work together in the structured, ritualized Real Talk. Diversity reinforces this process, allowing youth to learn about people and perspectives different than their own, and how to reconcile/overcome those differences. Youth could see how others were advancing and responding to the ecosystem through the formal Real Talk and Real
Accountability. Learning that a peer was receiving praise for following the rules, stepping up in circle, taking initiative, or for their quick pace in fieldwork acted to encourage others to follow the rules and conform to the standards.

This concept of peer modeling draws on the theory of social cognition and the role of peer-to-peer relationships in youth development. The theory suggests people learn behaviors and adopt practices from the replication of actions of others. It is “widely accepted” that peer influence and membership to a group is a powerful factor in adolescent development (Tate, 2000). Teenagers are more susceptible to pressure than other age groups (Cunningham et al, 2008), and positive peer pressure and group conformity can be taken advantage of in promoting positive change within youth development and skill building institutions. This is consistent with a complex systems – networking approach. Imbedding positive, leaderly youth within a network can influence other people within the system.

The relationships were one element of the whole ecosystem working to cultivate leaderly change.

Real Accountability

Real Accountability is my term for the system of accountability within the program: in Figure 10.1. The system consists of earned money, structured program standards, and the punitive model of Violations and Pay Withholdings. Those in turn are tied to the participant’ paycheck and based on the clear standards. The accountability system was a main change mechanism:

- paying youth to participate in the system
- enforcing expectations and revealing the consequences of contravening the rules
- providing structured flexibility and opportunities to learn from mistakes

The standards outline the expectations of youth participants within the program (see table 8.2 for further explanation). Real Accountability functions to show youth there are Real Consequences to not following expectations and standards within a professional environment. Recall that the youth are paid for their work, and when they do not follow the rules (Program Standards), they lose part of their paycheck.

Over time, youth can earn back the money lost to a Violation (thus ”Earnbacks”), which indicates to youth that they have the ability to overcome mistakes and improve. This teaches youth that there are
consequences for not following the rules, AND if you choose to correct your behavior and follow the rules, you are rewarded.

In many other settings for young people, they do not have an opportunity to self-correct and adapt. The stakes are often high, and when youth make mistakes, they lose opportunities. This feedback loop (explained in the next section) aimed to show youth that by obeying the rules and self-correcting, you can continue to reap the benefits of a paycheck, and gain the leaderly capabilities developed within the ecosystem.

Real Accountability is a primary change mechanism working in conjunction with other mechanisms and elements within the ecosystem.

Money matters: paycheck and incentives

Pay was relevant to the ecosystem. It gained entry for youth and helped to keep them present and interested. Simply to enter the program, most participants expected and needed to be paid - “I wouldn’t have done it if I didn’t get paid”. Youth applied for – and were hired to work at – a job for cash. In my case, most youth applied to the program because they viewed it as “a job”- a way to earn money vs. an educational experience or training program to earn skills. The reality for many youth in New Orleans is that money is often a necessity - meaning they need it for more than “pocket money” to go to the movies. Youth were eligible to earn a stipend of up to $1660, at roughly $6.85 per hour, which was just below minimum wage. For the program cohort, the total cost of the wages for 25 graduates was $40000. The total program costs were much greater, but the focus here is on the use of the paycheck as an incentive to create change.

Pay was important to youth in New Orleans, but this perhaps is based on context and local conditions. In other “developing” environments, like a rural subsistence farming community or an urban slum, youth may be willing to participate in a program because of skills they gain, or the access to a local nonprofit organization to build a social network. The criteria for a pay-based system is linked to understanding the local conditions and determining what type of an incentive is important for the local youth to commit to a program. In some settings (such as rural Kenya or Samoa), youth may not require an
incentive to participate in a training program that might lead to permanent work or income. They may value the training itself, so the context is important to factor into selecting an incentive.

Pay functioned as an incentive, drawing youth into the ecosystem and supporting other elements to create behavior change. This is consistent with other cash/incentive-based strategies in international development (employment schemes, food for work Conditional Cash Transfers) that use incentives in cultivating socially desired behavior change. In certain contexts and environments, people require an incentive to alter behavior, adhere to a condition, or participate in a beneficial activity to receive direct compensation (Hanlon, Barrientos, and Hulme, 2010). Conditions and the types of incentives shift based on local conditions. From a social CBA perspective, the money paid to encourage positive behavior is often a lesser cost to society than the ramifications of continuing the negative behavior (e.g. paying a mother for ensuring her child is in school, and paying a mother for getting her child immunized). The money worked similarly in this system. Youth were incentivized for meeting certain conditions tied to a valued personal change that adds value to society.

In New Orleans, the program offered participants a positive, constructive way to use their time. It took them off the streets afterschool and in the summer, while simultaneously building valuable skills for future success in life and work. Youth compete with a high surplus of low-skilled labor for jobs in many urban environments in both developing and developed cities/urban communities. The availability of jobs is limited. The value of gaining leaderly skills is important for future success. While paying youth on the farm cost the organization $1660 per pupil, the benefit overtime is potentially greater to society.

There are other ways of delivering/defining incentives within programming for youth. The takeaway for other programs is that an incentive can add an additional element to an ecosystem seeking to cultivate change in participant.

The pay on its own, however, is not enough to transform youth within a program.

6. Feedback loops: Crew Leaders and Flexible Rigor

This section addresses research question 3: How does the program’s designed structure of responses and adaptations in the organizational system influence programming and change in youth pathways? In other words, I address how specific elements of the ecosystem function as feedback loops to
shape individual youth pathways. Adult crew leaders, pay and money, and the flexible rigor within the systems have a role in the ecosystem functioning as feedback loops.

Role of the adult Crew Leaders

A crew leader was an adult staff member assigned to oversee 8 to 10 Crew Members during the five-month program. Youth Crew Members formed bonds with the adult staff as much – or more – as they did with other youth. These relationships were vital for cultivating change in youth. The Crew Leader was the main mechanism for supervising the Real Work and delivering the messages of change through Real Accountability and Real Talk. These adults were:

- invested: They are not on the sidelines observing, nor just directing and instructing, rather they converse and manage youth within each activity and task, which promoted bonds.
- trusted: The connections provided participants an example of a caring adult, who showed genuine interest in their life and well-being. Working side-by-side over time, participants valued the content from Crew Leaders because it was received from a trusted, adult staff member in a position of authority.
- authority figures: holding youth responsible for actions, Crew Leaders applied Violations, reported paycheck deductions, and monitored youth behavior. There is an incentive for participants to stay in the good graces of staff members.

The deeper understanding of individual participants was supported by the engagement of other staff members: staff maintained consistent streams of communication through the Real Talk log, and regular staff meetings to share information on the participants. Youth were diverse and responded to the system in different ways, which creates more work for the adults to tailor messages. Participant Jonathan Tyler needed Erin Lee to build his self-confidence before he could advance personal change. Bryan Miller needed Erin to encourage him to step back and understand his role in supporting others in the advancement of their leadership. Without Erin’s intimate knowledge of each Crew Member, she would not have been able to deliver the content to make participants aware of how to progress within the ecosystem.
Flexible rigor: balance between rigor and second chances

I introduce the term "flexible rigor" to refer the opportunities for youth to learn by self-correcting and second chances. The program is very structured, but the flexibility came in the Violations and Real Accountability. This includes the Earnbacks system (i.e. the ability to earn back money lost to Violations), and the system of Rehiring. It's common – 7 of the 12 youth who were fired opted to go through Rehiring. This flexibility was important to allow youth to self-correct, and remain within the ecosystem to benefit -- and benefit others -- from the change mechanisms.

