**Youth Involvement in Organizational Decision Making:
The Connection to Youth Initiative and Organizational Functioning**

by

Heather Ramey

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Psychology
BROCK UNIVERSITY
St. Catharines, Ontario

October 2011

ABSTRACT

Studying positive adolescent development requires an examination of the mutually beneficial associations between youth and their environment. These youth-context relations include both the contributions that youth make to others and society and the youth-context interactions that might predict positive youth outcomes. Community and youth-serving organizations, where youth may be involved in decision-making roles such as service delivery, advocacy, or on boards of directors, can provide one important context for youth contributions and for positive adolescent development. Research on the outcomes of youth involvement in organizational decision-making, however, is limited, and largely consists of exploratory qualitative studies.

This dissertation is formatted as an integrated article dissertation. It begins with a review of the literature on contexts of structured youth activities and positive youth development. This review is intended to describe theory on development-context relations, in which development is considered an interactive process that occurs between individuals and their contexts, as it pertains the positive development of youth who are involved in various structured activities (e.g., volunteering). This description follows with a review of current research, and conclusions and rationale for the current studies.

Following this theoretical and research background, the dissertation includes reports of two studies that were designed to address gaps in the research on youth involvement in organizational decision-making. The first was a qualitative research synthesis to elucidate and summarize the extant qualitative research on the outcomes of youth involvement in organizational decision making on adults and organizations. Results of this study suggested a number of outcomes for service provision, staff, and

broader organizational functioning, including both benefits to organizations as well as some costs. The second study was a quantitative analysis of the associations among youth involvement, organizations' learning culture, and youth initiative, and relied on survey data gathered from adults and youth in community-based organizations with youth involvement. As expected, greater youth involvement in organizational decision making was associated with higher learning culture within the organization. Two dimensions of youth involvement, greater program engagement and relationships with adults, were related to greater youth initiative. A third dimension, sense of ownership, was not associated with youth's level of initiative. Moreover, the association between relationships with adults and youth initiative was only significant in organizations with relatively low learning culture.

Despite some limitations, these studies contribute to the research literature by providing some indication of the potential benefits and costs of youth involvement and by making an important contribution toward the early stages of context-level analyses of youth development. Findings have important implications for practitioners, funders, future research, and lifespan development theory.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Linda Rose-Krasnor. Linda's wisdom, thoughtfulness, and creativity have helped me to learn the skills necessary for the field, and taught me what it is to be a truly dedicated teacher. Someday I hope that my abilities in research and teaching can begin to approach hers. Thanks also are due to my two other committee members, Dr. Teena Willoughby and Dr. Heather Chalmers, who provided me with valuable suggestions and much appreciated practical support, and who challenged me in very different and complementary ways.

There are others at Brock who also supported my learning and progress. For the past few years I have been fortunate enough to collaborate with Dr. Heather Lawford. She is kind, academically brilliant, and a great friend. Dr. Nancy DeCourville provided me with mentorship, intelligent encouragement, and advice based on the realities of life outside of grad school. I thank both of them.

I am very grateful to my family and friends for their acceptance and encouragement over the past four years. First and foremost, my daughter Tonia has tolerated my absorption in work, provided me with a youth perspective on my dissertation and several other research projects, and had to learn much earlier than most people what it is to live on a student budget. I simply would not have made it to this point in my life without her. Dave, my husband, has been the first to celebrate any achievement that I have had, and I am grateful to have him in my life. Finally, my parents and siblings also have always been willing to help in any way possible, and my parents, in particular, seem to have no limits to their support and generosity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

List of Figures

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Positive adolescent development is often considered to be the absence of problems (Lerner, Alberts, Jelicic, & Smith, 2006; Pittman, 1996). Lerner et al., however, have argued that studying positive youth development requires an examination of the mutually beneficial associations between youth and their environment, which they define as individual ←→ context relations, and the contributions that youth make to others and society. Researchers have focused particular attention on youth's roles in community work and programs and their involvement in responsible action, planning, and decision making (Lerner et al., 2006; Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes, & Calvert, 2000). Youth involvement in organizational decision making may be especially apparent in non-profit, community, and/or youth-serving organizations, where youth may have roles as members of youth advisory teams or boards of directors, in program planning and delivery, advocacy roles, or in a range of other ways. Throughout this dissertation, the term *youth involvement* will be used to describe youth's involvement in organizational decision making, because it encompasses different levels of youth participation in organizational decision making (Hart, 1992) and has been used by other scholars (e.g., Sloper & Lightfoot, 2003) in similar contexts.