This kind of "flexible rigor" within youth development, I argue and support from this case study, is important to encourage growth of leaderliness. Youth learn these leaderly skills not through sitting in a classroom following the rules, but through "experiences and adversity" where they have the opportunity to be challenged, and to fail and learn from their mistakes (Tough, 2012). Allowing participants opportunities to make mistakes in my case kept participants present, and able to benefit from and contribute to, the ecosystem.

Alternatives to this system are often rigid and stringent, and quick to eject people. Traditional work environments and training programs do not offer a lot of leeway. Youth have a perception that policies with major employers like Wal-Mart or McDonalds lead employees to be fired quickly because of their inability to adapt and adhere to the rules. Punctuality and truancy are taken seriously, and this is something young people tend to struggle with. (This was the number one issue for participants in my study). It is unrealistic to expect youth to learn and grow in overly structured environments. Youth require compassion and ecosystems that recognize failure is growth. Thus, more opportunities for them to learn valuable skills and keep within nurturing ecosystems are necessary to build important leaderly capabilities.

Flexible rigor raises an important question around how much leniency is too much, and how many rules are necessary to promote change in youth development programs. All 7 youths who opted to go through the rehiring process were given their job back. This demonstrates that the program is flexible – perhaps too flexible. This potentially can send a message to young people that regardless of individual investment and willingness to commit, you still keep your job.
The reality of work is that employees are not always given second chances. Many young people in the world (developed and developing) are relegated to low-skilled, low wage jobs. The likelihood is greater for “at-risk” youth (and others that do not advance into tertiary education) to enter low skilled and highly competitive job markets. In urban areas with high populations and few formal jobs, a young person's ability to commit to the job is vital to holding it. The competition for low-skilled jobs is high, and people are easily replaceable. Thus, there is a delicate balance in keeping people part of an ecosystem through rules and flexibility.

The organizational ecosystem offered a more balanced approach, aiming to ensure participants were able to remain within the system. Building relationships, staying on teams, going through tough times, and having compassion for one another helped to establish this balance. The effects of this “flexible rigor” on youth after they leave are unknown, however it presents an opportunity for future research to understand how this impacts/stays with participants in other job settings – is the rigor enough? Did it work, and how and why?
Chapter 11. Conclusion

In this chapter, I conclude my research in 4 sections.

- In section 1, I summarize what I attempted to do in the study, and explain what I accomplished in addressing my research questions.
- In section 2, I present the limitations to the research approach, methods, and the conclusions drawn from the findings.
- In section 3, I address the implications from these findings for youth development organizations, social innovators, policymakers, and the broader world of international development consider pathways for future research.
- In section 4, I present an epilogue of what I know about the youth participants following the conclusion of the program.

1. Conclusion

   My dissertation research explores “how change happens” in and through development organizations, focusing on youth “leadership”. I explored a specific organization, and its innovative programs and policies using a case study design. Through this single case, I intended to show:

   1. how a complex systems framing could reveal the ways in which an organization creates/establishes/influences youth pathways to change, and how change processes functioned,
   2. the individual characteristics that influenced youth participants in how they changed,
   3. the roles of specific programmatic elements in the change process including the relationships - between youth, and between youth and staff, the natural environment, the diversity of the participants, and other internal change mechanisms
   4. the role that feedback loops played in encouraging change in youth (i.e. how designed mechanisms of response and adaptation worked to alter youth pathways to change

   To investigate these questions, I employed a single case study research design where I used mixed research methods.

   I embedded myself within the organization for six months, engaging in all program activities and gathering data through personal observation. I complied and logged detailed observations, dates, and
experiences in a field journal. I conducted exit interviews with youth at the end of the program. I interviewed key informants --representatives from partner schools, program alumni, parents/guardians of youth participants, and program staff. I collected and compiled program data drawn from multiple internal documents including Real Talk logs, Individual Violation Records, and other organizational documents like daily schedules, staff meeting notes, and program calendars.

With these data, I conducted different types of analysis. For the interview transcripts, personal field notes, meeting notes, and program calendars I used qualitative content analysis - simple coding techniques like word counts and keyword in text were used to identify themes and interrogate the content. Multiple readings of the interview transcripts allowed for identification of inductive categories to interpret and understand the text, which was useful in formulating the narratives of each “change” mechanism to incorporate different types of data.

For the program documents – Real Talk logs and Individual Violation Records, I performed quantitative content analysis of the internal program documents (explained in detail in Chapters 8 and 9).

The case study addressed how personal factors like race, gender, socioeconomic status, and school affiliation influenced a youth’s pathway to leaderly change. I examined the role that diversity, relationships and the natural environment played within the program in cultivating leaderly change in participants. I analyzed internal change processes – what I call change mechanisms of Real Work, Real Talk, and Real Accountability – and the nuance of the programming language, internal systems of Violations, Withholdings, and Earnbacks, and the personal interactions with and within the work to unpack how change was cultivated within youth. The internal feedback loops – Crew Leader, individual Violations/Earnbacks, and single Positives and Deltas – were analyzed to demonstrate how the program uses these processes to cultivate change.

In my conceptual approach, I challenged the traditional methods of understanding in international development and youth development, which consider development as a linear process. Youth are viewed as capital for investment leading to greater outputs and increases in growth, income, and productivity (Heckman and Masterov, 2007). Instead, I applied a complex systems lens, which acknowledges the dynamic interactions between agents and actors over time. Complex Systems are nonlinear, interconnected,
dynamic, and adaptive, and change within a system is unpredictable. I considered how my case pursued positive change in participants through this approach.

I utilized the Capabilities Approach — to observe valued change as enhanced capabilities, i.e., the expansion of valued and inter-related individual freedoms “to do more and be more” (UNDP, 1990; Sen, 1999; Alkire, 2001; Nussbaum, 2011). These enhanced capabilities are seen in advancement of individual level “soft skills”, which I refer to as leaderliness; that is the growth in self-confidence, interpersonal communication, and self-efficacy.

I considered the program through the complexity lens as an ecosystem aiming to foster change within youth. Through this framing, I discovered the value of the “ecosystem” approach and how this development organization cultivated an ecosystem to grow leaderly change in diverse youth.

The organization program staff, employees, policies, standards, and activities – Real Work, Real Relationships, Real Talk and Accountability functioned together to nurture an ecosystem that cultivated life experience and valuable, positive leaderly growth in individuals, not just specific skills.

The Real Work experiences cultivating living plants taught youth the value of hard work, and nurtured experiential knowledge of how to work and be successful within a professional work environment. Youth interacted with diverse peers and learned from one another. Real Accountability ensured rigor and structure was present within the ecosystem to enforce the standards and encourage youth to grow in leaderly capabilities. This was supported through an open forum of communication – Real Talk – which offered youth feedback on their work performance, cultivating leaderliness in participants by encouraging them to open up, step up, and advance their abilities. Growth in the work recognized by the feedback mechanisms (Real Talk and Real Accountability) built youth self-confidence and propelled them to advance self-efficacy and other personal capabilities.

The diversity youth brought into the ecosystem functioned to bring difference and allow youth to learn from one another through the unique personalities, characteristics, and perspectives that each person brought to the farm. Youth adapted and adopted their own version of leaderliness – each individual’s pathway was unique. Some showed significant growth, while others (like Lisa Charles) did not yet reach a “tipping point”. Leaderly change was not always visible in youth, and their tipping point might come later, or not at all.
2. Limitations of research

My study has strengths of a case study to reveal novel, original concepts through a grounded qualitative enquiry. The multiple sources of rich, in-depth data collected through various methodological approaches (participant observation, in-depth interviews with multiple agents, programmatic documents) strengthens the internal validity of the findings. “Generalizability” in qualitative work and case study research is more about plausible extensions and interpretations from a theoretical standpoint—insights and understanding—rather than statistical representativeness, thus the aims of this research were different.