Rationales for Youth Involvement

Organizations and researchers suggest a number of rationales for youth involvement (Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin, & Sinclair, 2003; Zeldin, 2004). One is that youth involvement may foster positive youth development by engaging youth in structured activities and requiring them to take action on behalf of others (Zeldin, Camino, & Calvert, 2007). Scholars from the field of positive youth development have identified the

general importance of youth contributions in community-based organizations (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2006; Lerner et al., 2006). Positive youth development has often been defined as the five Cs—competence, character, caring, connection, and confidence (Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2000). According to Lerner and colleagues (e.g., Lerner, von Eye, Lerner, Lewin-Bizan, & Bowers, 2010), a sixth C, contributions to the self, others, and society, is seen to develop as a result of growth in the first five. Contributions are then hypothesized to be mutually reinforcing, as youth maintain their own well-being, are independently motivated to assist others, help maintain a civil society, and regulate their own development.

More specifically than the positive youth development literature, Larson and colleagues (Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005; Wood, Larson, & Brown, 2009) have noted that youth who take responsibility in programs demonstrate changes in their abilities in the areas of making decisions, planning and problem-solving, taking action with a degree of autonomy, goal-setting, perseverance, and time management—competencies which they define as youth initiative. These researchers have concluded that youth from a variety of different activities reported the development of initiative (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003), and that the development of initiative appears to be greater in youth activities, such as service activities and in community organizations, than other settings of youth's lives, such as school and spending time with friends (Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003).

Another rationale for involving youth in organizational decision making is the practical benefits youth involvement may bring to services provided by these organizations, especially where youth are also clients and can speak to youth's needs and

help improve service accountability (Kirby et al., 2003; Zeldin, 2004). Extending this

rationale, Wheeler (2000) has suggested that youth involvement in decision making may

affect the practices and culture of organizations in ways that are compatible with the

characteristics of learning organizations. Learning organizations (Senge, 2006) are

businesses committed to ongoing learning and adaptation, and organizational learning

culture has been linked to positive financial and knowledge-based performance (Yang,

Watkins, & Marsick, 2004).

Similarly, youth involvement in decision making may also affect the development

of youth workers and other adults within organizations. For example, Mumford and

Manley (2003) have applied Baltes and colleagues' selection, optimization, and

compensation theory (Freund & Baltes, 2000) to the adult leadership development and

action learning literature. Selection, optimization, and compensation theory provides a

framework for understanding the mechanisms of individuals' successful development,

while acknowledging the limitations of time and resources that are available during the

course of development. According to Freund and Baltes, successful development occurs

through the minimization of losses and the maximization of gains, as people select goals,

acquire and apply resources to optimize the possibility of goal attainment, and

compensate for the losses that occur as goal-relevant resources are lost.

Mumford and Manley (2003) have suggested that practice-based experiences can

provide optimization opportunities, in particular, in adults who are involved in leadership

development roles that promote the development of specific expertise and problem

solving skills in adults. However, these authors also suggest that these activities may

promote negative development if individuals do not have some level of readiness for their

experiences. In general, research literature supporting these different rationales for involving youth in organizational decision making is limited.

The Current Studies

Some aspects of the associations among youth involvement, youth initiative, and organizational outcomes, such as learning organization culture, have been examined qualitatively, but these associations have yet to be examined quantitatively. Further, the literature on organizational outcomes is sparse, failing to build on previous studies within the same area, and sometimes published only in the *gray literature*, which reports on original research that has not necessarily been peer-reviewed (e.g., government and non-profit reports; American Psychological Association, 2010).

I have formatted this dissertation as an integrated article dissertation. Following this brief introduction, I include a review of the literature on contexts of structured youth activities and positive youth development. This review is intended to describe theory on development-context relations, in which development is considered to be an interactive process that occurs between individuals and their contexts, as it pertains to the positive development of youth who are involved in various structured activities (e.g., volunteering, sports). Following the introductory chapter, I review current research, describe my conclusions and present the rationale for the current study. I next include reports of two studies that were designed to address gaps in the research on youth involvement in organizational decision-making.

In the first study, reported in Chapter 3, I conducted a qualitative research synthesis to elucidate and summarize the extant qualitative research in the area of youth involvement and organizational outcomes. A qualitative synthesis is a method of

systematically reviewing and integrating findings from qualitative studies (Sandelowski, 2007; Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007). My synthesis summarizes the empirical qualitative research on the outcomes of youth involvement in organizational decision making on adults and organizations over the past decade.

In the second study (Chapter 4), to build on and extend previous research, I conducted a quantitative study of the associations among youth involvement, organizations' learning culture, and youth initiative. This study relied on survey data from adults and youth in community-based organizations with youth involvement. Based on results from Study 1 on organizations' learning culture, in Study 2 I examined the possibility that learning culture was an outcome of youth involvement in organizational decision making. To test Larson's (Larson, 2000) argument for the development of youth initiative and the relevance of youth-context relations (Lerner et al., 2006), I also examined the association between dimensions of youth involvement and youth initiative, as well as the potential moderating effect of learning culture on this association.

It should be noted that each of the qualitative and quantitative studies were conducted within their own methodological traditions. In particular, the first, qualitative study followed standards of rigor as suggested in the qualitative research literature. For example, it describes "trustworthiness", rather than reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It also contains language that might be considered unjustifiably causal in more quantitative research traditions. Findings are generally described in the language provided by research participants and might therefore include language that in other settings might be considered causal. In qualitative literature, use of participants' actual words is seen to enhance the credibility of research findings and provide evidence of rigor, as findings are

grounded in the original data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Further, the use of some specific terminology can have different connotations in different research traditions. For example, in outlining how to conduct program evaluations, Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman (2004) clearly differentiate the term *outcome* from the term *effect*. According to Rossi et al., outcomes are "observed characteristics of the target population or social conditions" (p. 205), whereas effects must be uniquely attributable to the program, which is only testable through experimental designs with random assignment. It would be inappropriate, if not impossible, to evaluate qualitative research according to quantitative standards and vice-versa, but these seeming incongruities are noted here for the reader.

The fifth and final chapter of this dissertation is a géneral discussion and conclusion, which follows the two studies. The general discussion section begins with an integrative summary. I relate the separate studies to each other and to the field of lifespan development psychology and include a discussion of the mixed methodology that comprises this dissertation. Finally, I describe the strengths and limitations of the integration process, and integrative recommendations for future studies are provided.

References

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Benson, P. L., Scales, P. C., Hamilton, S. H., & Sesma, A., Jr. (2006). Positive youth development: Theory, research, and applications. In R. M. Lerner (Vol. Ed.) & W. Damon & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 1. Theoretical models of human development* (6th ed., pp. 894–941). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (3rd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Dworkin, J. B., Larson, R., & Hansen, D. (2003). Adolescents' accounts of growth experiences in youth activities. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 32*, 17–26. doi: 0047-2891/03/0200-0017/0

Freund, A. M., & Baltes, P. B. (2000). The orchestration of selection, optimization and compensation: An action-theoretical conceptualization of a theory of developmental regulation. In W. J. Perrig & A. Grob (Eds.), *Control of human behavior, mental processes, and consciousness: Essays in honor of the 60th birthday of August Flammer* (pp. 35–58). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Hansen, D. M., Larson, R. W., & Dworkin, J. B. (2003). What adolescents learn in organized youth activities: A survey of self-reported developmental experiences. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 13*, 25–55.

Hart, R. (1992). *Children's participation: From tokenism and citizenship.* Innocenti Essays No. 4. Florence, Italy: UNICEF.

Kirby, P., Lanyon, C., Cronin, K., & Sinclair, R. (2003). *Building a culture of participation: Involving children and young people in policy, service planning, delivery and evaluation.* London: Department for Education and Skills.