In my case, I sought to reveal how “change” occurs within this program supported by complexity thinking, which called for the specific methods I employed. My findings can be generalized to other locations, organizations, contexts and populations by offering insights from this particular program, how it functioned, what it accomplished with these youth, which can be contextualized and applied in other settings.

Nevertheless, there are obvious and necessary epistemological limits particularly around formal external validity related to my study design and specific methods.

Site and setting

The external validity to the New Orleans context and US situation is somewhat constrained by a focus on social innovation, a single growing season, and specific age/target group.

The study of an individual case, grounded in New Orleans in the United States, potentially limits how it can be applied to cases elsewhere in developing world contexts. Youth in south Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa face different conditions, such as extreme rates of unemployment, lack of formal economic and education opportunities, absolute poverty, and booming demographic trends not present in the United States. The context of the case would have been different if conducted in a location with these “environmental” issues that could have influenced the youth participants and conditions of the ecosystem (internally and externally). If conducted in Western Kenya, for example, at a small community-based organization, my findings could have been different. Youth in a rural setting in Kenya face different challenges (less formal education and employment opportunities, different household factors). Cultural implications may have influenced outcomes (views on formal jobs, paying youth to participate in a
program, traditional expectations of youth in the household). The program structure and focus would have been different (subsistence agriculture, less market access/commerce, donor and funding implications). As I demonstrated with my case, contextual factors are important in shaping an experience for a youth. These factors (and others) influence an ecosystem and how a program is rolled out, which would lead to different results and limitations of applying the findings to another location (directly).

**Population**

I am not able to make generalizations to the larger population of “inner city youth” because I investigated a small sample of youth through participant observation over a longer period of time. My research methods sought depth over breadth, and the aim was not to include a “statistically significant” sample.

The population of youth was not sampled from a larger population of urban youth in New Orleans or other urban setting. I did not randomly select the youth from a population of all youth in the city (or other region), to offer the same chance of selection for all youth. I focus only on a small group of youth between the ages of 15 and 19. The job is available only to students from five high schools in New Orleans (five specific schools selected for specific reasons to represent diversity in the city). These youth opt into the program (i.e., job) by applying and being hired. (This means youth applied, so it is a self-selecting sample of youth).

But, the youth represent black and white students from different schools and various socioeconomic backgrounds. The variation offers a richer understanding of these individual youth and their personal experience, but not a whole population. Mixed youth from different backgrounds, race and class are affected differently by the history and conditions of the city, which can influence change and is not directly “controlled” for in this study meaning it is difficult to generalize the findings directly to the larger population.

The program is focused on farming and relies on the weather, which cannot be compared or replicated directly to other settings such as a desert community in New Mexico in the United States or a tropical rainforest in Samoa meaning there are conditional/contextual factors that influenced how “change”
happened in this specific program that would not be present in other settings, potentially leading to
different findings/results.

**Methods**

My methods were mixed and analysis drew on various types of qualitative data. The analysis was
mostly interpretive, however, which is a limitation to the findings.

The interpretation of the findings is based on my own experiences and position and also poses
limitations. As a monitoring and evaluation coordinator for the organization while doing the research I
interacted daily with the youth, potentially influencing and shaping their experience. I attempted to control
for my personal bias by gaining multiple perspectives of events and change mechanisms (other youth,
alumni, staff, parents/guardians) to discern if my interpretations were accurate. My presence on the farm
and interactions with the people and place altered the environment, which may have influenced the
outcomes of individual pathways.

My knowledge and affiliation with the people and place has potential for introducing bias into
how I convey and interpret the findings. This could lead to a tendency to shed a more positive light on the
work of the program. My interactions with staff and youth did not occur in a vacuum, meaning I influenced
them and they influenced me.

My research would not have been possible without being “embedded”, however. I join a long
history of ethnographic enquiry in development studies (Crewe and Harrison, 1998, Ferguson, 1990). I
emphasized internal validity – coherent and valid understanding of how change happens to mitigate the
effects of my subjective interpretation and position within the organization.

I did not compare youth to other youth not “receiving the intervention”. Offering a comparator
would have eliminated the richness and depth in understanding I sought in youth. More specifically, I
would not have observed the nuance of each individual case, and how each young person experienced the
program. This would have produced something different. This method may be more appropriate if the
change processes – the “how” aspects – were already defined and determined, and where the research was
concerned directly with how an intervention impacted a group of people. The comparator group would
have thus required something different, beyond the capacity of a single researcher desiring to employ appropriate participatory research methods.

External threats

The specific year and season was unique. Previous cohorts witnessed interruptions in programming due to weather and pests, which impacted the crops and amount of Real Work on the farm. My program cohort was not impacted by external events, and therefore the data collection was consistent and occurred as planned. Comparing the program year-to-year is challenging for these reasons.

These factors were all considered in preparing my work, however my primary aim was to understand how this program functions, and to reveal the innovative aspects of the programming using an ecosystem framing. In that regard, I would not have done anything differently in terms of the research design, data collection methods, or my analysis, as I feel this was the most appropriate approach in the toolbox to accomplish what I wanted to learn.

3. Implications for organizations promoting positive change

My research explored how a single, innovative youth “leadership development” program functions as an alternative ecosystem to offer relevant, tailored pathways to youth for positive, self-directed, leaderly change.

These findings of the value of an ecosystem approach to leadership/change have theoretical and practical implications for (1) youth development organizations—not only the one under study, but similar US-based and global youth development programs and (2) development organizations around the world seeking to promote self-sustaining change.

Implications for youth development: diversity vs. “at-risk” populations youth

My research revealed that “diversity” is important in introducing variation into an ecosystem aiming to cultivate skills for young people. It allows youth to learn from, and about, different types of people. Different interpretations of diversity beyond race and class are important sources for creating a thriving ecosystem that promotes positive, self-direct change like leaderliness. If the program consisted of
only “at-risk” youth, it would be more challenging to sustain a culture of consistency where “leaderly” type changes can be advanced. While “at-risk” is a relative term, youth in this category may not offer enough diversity. The diversity aspect showed that the overly-committed youth struggled as much as others under committed within the ecosystem. If all youth were “at-risk” this finding would not have been revealed.

Engaged youth are important ingredients for an ecosystem, but overly-committed youth did not necessarily instill the values of the program. Still, some “engaged leaders” are important for bringing diversity. A program could admit more “at-risk” youth without compromising success. The majority of participants who were considered “potentially disconnected” – examples of Frank, Jenny, Jonathan – thrived. A goal of reaching more at-risk youth (i.e. youth that could potentially benefit from the exposure to a program like this one) could be considered for other programming, and potentially introducing more youth from the “at-risk” category.

In my case, more “at-risk” youth could enter the ecosystem through alternate hiring/interview procedures. A simpler two-staged, not 3 stage – hiring process would allow more worthy at-risk youth get into the system. (This means doing the first interview at their school, more convenient/accessible for those “at-risk”).

Improving feedback

Intentional feedback mechanisms (Real Talk, Violations) feed information to Crew Leaders to tailor communications for individual youth. Some of these data could be utilized more effectively to promote and sustain change in youth. For example, this program could:

1. Utilize the documented Violations system to invoke positive peer pressure within Crews. In the same way that poundage is reported out each week related to the production goals on the farm, I propose that Violations and Earnbacks data also be reported out to Crew Members. Reporting out the numbers improves transparency, could encourage greater behavior change from internal pressure within the Crews, and create internal competition within crews to reduce the number of Violations participants earn.