Larson, R. W. (2000). Toward a psychology of positive youth development. *American Psychologist, 55,* 170–183. doi: 10.1037//0003-066X.55.1.170

Larson, R., Walker, K., & Pearce, N. (2005). A comparison of youth-driven and adult-driven youth programs: Balancing inputs from youth and adults. *Journal of Community Psychology, 33,* 57–74. doi: 10.1002/jcop.20035

Lerner, R. M., Alberts, A. E., Jelicic, H., & Smith, L M. (2006). Young people are resources to be developed: Promoting positive youth development through adult-youth relations and community assets. In E. G. Clary & J. E. Rhodes (Eds.), *Mobilizing adults for positive youth development* (pp. 19–39). New York: Springer.

Lerner, R. M., Fisher, C. B., & Weinberg, R. A. (2000). Toward a science for and of the people: Promoting the civil society through the application of developmental science. *Child Development, 71,* 11–20.

Lerner, R. M., von Eye, A., Lerner, J. V., Lewin-Bizan, S., & Bowers, E. P. (2010). Special issue introduction: The meaning and measurement of thriving: A view of the issues. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 39,* 707–719. doi: 10.1007/s10964-010-9531-8

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Mumford, M. D., & Manley, G. G. (2003). Putting the development in leadership

development: Implications for theory and practice. In S. E. Murphy & R. E.

Riggio (Eds.), *The future of leadership development* (pp. 237–261). Mahwah, NJ:

Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Pittman, K. (1996). Community, youth, development: Three goals in search of

connection. *New Designs for Youth Development, 12,* 4–8.

Rossi, P. H., Lipsey, M. W., & Freeman, H. E. (2004). *Evaluation: A systematic*

approach (7th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sandelowski, M. (2007). From meta-synthesis to method: Appraising the qualitative

research synthesis report. In C. Webb & B. Roe (Eds.), *Reviewing research*

evidence for nursing practice (pp. 88–111). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Sandelowski, M., & Barroso, J. (2007). *Handbook for synthesizing qualitative research.*

NY: Springer Publishing Company.

Senge, P. M. (2006). *The fifth discipline: The art & practice of the learning organization*

(2nd ed.). New York: Doubleday.

Sloper, P., & Lightfoot, J. (2003). Involving disabled and chronically ill children and

young people in health service development. *Child Care, Health and*

Development, 29, 15–20.

Wheeler, W. (2000). Emerging organizational theory and the youth development

organization. *Applied Developmental Science, 4,* 47–54.

Wood, D., Larson, R. W., & Brown, J. R. (2009). How adolescents come to see

themselves as more responsible through participation in youth programs. *Child*

Development, 80, 295–309. doi: 0009-3920/2009/8001-0022

Yang, B., Watkins, K. E., & Marsick, V. J. (2004). The construct of the learning

organization: Dimensions, measurement, and validation. *Human Resources*

Development Quarterly, 15, 31–55.

Zeldin, S. (2004). Youth as agents of adult and community development: Mapping the

processes and outcomes of youth engaged in organizational governance. *Applied*

Developmental Science, 8, 75–90.

Zeldin, S., Camino, L., & Calvert, M. (2007). Toward an understanding of youth in

community governance: Policy priorities and research directions. *Análise*

Psicológica, 1, 77–95.

Zeldin, S., McDaniel, A. K., Topitzes, D., & Calvert, M. (2000). *Youth in decision-*

making: A study on the impacts of youth on adults and organizations.

Washington, DC: National 4-H Council.

CHAPTER 2: Contexts of Structured Youth Activities and

Positive Youth Development

(Adapted from Ramey, H. L., & Rose-Krasnor, L. (in press). Contexts of structured youth activities and positive youth development. *Child Development Perspectives*.)

Increasingly, development-context relations are recognized as integral to lifespan developmental psychology (Damon & Lerner, 2008; Lerner & Steinberg, 2009; Overton, 2010). There is growing awareness among scholars that development cannot be explained by focusing on individual-level variables alone, but must reflect ongoing interactive processes that occur between individuals and their contexts. Despite increased recognition at the theoretical level, empirical research involving development-context relations has been fragmented (Magnusson & Stattin, 2006). However, one domain in which researchers have paid greater attention to youth-context relations is the field of positive youth development (PYD).