2. Improve transparency and accountability in the ecosystem by reporting Pay Withholdings directly on the participant’ paychecks to demonstrate the consequences, how much pay was
lost due to noncompliance with the rules. Participants would see the direct effect of breaching the program standards. While it is voiced to them, it is not printed on the check.

**Building leaderly capabilities**

Leaderliness is a main finding from this research. This has implications for youth development, workforce development, education, and other programs focused on building youth capabilities. The cultivation of “hard skills”, “soft skills” and leadership development programs require young people to possess specific characteristics to benefit from upper-level training and skill development. Recent trends suggest that youth require more than hard skills to contribute to the workforce (Manpower, 2014; ILO, 2013; Tough, 2012), thus new approaches to developing “soft skills” and other abilities are trendy. My case showed how to cultivate basic leaderly capabilities. Before a person can learn to program a computer, use a tool to build a piece of furniture, work collaboratively as part of a team, think critically about solving a social problem, they first need leaderliness. My case does not reject the importance of technical training or other youth development; rather it offers an alternative approach revealing the value in considering all the relevant factors that can contribute to building youth capabilities (i.e. the ecosystem), and the experiences that youth may need to be successful in other settings.

**Constructing an ecosystem**

My case demonstrates how to – (and in general, the need for) – construct a functioning ecosystem to encourage change. An ecosystem approach means creating interacting mechanisms (like Real Work, Real Talk, and Real Accountability) that function together through feedback loops (e.g. Crew Leaders) to respond to unpredictable, diverse types of people and conditions (external events like a shooting in the community). The ecosystem approach, and complexity thinking generally, recognizes that change is dynamic and arises from a number of factors. It considers how small, iterative processes like a single word in Real Talk, an individual Violation, interacting with a peer in a game, or the experience of growing a watermelon can “tip” the pathway of youth toward a positive pathway and life trajectory. The use of an urban farm helps create /communicate the ecosystem approach – a living, evolving system cultivating change through meaningful, relevant opportunities for youth to engage within work. The ecosystem
accounts for diverse types of people, and the varying individual and environmental factors that can
influence program outcomes. Dynamic change thus requires an adaptive system.

This contrasts with the conventional thinking to build the capacity of young people through
technical training programs. These programs often attempt to foster youth capabilities and improve their
chances of joining the workforce through non-ecosystem models, such as a single, one-off training where
youth are given inputs (technical training) in a classroom setting and then expected to internalize and
incorporate into future work; or a longer apprenticeship where a youth is on the site of an existing job and
is asked to adapt to the culture, punch a clock, and learn a set of skills through an experience. These
programs are often based on economies of scale. Each individual person (despite their differences) is
expected to advance through the same pathway.

Youth development organizations can recognize the importance of providing a space where youth
can be nurtured in an individual way to build these basic capabilities to ensure they are successful in
personal endeavors and employability. Jobs training programs should consider the value in an ecosystem
approach, taking a broader, holistic view of all the elements that foster change, what else youth need to
build capabilities, where within existing structures simple changes can be made (like the introduction of a
space for communication and feedback on what they are doing well and where they can improve) to better
tailor the programming toward diverse individuals.

The ecosystem approach acknowledges that each person is an individual and requires nurturing to
develop. By instilling multiple, reinforcing, individualized mechanisms, an ecosystem approach ensures
that young people receive an opportunity to develop vital capabilities. The case revealed that youth are
diverse and require personalized experiences, interactions, and encouragement for this kind of leaderly
change to occur.

Finding the balance: Structure/Rigor and Flexibility for/in the ecosystem

In considering Real Accountability, an ecosystem approach demonstrated the role of “flexibility”
to keep youth present on the farm. This has implications for other youth development organizations
working with “at-risk” youth and diverse populations. It also, poses an interesting question around how
much structure, rigor, and flexibility are necessary for/within an ecosystem to cultivate change.
As my case showed, individuals respond to the system differently. They are individuals, and thus each person reacts differently to structure. The goal is to keep youth within the ecosystem to allow nurturing to occur, and simultaneously benefit the system by having diverse types of people interact. Thus, flexibility in the structure is required to keep people present. Youth with difficulties adhering to rules benefit from the flexibility, but the program as a whole also benefits as youth are kept on the farm to continue in the work and continue bringing diversity to the program.

Yet, the question remains in an ecosystem of how much flexibility is too much, as youth need to learn and see the ramifications of their actions. Too much flexibility can introduce different expectations for youth (i.e. maybe I don’t need to work as hard because I won’t really lose my job). We also know from the complexity paradigm that too much flexibility can lead to chaos.

Too little flexibility suggests control over everyone and everything. We know from my case that people learn from the little interactions, much of which were organic. An over controlled environment leaves little space for the ecosystem to do its work. Other jobs training programs typically do not offer much flexibility. They view youth as a “cog in the wheel of production” – when you are late, there are no second chances, especially in urban environments and developing communities where the labor supply is high and the number of jobs is low.

Too much rigor is also constraining and can alienate youth from positive environments. For example, KIPP schools require youth to thank their teacher when called upon, and walk around the hallways on a taped line on the floor. These regimental approaches to education instill elements of discipline in youth, but also can leave them disgruntled and disinterested in authoritarian/institutions.

These tensions beg the question of how much flexibility is appropriate? My case showed evidence of several youth benefiting from rehiring, and in turn, the system benefiting from having them present and participating, and contributing to higher graduation numbers.

But, what is the right amount of flexibility, where youth are learning and not acquiring different expectations of the world and workplace, while also ensuring people stay within the ecosystem?
For International Development: take an ecosystem approach!

Traditional approaches for understanding change in international development rely on conventional methods where change is treated as predictable, linear, and prescriptive. It is thought to arise from a single intervention within a controlled environment. These approaches reduce “change” to discrete variables that increase or decrease directly from the intervention, and eliminate the role of the setting and context. This does not account for factors that showed to be important in creating change in my case.

Viewing programs, organizations, and communities through the ecosystem lens adds value to our understanding of international development processes by demonstrating how people and systems are connected, and thus how to better construct systems cultivate different types of “change”.

Change occurs through a process (revealed here through the interactions with and within the ecosystem) in unpredictable ways –sometimes sudden and large, sometimes incremental. Change in my ecosystem was context specific and individual. The ecosystem was interconnected. The people and change mechanisms were influenced by each other and other elements of the system.

Building systems that support each other (like Real Work, Real Talk, and Real Accountability) can create environments where change can occur. The small interactions, relationships, and simple feedback loops created through an ecosystem can guide people toward valued, positive change.

Establishing open forums of communication can help to foster connections, deliver content, and inform individuals of performance. Relationships within these environments are key to creating “change”. Giving people opportunities to develop connections, open up to one another, and feel comfortable can help encourage the change process.

Instilling structure, where people are accountable for actions, can help provide a secure environment where people feel comfortable and are able to express themselves. Flexibility helps to keep a system intact, and recognizes that people are part of the system and are required for changes to occur.

Diversity helps fuel change – it can add creativity and perspective to how people think and act within different environments.

Pay or incentives may be required (at times) to bring people in to a system and keep them present. It can be a valuable tool for instilling accountability and rigor.
These findings are relevant to development organizations and practitioners, researchers and evaluators, and policymakers in considering how to understand and construct systems aiming to cultivate different types of “change” in participants, stakeholders, and communities. Environments are constantly seeking methods to foster innovation, growth, and other change in people, and my case offers evidence of what kind of internal systems can be established to create environments where change can thrive.