The PYD approach stemmed from government and non-government organizations' attempts to enhance supports both for at-risk and typical youth (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2006). This work included efforts to discover the supports needed to promote youth's optimal development (e.g., Carnegie Council, 1989). PYD was adopted within developmental psychology as researchers became involved in evaluations of youth development programs (e.g., Big Brothers/Big Sisters) and with the discipline's increased focus on strength-based approaches (Zeldin, 2000). The PYD approach asserts that youth have the right to contexts that foster their strengths and competencies; provide opportunities and encouragement to learn and explore; and contain expectations that youth exhibit caring, character-building, and moral identity (Damon,

2004). Reciprocally, the approach also outlines youth's responsibilities for community contributions through meaningful service (Benson et al., 2006). When activity settings offer youth opportunities for meaningful participation and broad commitment in ways that extend to interests outside the self, such as citizenship and prosocial activities, youth respond in ways that impel growth in PYD elements, such as character-building. Simultaneously, youth who exhibit PYD characteristics, such as caring and compassion, promote positive development in their community and activity contexts.

This chapter provides an overview of existing theory and research on the relations between youth activity contexts and PYD. I focus on structured youth activities, which have been defined as rule-based activities that have adult supervision, involve other participants, meet regularly, and focus on skills and achieving goals (Mahoney, Larson, & Eccles, 2005). Although this dissertation focuses on youth involvement in organizational decision making, the current chapter includes activities have a wide range of content, such as sports, volunteering, and religion. Theories and research on positive youth development and development-context relations focus on youth activity participation more broadly, and it is this broader literature that provides a basis for the current studies. I begin by describing theory on the bidirectional effects between structured youth activities and PYD, considering different but overlapping PYD definitions. Next, I review current research on these activity context-PYD associations. This chapter ends with conclusions and rationales for the current studies.

Theoretical Perspectives on PYD and Youth Activity Contexts

Structured Activities as Contexts for PYD

Several conceptualizations of PYD, each with its own theoretical perspective,

suggest that structured activity contexts promote PYD. Lerner's (2004, 2009) developmental systems approach, which begins with the premise that youth and developmental processes dynamically influence each other, may be the most prominent. Lerner's (Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2000) PYD definition involves five Cs: competence (e.g., problem-solving), caring (e.g., empathy), connection (relationships), character (e.g., morality), and confidence (e.g., identity). The development of these five Cs leads to a sixth C: youth contributions to the self and the context (e.g., family, community, and society). Many activity contexts deliberately seek to promote these PYD elements (Lerner, 2004). Based on research by Eccles and Gootman (2002) and Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003a, 2003b), Lerner (2004) viewed activity contexts as promoting youth development when they provide the "Big 3" characteristics of ideal youth development programs: opportunities for participation and leadership in family, school, and community; emphasis on life skills; and supportive youth-adult relationships.

Larson (2000) and colleagues provided a slightly different perspective on activity context-PYD relations. Larson (2006) viewed PYD broadly as "a process in which young people's capacity for being motivated by challenge energizes their active engagement in development" (p. 677). In this conceptualization, as in Lerner's, youth are active producers of their own development (Larson & Walker, 2006) and, for PYD to occur, youth need to be internally motivated and feel ownership in their life and activities. Structured activities are uniquely rich settings for PYD because in such activities youth tend to experience high motivation, attention, and challenge (Larson, 2000). This differs from school, which tends to provide challenge but little motivation, and time with peers, which tends to evoke high motivation but little challenge. Activity contexts afford critical

opportunities for youth to work toward real-world goals, exert control over projects, and learn skills, which may engage their energy and attention. In addition, adults within the PYD context can support youth's potentials by helping to activate and sustain youth's internal motivation and direct their agency.

Thriving, a third, related construct, encompasses PYD and is similarly expected to be promoted by youth activity contexts (Lerner, von Eye, Lerner, Lewin-Bizan, & Bowers, 2010). As with Lerner's definition of PYD, mutual enhancement of youth and context is considered to be a fundamental principle (Bundick, Yeager, King, & Damon, 2010). Thriving, however, may include additional individual-level indicators, such as a sense of meaning and purpose, and related contextual dimensions (Benson & Scales, 2009; Bundick et al.; Scales, Benson, & Roehlkepartain, 2011).

Community opportunities initially were conceptualized as predictors of individual-level indicators of thriving, following Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory and Lerner's (1986) developmental contextualism. Further, youth living in communities with greater opportunities to participate in activities may experience better overall development than do youth in less well-served communities (Leffert, Benson, Scales, Sharma, Drake, & Blyth, 1998; Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000; Wynn, Richman, Rubinstein, & Littell, 1987). Structured activities, specifically, were expected to predict greater thriving because they often involve supportive relationships and opportunities that nurture the development of talents, interests, caring, and a sense of purpose.

Thus, in theory, the opportunities, learning experiences, and support provided by activity contexts are expected to promote characteristics of PYD and thriving, and help

youth become more active producers of their own positive development. Also embedded in definitions of thriving and PYD are ideas about the effects of PYD on youth's activity contexts.

The Effects of PYD on Structured Activity Contexts

PYD theory describes the potential impact on community and activity contexts as youth enact features of PYD, such as exploring, developing skills, and making contributions. Integral to Lerner's theory of PYD and individual $\longleftrightarrow$ context relations are effects of youth on these contexts. As already noted, the five Cs of PYD lead to a sixth C, contributions to self and context. As youth contribute by affecting decision-making, assuming responsibilities, and acting as engaged citizens, they likely create institutional and community change (Lerner, 2004; Lerner et al., 2005). Similarly, a fundamental aspect of thriving is recognition of "youth making active and constructive contributions" (Benson & Scales, 2009, p. 90) to communities and organizations. This emphasis on youth $\rightarrow$ context relations is rooted, in part, in developmental theory that stressed children as active agents in their own development (Bandura, 1978; Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and developmental systems theory.

Larson and Hansen (2005) placed even greater emphasis on youth agency as a defining feature of PYD, and how youth's demonstrations of goal-directed action in activities may impact organizational and interpersonal systems. In youth-led programs, in particular, youth have broad opportunities to influence their own development (Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005). Often, youth-led programs also have goals of community change, such as social action, which sometimes supersede PYD goals. In sum, Larson's description of PYD, as well as those provided by Lerner and researchers of thriving, all

present theoretical rationales for bidirectional associations between PYD features and activity contexts.

Current Research on PYD and Youth Activity Contexts

Activity Contexts as Predictors of PYD

Although activity contexts are theoretically hypothesized to promote PYD, most studies of activity involvement and PYD have examined behavioral dimensions of participation, such as frequency or breadth, rather than opportunities provided *within* the activity context. For example, greater participation breadth, sports involvement (Linver, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009; Zarrett, Fay, Li, Carrano, Phelps, & Lerner, 2009), and participation in 4-H youth programs have been linked positively to PYD (Lewis, Murphy, & Baker, 2008). Further, greater breadth and participation in youth development programs have been found to predict the contribution component of PYD (Lerner et al., 2005; Lerner, Phelps, Alberts, Forman, & Christiansen, 2007). Although none of these studies assessed context-level features of the activity, such as the presence of the Big 3, they do suggest that activity participation is related to PYD and thriving.

Two studies provide slightly different perspectives of the associations between activity contexts and PYD. Theokas and Lerner (2006) found that greater provision of resources, such as extended school day programs, was associated with greater PYD. They did not, however, measure the extent to which youth participated in the activities or the opportunities and supports provided within these contexts. Using a different, qualitative approach, Jones and Lavallee (2009) found that young athletes, coaches, and researchers believed that sports contexts could provide opportunities for youth to develop interpersonal skills and social connections. Hypothesized associations between activity

contexts and PYD are just beginning to be examined and are likely more complicated than initially thought (Lerner, 2009).

Researchers of thriving have done more than PYD researchers to assess the extent to which activity contexts support youth outcomes. Similar to PYD investigations, at least two studies found that time spent in activities was an important predictor of thriving (Scales et al., 2000; Theokas et al., 2005). However, subsequent investigations provide a more nuanced understanding of the relations between activity contexts and thriving. Scales, Benson, and Mannes (2006) concluded that youth activity involvement positively predicted thriving, an association that was explained, in part, by greater support, empowerment, and boundary setting from non-family adults. Scales et al. (2011) found that relational opportunities, such as the presence of supportive relationships in community activities, predicted youth thriving. These studies of thriving go beyond analyses of mere behavioral measures of participation, such as attendance frequency, to suggest that opportunities and supports provided within activity contexts are related to PYD.