This understanding and ecosystem framing is consistent with social innovations, and other related literature and fields in leadership like Liberating Structures and Social Labs, which are modeling these environments and seeking ways of creating change within other institutional settings.

4. **Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings in this study revealed the importance of meaningful work, and how to construct an ecosystem to advance change in youth. This research left me wanting to know what happens next for these youth. Specifically,

- How does the advancement of leaderly capabilities for these youth translate into future success in life and work, and how does the flexible rigor within the system translate later in professional jobs and workplace interactions?

  I also imagine larger questions about, and how to apply the ecosystem approach in other settings, in other developing countries/regions/contexts:

  - Testing components of the model in other settings: what are the components that are primary to the model that could be less or more important in other developing settings?

  Within the world of youth development, with the concentration on hard and “soft skills” and “leadership” among individuals, and the Human Capital model: how does it contrast with my ecosystem approach and leaderliness? This leads to questions on how these “skills” transition into the workplace, and what make participants successful in future work and life trajectories:

  - Do participants who have the ecosystem type of experience have different outcomes in life and work than similar motivated youth who do not experience the program? (This approach could utilize a control – a group of youth selected from the same school who do not apply to view and
the two groups could be compared longitudinally related to future life and work outcomes
(likeliness of crime, future employment, income, health outcomes, etc.).

5. An Epilogue - Moving on

This research demonstrated the value of an ecosystem approach. Through my engagement, I came
to know each of the youth, and I have stayed connected to the program since the conclusion of the research.
I offer a couple brief narratives of where youth have moved on to now to shed a bit of light on how the
program has continued (or ceased) to influence their pathways. As cohorts transitioned in and out of the
program on the farm, youth have found their way back into the ecosystem – directly and indirectly.

Katie Smith

Katie graduated from the program in 2012 and was an Assistant Crew Leader in 2013. Through
her work on the farm, Katie was nominated for a prestigious scholarship to receive support at a major
university in the New Orleans area. Katie was nominated by the program staff and is thriving as an
undergraduate in her second year. Katie remains a core piece of the program, returning in 2014 in Crew
Leader role. She is the first graduate to be hired as a Crew Leader.

Jonathan Tyler

Jonathan’s growth was well established during his experience on the farm. Shortly after
graduation, Jonathan was involved in an altercation near his home, where he was accused of assaulting
another person with a knife. In my last communication with Jonathan, he was awaiting trial and continuing
to attend school with the expectation of graduating in May of 2014. Through Jonathan’s connections,
references, and experience in the program, he was also able to get a job at a local grocery store.

Ben Davis

Ben was not featured prominently in my work, however he offers an interesting case of where the
program staff committed a significant amount of time, resources, and effort to assisting him. Ben was a
graduate of the 2012 cohort. Following graduation, Ben purchased a car despite the pleas from program
staff for him to avoid doing so. Over time, Ben accrued some moving violations for the car and for not having proper insurance. Ben failed to pay his fines. He was pulled over for having a warrant out for his arrest. When he was pulled over, he had a friend in the car with him who possessed a significant amount of stolen goods. Ben was arrested and spent roughly two-weeks in jail before the program staff could mobilize and assist him in getting out. The social networks of the organization were significant in helping gain legal support and ensure his release. Ben was eventually cleared for the theft charge, and sold his vehicle to help cover the remaining fines. After his experience, Ben was able to get himself back on track. He became one of the first members of his family to graduate from high school in the summer of 2013.

**Rachel Webster**

Rachel returned after her graduation as an Education and Outreach intern in the fall of 2013. She continued to thrive within the ecosystem and was given an opportunity to become an Assistant Crew Leader working with the 2014 cohort. Unsurprisingly, Rachel excelled in this role as well.

As these youth and others who entered and exited the ecosystem continue down their “pathways”, they encounter other systems and continue to experience the world in their own individual way. In closing, I offer a final quote from Frank Jones about this experience. Some of these youth are continuing to blossom and branch out as they move forward in the world.

*We started as something small and branched out and grew stronger and eventually became this beautiful fruit. I started growing slowly, but then as I started doing more, I transformed and changed as a person… when you see the plant’s stems getting stronger, growing up, and starting to branch out, and then the flowers start to open up, it’s the same as when the youth are opening their minds to new things.*
Bibliography


Burnett, Nicholas, and Jayaram, Shubha (2012). “Skills for Employability in Africa and Asia”. Results for Development Institute, ISESE Skills Synthesis Paper, Washington DC.


Author Biosketch

Growing up in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, Joshua Schoop attended the University of Iowa where he earned a B.A. degree in Philosophy and a minor in Business Administration. Following graduation, Schoop served in the United States Peace Corps as a Volunteer in Samoa from 2005 to 2007. There he worked as a carpentry instructor in a village high school. Following the Peace Corps, Schoop taught English for a year in South Korea before landing in New Orleans at the Payson Center for International Development at Tulane University. Completing his M.S. degree in 2010, Schoop went on to study social innovation and social entrepreneurship, focusing his research on youth development issues for his doctoral work. Currently, he is Adjunct Faculty and the first Social Innovation Research Fellow in the Tulane School of Architecture.
Appendix A. Crew Member Information

Figure A.1: Arrangement of crews in program

![Diagram of crew arrangement]

Table A.1: Crew breakdown by position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Crew 1</th>
<th>Crew 2</th>
<th>Crew 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crew Leader</td>
<td>Heather Warren</td>
<td>Erin Lee</td>
<td>Kyle Lott</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Crew Leader (ACL)</td>
<td>Will Stafford</td>
<td>Katie Smith</td>
<td>Holly Sutter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew Member</td>
<td>Ben Davis</td>
<td>Allison Marx</td>
<td>Joe Rogers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew Member</td>
<td>Jeff Logan</td>
<td>Jonathan Tyler</td>
<td>Dave Duncan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew Member</td>
<td>Rachel Webster</td>
<td>Lauren Belle</td>
<td>Jimmy Kirkland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew Member</td>
<td>Kevin Bishop</td>
<td>Brett Samuel</td>
<td>Eddie Benson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew Member</td>
<td>Jenny Elliot</td>
<td>Steve Young</td>
<td>Lisa Charles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew Member</td>
<td>Julie Johnson</td>
<td>Bryan Miller</td>
<td>Kim Robinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew Member</td>
<td>Kristen Brown</td>
<td>Anne Macmillan</td>
<td>James Foster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew Member</td>
<td>Brooke Jefferson</td>
<td></td>
<td>Frank Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew Member</td>
<td>Tim Watson</td>
<td>Michelle Wilson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew Member</td>
<td>Walter Alexander</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sally Houston</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Number of Crew Members 10  7  10

* Red = participants who did not graduate
Appendix B: Partner High School Information

The program hires youth only from partner high schools in the city. In 2010, when the program started, the organizer/director convened a group of people from the education sector in New Orleans. The goal was to determine what initial school would be a good fit for the pilot phase. The group recommended an initial partnership be formed with Washington High School to pilot the program. Heather Warren then reached out and connected with that school. Together, they decided to form the partnership to deliver the first pilot program.

The following year four additional schools were selected utilizing input from the same group of people from the education sector in New Orleans. These partnerships were created based on a goal of diversity. Heather reached out to administration in the four new schools that agreed to sign on as partners - Madison, Monroe, Jefferson, and Adams – based off the enrollment and demographics (based on free and reduced lunch and racial profile) of each of these schools. The schools represent different demographic profiles as described below. Each offers the program a mixed recruitment pool from different backgrounds, socioeconomic status, and educational experience.