Other researchers of youth activity contexts and PYD have relied more heavily on Larson's definitions of PYD and ideas about self-directed development. Thurber, Scanlin, Scheuler, and Henderson (2007) tested PYD outcomes on the premise that camp experiences are, as Larson (2000) described, challenging and intrinsically motivating activities affording opportunities for planning, initiative-taking, and personal agency. PYD outcome measures, however, were based largely on other conceptualizations, such as thriving (Henderson, Thurber, Scheuler Whitaker, Bialeschki, Scanlin, 2006; Leffert et al., 1998). Thurber et al. reported increases in PYD domains, such as identity and social

skills. Further, youth attending camps with a specific focus (i.e., spirituality) tended to experience greater development in that area. Also drawing on Larson and Leffert et al.'s consideration of thriving and community assets, Morrissey and Werner-Wilson (2005) found that perceived community opportunities and supports predicted greater participation, which in turn predicted greater PYD, as measured by prosocial behavior. Although lacking a consistent definition of PYD outcomes, these studies provide some evidence that particular aspects of activity contexts, rather than just participation, are related to greater PYD.

One such aspect seems to be the activity content itself. For example, some types of activities, such as sports combined with other activities (Linver et al., 2009; Zarrett et al., 2009), and 4-H programs (Lewis et al., 2008), have been more strongly related to PYD than have other activities and their combinations. Additional specific characteristics of activity contexts that may predict PYD outcomes include opportunities for planning and taking initiative (Komro et al., 1996; Larson, 2000), parental support (Larson, Pearce, Sullivan, & Jarrett, 2007), and positive peer and adult models (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004). There has been little systematic investigation of such potentially important contextual variables, perhaps partly related to a scarcity of theoretical models of contextual effects in the PYD and developmental literature (see Tseng and Seidman, 2007, for an exception).

In addition to a neglect of specific contextual variables and their effects, little is known about factors that may moderate the relation between activity involvement and PYD. Although some researchers have tested age and ethnicity differences in the relation between activities and PYD, significant effects (e.g., Lewis et al., 2008; Scales et al.,

2000) have not generally been reported. An exception is Thurber et al. (2007), who found

limited support for greater PYD growth in older youth. None of the studies reviewed

herein tested youth temperament, personality, abilities, or interests as potential

moderators. Nevertheless, the impact of activities must entail interactions among youth,

resources, and opportunities, which likely will show differing patterns of effects across

youth (Tseng & Seidman, 2007).

In summary, as research in this domain expands, there is a need for more testing

of complex frameworks, such as the mediated models examined by Morrissey and

Werner-Wilson (2005) and Scales et al. (2006). Further, there has been little assessment

of potential moderating effects, based on a "goodness of fit" approach (e.g., Walker,

Marczak, Blyth, & Borden, 2005) in which contextual and individual characteristics

interact in producing PYD effects. Also missing are tests of the potential effects of

youth's PYD on activity contexts.

PYD as a Predictor of Outcomes for Organized Activity Contexts

The handful of recent qualitative studies on youth engagement in organizational

decision-making point to important outcomes for adults and organizations. For example,

Flicker (2008) found that youth contributions to a project for HIV-positive youth led to

changes in the programs of organizational stakeholders. Improvements included more

effective advocacy for youth, better support for program initiatives, and new service-

provider skills. At the same time, greater youth contributions also required increased staff

workload, reduced project control, and created some confusion about roles and decision-

making. Lawson, Claiborne, Hardiman, Austin, and Surko (2007), in a study of

partnerships among youth and community-based organizations, identified many similarly

positive organizational outcomes, such as new community partnerships, access to new resources and funding, and increased service delivery. Similarly, Mitra (2009) examined youth-adult collaborations in school contexts and found that most were at least partially successful in reaching goals, such as improving race-relations. In each of these studies, youth contributions, competencies, and action contributed to meaningful changes in activity contexts.

Summary

Overall, PYD theories present activity contexts as affording opportunities that promote youth competencies, prosociality, identity development, and relationships. Research provides early indications that some aspects of activity contexts may promote PYD, but more research is needed to clarify the definitions and nature of these associations. PYD approaches also outline how youth who enact PYD characteristics effect meaningful and concrete changes on organizations and activities. Research on the possible effects of PYD on activity contexts, however, is in its nascent stages.