In 2014, the program added a sixth school, and in 2015, they expect to add an additional three schools to bring the total to nine.

Note: the information on school partners below is pieced together from school websites, my personal experiences communicating with the schools during the research/study period, and other supplementary materials such as informational brochures and annual reports.

Adams High School
Adams is a private high school serving students in grades 8 through 12. The school has approximately 460 students. The tuition in 2013 was $7800 for the school year. Adams is mentioned by program staff as the least supportive of schools, reflected by the challenges in obtaining information from the school. I reached out to Adams on several occasions to track down further information on the school but was unsuccessful, which is why the information on the school is incomplete. The school is predominantly white and has contributed the majority of the white students to the program throughout its history.

Monroe High School
Monroe was founded in 2011 with the goal of creating an alternative model of schooling for students who were challenged by traditional academic environments. Monroe with students between grades 9 and 12, but it does not relegate students to a specific grade because the school believes each individual student progresses at his or her own rate through the school. Students are assessed when they enter the school based on the number of credits they need to graduate and how they perform in individual subjects, and are
provided an individual education plan. The mission of the school is to provide struggling high school students with the skills, confidence and experiences necessary to succeed in the education and career paths of their choice. Monroe grew from 60 students in 2012 to 150 in 2013. The enrollment is predominantly African-American students with the majority (98%) qualifying for free and reduced lunch. The school struggles with student retention rates and attendance, which they believe is connected to the “instability” in the lives of its students. For example, in the 2012-2013 school year, 29 Net students dropped out of school all together, and 15 students left school because of incarceration. In discussions and surveys conducted by the school staff, students identify external issues such as family problems, homelessness, illness, and legal issues, as effecting their attendance rather than internal issues such as a dislike of their teachers or classes. Students from Monroe have the option of doing an internship during each year to gain experience and job training skills, and to connect with potential employers in the community. The development organization in this case study is one potential location for the student’s internship opportunity. The staff explains that the partnership with Monroe is one of the best because of the dedicated staff, consistent feedback and communication from the point person in the school, and the similarity in mission and approach. The principal of Monroe explained that they have a great deal of trust and respect for the leadership development program because of the track record of working successfully with some of the toughest of Monroe’s students.

Jefferson High School

Jefferson High School opened on its current site in 1913. Since Hurricane Katrina, Jefferson has outperformed almost all other schools in the district and has improved its School Performance Score (SPS) for five consecutive years. The school’s “reputation of academic excellence, high attendance, low drop-out rate and high graduation rate” led to the school’s National Blue Ribbon designation by the US Dept. of Ed. in 2012. The school boasts high SPS scores while having a Free and Reduced Lunch rate of over 86%. The school offers classes for students in grades 9 to 12. In 2013, Jefferson had a 100% minority student body with the majority of the students being African-American (96%), followed by Hispanic (3%) and Asian (1%). The school has a 98% graduation rate with dropout rates at less than 1%. It is considered one of the top schools in the city for academics. The correlation between school performance and free and reduced lunch rates is somewhat of an anomaly for a school of its size and demography within Orleans Parish. Ray Billings, Farm Manager, is a former Jefferson teacher, which assists in maintaining communication and connection to key people within the school. Much of the recruitment in the school is related to relationships that the program has built with teachers at Jefferson, who assist in encouraging students to apply and complete applications.

Madison High School

Madison was founded in 1947 as one of the first two public high schools in New Orleans open to African-American students before integration. Madison offers classes for students in grades 9 to 12. Following
Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Madison has been one of the lowest performing schools in the city. It has consistently posted low SPS scores and high dropout rates. Madison has a typical profile for a low-performing school with high rates of students on free and reduced lunch. It has suffered from the charter school movement in New Orleans, as students coming from unstable households that have historically had issues with academics and behavior are generally kept out of the higher performing schools in the city due to having to apply for admission and meet specific deadlines. Madison has a supportive, responsive staff that understands what the leadership development program is trying to accomplish. The school social worker felt that students are most excited about working on the farm because it provides them a paying job that is not in fast food or working at a grocery store. She explained that, “the population of Clark is for the most part living in extreme poverty”.

**Washington High School**

Washington was founded in 1993. The school offers classes for grades 9 to 12. The student body is 80% African-American, 12% Caucasian, 3% Hispanic, 2% Asian, and 2% other. Washington had a 93% graduation rate for its 2013 class. Washington’s program and outreach coordinator was the partner contact for recruitment and program support. She performed a lot of “groundwork” inside the school to get the word out to students to ensure that they are aware of the program. Washington has seen the highest number of applications for program, likely related to the length of time the program has been working with the school, and the work of recruiter to ensure that students apply to the program. Academically, Washington is a relatively high performing school. It has demonstrated consistent growth in its SPS scores. The diversity in the school is more mixed than other Charter schools in the city, which has added diversity to the pool of student’s that the program has hired.

**Table B.1: Partner school information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>School Proficiency Grade</th>
<th>% Free/Reduced Lunch</th>
<th>Average Composite ACT Scores</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madison High School</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>55.8 (F)</td>
<td>92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washington High School</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>106.4</td>
<td>115.7 (B)</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<td>Monroe High School</td>
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<td>98%</td>
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<td>Jefferson High School</td>
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<td>881</td>
<td>120.2</td>
<td>130.3 (A)</td>
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<td>Adams High School</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>460</td>
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### Table B.2: Program applications and hires by school

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<th>School</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Applied</td>
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<td>Jefferson High School</td>
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<td>Adams High School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
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<td>11</td>
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Appendix C. Background and performance information on youth participants

Table C.1: Background information on program participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Age (at start of program)</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Level of Engagement</th>
<th>Crew</th>
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<td>Alexander, Walter</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Hollygrove</td>
<td>Currently Unengaged</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belle, Lauren</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Little Woods</td>
<td>Currently Unengaged</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benson, Eddie</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>River Ridge</td>
<td>Currently Unengaged</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop, Kevin</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>Mid-City</td>
<td>Potentially Disconnected</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brown, Kristen</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>Gentilly</td>
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<td>7th Ward</td>
<td>Currently Unengaged</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis, Ben</td>
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<td>B</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>Elliot, Jenny</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>Foster, James</td>
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<td>Washington</td>
<td>Little Woods</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Central City</td>
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<td>Jefferson, Brooke</td>
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<td>Madison</td>
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<td>Jones, Frank</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Central City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kirkland, Jimmy</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>Algiers</td>
<td>Currently Unengaged</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Logan, Jeff</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
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<td>Adams</td>
<td>Gretna</td>
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<td>Macmillan, Anne</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Monroe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marx, Allison</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>Uptown</td>
<td>Currently Unengaged</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miller, Bryan</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Washington</td>
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<td>Engaged Leader</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robinson, Kim</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Hollygrove</td>
<td>Engaged Leader</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rogers, Joe</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Uptown</td>
<td>Currently Unengaged</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross, Emily</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>Market ACL</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Mid-City</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>ACL, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stafford, Will</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Race</td>
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<td>Ward</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
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<td>-----</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutter, Holly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>7th Ward</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>ACL, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyler, Jonathan</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Monroe</td>
<td>7th Ward</td>
<td>Potentially Disconnected</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watson, Tim</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>N.O. East</td>
<td>Currently Unengaged</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster, Rachel</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>Gentilly</td>
<td>Currently Unengaged</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson, Michelle</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Monroe</td>
<td>St. Roch</td>
<td>Potentially Disconnected</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young, Steve</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>N.O. East</td>
<td>Currently Unengaged</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: “NA” under level of engagement relates to 1) youth who were hired into the program for the summer portion only (Dave Duncan and Ben Davis) and were therefore not rated and hired based on engagement, and 2) ACLs who were not hired based on engagement.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Started</th>
<th>Quit/Fired, Reason</th>
<th>Last Day Worked</th>
<th>Rehired</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>Possible Days Worked</th>
<th># of Absences</th>
<th>Pay withholdings</th>
<th>Earnbacks</th>
<th>Most Frequent Violation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexander</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Quit (4/25/13)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Community (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belle</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Fired for Excessive Absences (4/27/13)</td>
<td>Rehired (5/18/13)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Commitment (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benson</td>
<td>5/29/13</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Community (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elliott</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Fired for Excessive Absences (4/27/13)</td>
<td>Rehired (5/18/13)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Respect (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis</td>
<td>5/31/13</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Community (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Fired for Excessive Absences (5/29/13)</td>
<td>Rehired (6/12/13)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Community (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Fired for Excessive Absences (4/27/13)</td>
<td>Rehired (5/18/13)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Respect (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Community (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>5/31/13</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Community (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Fired for Excessive Absences (4/27/13)</td>
<td>Rehired (5/18/13)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Respect (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Fired for Excessive Absences (4/27/13)</td>
<td>Rehired (5/18/13)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Respect (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Fired for Excessive Absences (4/27/13)</td>
<td>Rehired (5/18/13)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Respect (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Fired for Excessive Absences (4/27/13)</td>
<td>Rehired (5/18/13)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Respect (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table C.2: Data on youth performance in accountability system.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position and Responsibility</th>
<th>Absences and Rehiring</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Willingness</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson, Brooke</td>
<td>Fired for Excessive Absences (4/11/13)</td>
<td>Did not apply for rehiring</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson, Julie</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Frank</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Commitment and Respect</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkland, Jimmy</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Commitment (2)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logan, Jeff</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Commitment (5)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macmillan, Anne</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marx, Kim</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin, Jane</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logan, Jeff</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiddman, Jimmy</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Frank</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson, Julio</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brookes, Jeff</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note: the table is drawn from program documents, namely Individual Violation Records and staff payroll to compile the categories. Days they could have worked = total number of days they were hired while they were hired. I deducted the days they were absent from the total number of days they could have worked. Some participants were fired, and others were fired than rehired, so the total possible days factors in this information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commitment (6/11/13)</th>
<th>Sutter, Holly</th>
<th>1/31/13</th>
<th>NA</th>
<th>NA</th>
<th>47</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>$60</th>
<th>$60</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment and Hard Work (3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Did not apply for</td>
<td>$60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand Work (5)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Did not apply for</td>
<td>$60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility (3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Did not apply for</td>
<td>$60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community (5)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Did not apply for</td>
<td>$60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community (5)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Did not apply for</td>
<td>$60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Young, Steve
Wilson, Michelle
Webster, Rachel
Wilson, Jamie
Young, Holly
Sutter, Tim
## Appendix D: Program Documents

### Figure D.1: Standards and Violations Chart for Program Accountability System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WARNING</th>
<th>1 Warning</th>
<th>2 Warnings</th>
<th>3 Warnings</th>
<th>4 Warnings</th>
<th>5 Warnings</th>
<th>6 Warnings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAFETY</td>
<td>No possession of weapons, drugs, or alcohol.</td>
<td>No fighting, stealing, or school transgression.</td>
<td>No drug or alcohol abuse, nor any leaching.</td>
<td>No smoking, no e-cigarettes.</td>
<td>No fighting, no drugs, no alcohol.</td>
<td>No fighting, no drugs, no alcohol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY</td>
<td>No bullying, no discrimination.</td>
<td>No bullying, no discrimination.</td>
<td>No bullying, no discrimination.</td>
<td>No bullying, no discrimination.</td>
<td>No bullying, no discrimination.</td>
<td>No bullying, no discrimination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESPECT</td>
<td>Respect one another.</td>
<td>Respect one another.</td>
<td>Respect one another.</td>
<td>Respect one another.</td>
<td>Respect one another.</td>
<td>Respect one another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROFESSIONALS</td>
<td>Respect the organization.</td>
<td>Respect the organization.</td>
<td>Respect the organization.</td>
<td>Respect the organization.</td>
<td>Respect the organization.</td>
<td>Respect the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUSTAINABILITY</td>
<td>Care for the school and its resources.</td>
<td>Care for the school and its resources.</td>
<td>Care for the school and its resources.</td>
<td>Care for the school and its resources.</td>
<td>Care for the school and its resources.</td>
<td>Care for the school and its resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HARD WORK</td>
<td>Keep your work on time.</td>
<td>Keep your work on time.</td>
<td>Keep your work on time.</td>
<td>Keep your work on time.</td>
<td>Keep your work on time.</td>
<td>Keep your work on time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESPONSIBILITY</td>
<td>Wear your school uniform.</td>
<td>Wear your school uniform.</td>
<td>Wear your school uniform.</td>
<td>Wear your school uniform.</td>
<td>Wear your school uniform.</td>
<td>Wear your school uniform.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Our Standards of Behavior:**
- Consequences for violating these standards:

**Our Values:**
- Responsibility
- Respect
- Integrity
- Community
- Sustained
- Hard work
- Commitment
- Safety
**Figure D.2:** Paper application for 2013 hiring

(Note: this document is copied from the original with identifiers to the organization removed).

**Crew Member Application**

**Spring/Summer 2013**

Full Name:________________________________________________________

Nickname:________________________________________________________

First and Last name

Home address:______________________________________________________

City:___________________________ State:_______ Zip:_______________

Telephone: (         ) ______ -__________ (CIRCLE kind of phone)    cell    home

Gender: __________

Date of Birth:_________/__________/___________          Current age:___________

month, day, year

Year in School: _______________      T-shirt size: ___________

Parent/Guardian Name:______________________________________________

Parent/Guardian Phone: (      )______ -__________ (CIRCLE kind of phone) cell home work

This person is my (CIRCLE):    legal guardian     mother     father    relative:__________

Other Parent/Guardian Name:__________________________________________

Other Parent/Guardian Phone: (      )______ -__________ (CIRCLE kind of phone) cell home work

This person is my (CIRCLE):    case worker       mother           father        relative: _________

Name of a teacher who knows you well: ____________________________

Do you currently have a physician/doctor? _____

yes, no

Do you see your doctor for a physical every year? _____

yes, no
Application Questions

In order to help us assess your interest, understanding and commitment, please be thoughtful and complete when answering the questions below.

1. Why do you want to be a member of this program and what interests you about the job?

2. Have you had experience working or practicing outside (sports, exercise, physical labor, etc.?)

3. This program encourages young people to develop skills in working as a team, leading and teaching others, public speaking, cooking and farming. Which of these areas interests you the most and why? Which area would challenge you the most and why?

4. What skills or characteristics could you contribute that would help make you an important member of our farm crew?

5. Reflect on a time when you have worked with a group or team. What was exciting about working with others? What was challenging about working with others?

6. Do you have any previous commitments that would require you to miss one or more days of work over the spring? If so, please write out the exact dates and why you would need to be absent from work. (You will not be paid for any days you are absent from work.)

7. Would you be able to get to and from the pickup location on workdays? How do you plan to get to and from your house to the pickup point?

8. Are you involved in any after-school programs or do you have any other jobs? If so, please list them.
**Figure D.3:** Redacted spring and summer programming schedules

Note: The schedules below are scanned, original documents taken from the program during the spring and summer programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00</td>
<td>Pick up at</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:15</td>
<td>Icebreaker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30</td>
<td>Depart for CCFM (Crew 3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00-12:00</td>
<td>CCFM for ½ of Crew 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00-12:15</td>
<td>Market wrap up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15-12:45</td>
<td>Lunch, ½ of Crew 3 @ CCFM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:45</td>
<td>Depart by bus to pick up other ½ of Crew 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30-1:30</td>
<td>Columbia Park—first Pop Up Market!!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30</td>
<td>Pick up at CP and return to farm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30-2:00</td>
<td>Unpack from Market</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00-2:30</td>
<td>??? (Crew 3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30-11:30</td>
<td>Agricultural Task for Crews 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>CLs &amp; ACLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30-12:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00-2:30</td>
<td>Food Inc. Viewing and Debrief (Crews 1 &amp; 2)</td>
<td>CLs &amp; ACLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30</td>
<td>Closing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00</td>
<td>Depart by bus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Materials:**

Crew 1 — Food Inc. materials

Crew 2 — Food Inc. materials

Crew 3 — Market materials for CCFM, outreach/survey materials for CP
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3:15</td>
<td>Meet bus at [redacted]</td>
<td>Josh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30</td>
<td>Pick up at [redacted]</td>
<td>Josh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:45</td>
<td>Pick up at [redacted]</td>
<td>Josh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00</td>
<td>Pick up at [redacted]</td>
<td>Josh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:15</td>
<td>Arrive at [redacted]</td>
<td>[redacted]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30-5:45</td>
<td>Icebreaker: Agricultural Game</td>
<td>[redacted]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:45</td>
<td>Field Work</td>
<td>[redacted]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>Closing: ________________________</td>
<td>[redacted]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00-6:30</td>
<td>Real Talk with ACLs</td>
<td>CI/ACL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3:00</td>
<td>Pick up at [redacted]</td>
<td>Josh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:15</td>
<td>Meet bus at [redacted]</td>
<td>Josh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30</td>
<td>Pick up at [redacted]</td>
<td>Josh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:45</td>
<td>Pick up at [redacted]</td>
<td>Josh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:15</td>
<td>Arrive at [redacted]</td>
<td>[redacted]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30-5:45</td>
<td>Icebreaker: Agricultural Game</td>
<td>[redacted]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:45</td>
<td>Crew 2: Harvest</td>
<td>[redacted]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>Closing: ________________________</td>
<td>[redacted]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00-6:30</td>
<td>Real Talk with ACLs</td>
<td>CI/ACL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Wednesday, June 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00</td>
<td>Pick up at...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:15</td>
<td>Icebreaker: Professionalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30-11:30</td>
<td><strong>Ag Task</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00-11:30</td>
<td>Working lunch on the farm, discussion for Challenging Oppression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30</td>
<td>Depart for Challenging Oppression Training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:15</td>
<td>Return to Farm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:45</td>
<td>Closing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00</td>
<td>Depart by bus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Materials:**

office day

### Thursday, June 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00</td>
<td>Pick up at...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:15</td>
<td>Icebreaker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30-1:00</td>
<td>Blueberry Farm (see detailed agenda)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:45</td>
<td>Closing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00</td>
<td>Depart by bus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Materials:**

Gift for Pearl River Blues Staff ?

office day
**Real Talk**
**Positives and Changes Feedback Form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Positives (+)</th>
<th>Changes (A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bonding w/ people @ work before &amp; during break times</td>
<td>More confidence in yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+ Sweet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+ Look on her face</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The form contains additional hand-written notes and comments not transcribed here.
**Figure D.5:** Youth participant violation record form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actual Visit Date</th>
<th>Viol. Report Period</th>
<th>Notes &amp; Description of Behavior</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Hard Work</th>
<th>Sustainability</th>
<th>Professionalism</th>
<th>Respect</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Integrity</th>
<th>Safety</th>
<th>Earnback Date</th>
<th>Earnback Report Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/16</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>cursing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2/22</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>absent - AND</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/1</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>absent - AND</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>no water bottle</td>
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<td>3/5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>littering</td>
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<td>3/10</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>late</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/16</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>no call</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/27</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>sleepin on bed</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>no show</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/6</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>late</td>
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<td>4/8</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>no call</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/13</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>no show</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial Knowledge/Pledge/With a check, saving money</td>
<td>Program Participants</td>
<td>Pre/Post Survey</td>
<td>Population</td>
<td>What</td>
<td>Methods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available Data/Information Collected</td>
<td>22 youth</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Support from job, letter of recommendation</td>
<td>Program applicants, interview notes, self and interviewer(s)</td>
<td>2013 Documentation, Applications, interviews, self and interviewer(s)</td>
<td>2013 Applications, Program applicants</td>
<td>All 2013 Applicants, Program applicants, Application forms, Self and interviewer(s)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
My field notes represent my personal observations from experiences and interactions with my time in the ecosystem. I performed periodic check-ins with youth to gauge individual perspectives on change occurring within the ecosystem, how people were responding to events, and to gain a general sense of how participants were feeling about the program. Exits interviews were also used to understand how the program was helping to create and sustain an environment conducive to meeting goals. Administrative records and interactions were gathered from the meetings to help reconstruct and recount events during the program. The staff were given violations for failing to meet the program standards (see table below). Each violation and payback is recorded and justified for tracking purposes to see how youth respond to carrot/stick incentives. Program schedules: I compiled schedules from throughout the program to keep track of occurrences, events, and activities. Program records: I compiled records from the program and the youth records to keep track of program objectives and successful outcomes. Program documents (Real Talk Log, Individual Violations Records, program schedules): Program staff attended weekly staff meetings. Notes, schedules, and interactions were gathered from meetings to help reconstruct and recount events during the program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Field Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interactions by the end of July 2013.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Personal Observations</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with program participants upon exiting the program.</td>
<td>Interviews with program participants</td>
<td>Exit Interviews</td>
<td>Program Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings were also utilized to understand how the program was helping to create and sustain an environment conducive to meeting goals.</td>
<td>Meetings all met weekly</td>
<td>Program sustain</td>
<td>Program documents (Real Talk Log, Individual Violations Records, program schedules)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program records: I compiled records from the program and the youth records to keep track of program objectives and successful outcomes.</td>
<td>Program records</td>
<td>Field Notes</td>
<td>Program records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program documents (Real Talk Log, Individual Violations Records, program schedules): Program staff attended weekly staff meetings. Notes, schedules, and interactions were gathered from meetings to help reconstruct and recount events during the program.</td>
<td>Program documents</td>
<td>Field Notes</td>
<td>Program documents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Program about: Where can people work in my community? What is the daily routine? Healthy habits: exercise frequency, healthy food, food choice, healthy eating, bedtime routine, meal patterns, and other healthy habits.
I conducted 8 interviews (4 females, 4 males) with participants from the previous cohorts (5 participants from 2012, and 3 participants from 2011).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Informants</th>
<th>Household from youth/guardians</th>
<th>Interview from school</th>
<th>Interview from parent/guardian</th>
<th>Interview from school affiliate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff Interviews</td>
<td>Core staff member of school</td>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>In-person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni Interviews</td>
<td>Past program participants</td>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>In-person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Guardians</td>
<td>School affiliates</td>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>In-person</td>
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<tr>
<td>School affiliates</td>
<td>In-person</td>
<td></td>
<td>In-person</td>
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<tr>
<td>Periodic check-ins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
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