Limitations

The current review does not fully represent the complexity of youth-context relations in at least two ways. First, potential links between activity contexts and PYD do not eliminate the possibility that these contexts contribute to negative experiences and development. At times, organized activity participation has been linked to stress (Larson, Hansen, & Moneta, 2006), negative peer behavior, and parental pressure (Dworkin & Larson, 2006). For example, displays of antisocial behaviors in activities have been found to promote these behaviors among peers (Gifford-Smith, Dodge, Dishion, & McCord, 2005; Stattin, Kerr, Mahoney, Persson, & Magnusson, 2005). Although found primarily

in unstructured activities and treatment programs, these iatrogenic effects also may occur in more structured activities. Nevertheless, it is important to note that negative experiences sometimes can have positive developmental effects. Challenges, such as stress, may strengthen youth's intrinsic motivation (Pearce & Larson, 2006), lead to learning (Dworkin & Larson), and help prepare youth for future challenges (Larson & Walker, 2006).

A second limitation of the current review is that descriptions of bidirectional youth-context associations cannot fully represent the ongoing, multilayered relations between youth and their contexts, such as the dynamic reciprocity between youth and activity leaders or the potential influence of peers. Indeed, in a number of ways, interactions with peers afford youth different opportunities for development than do interactions with adults (e.g., Edwards & Lewis, 1979; Piaget, 1965; Sullivan, 1953). Thus, the relative balance and nature of peer and adult interactions may be important contextual features for assessment and programming considerations.

Implications for Practice and Policy

Research into associations between PYD and organizational contexts may inform program planning and policy in at least two ways. First, documented associations between affordances in activity contexts and PYD suggest that opportunities for supportive relationships may be critical. Scales et al. (2011), for example, have identified specific aspects of youth's interactions with adults as important in predicting PYD; these contextual aspects include warm, trusting relationships and encouragement of youth's talents and interests. Second, theory and initial evidence support the need for organizations and policy makers to attend to how the relation between context and PYD

may differ among individual youth, both by promoting program diversity and developing more nuanced assessments of program effectiveness. Third, organizations should identify and evaluate potential benefits of PYD, for example, by targeting the type of youth-adult partnerships that will achieve desired goals (Lawson et al., 2007). Further, organizations should recognize potential costs or drawbacks, such as the need for additional staff time and resources, and appropriate supports should be built into program plans, policies, and budgets.

Future Research Directions

Current theory and research on youth activity contexts and PYD point to several areas for future research. First, a principle requirement is clarity around concepts such as PYD, thriving, and context effects, so that their divergent definitions do not result in inconsistent findings. Investigators also must include contextual aspects of activities that theory and research suggest may be linked to positive development, such as the Big 3 characteristics of youth development programs.

A further conceptual issue relates to the potential impact of youth on their organizational or community context. In examining this impact, researchers need to distinguish among the intention to have an impact (purpose), perception of the ability to achieve an impact (self-efficacy), and actual impact (see Weems & Silverman, 2006 for a similar differentiation of sense of control). The PYD literature has generally focused on the importance of youth's *perception* of having an impact on their context (e.g., Damon, 2008; Lerner et al., 2010). In contrast, other psychologists (e.g., Bandura, 1997) have focused on youth's belief that they are *able* to have an influence on their environment, whereas community psychology researchers have generally highlighted the significance

of the *actual* organizational impact of youth participation (e.g., Zeldin, 2000).

Disentangling these dimensions may be important. Indeed, Scott and Weems (2010)

found that youth's actual and perceived control were differentially related to adjustment.

Similarly, Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Talib, and Finch (2009) reported that, among adolescents

and emerging adults, the sense of pursuing a purpose positively predicted life satisfaction,

but this relation was not dependent on knowing how to achieve that purpose (an

important component of efficacy). The choice among measures of purpose, sense of

efficacy, and actual impact likely depends on the specific research question. Clarification

of these impact-related variables, however, may be necessary for a coherent and

integrated understanding of youth-context relationships.

In addition to these conceptual difficulties, future research should address

measurement and analysis issues. Activity-related variables, for example, need to be

assessed at an appropriate contextual level. Behavioral measures of activity involvement

(e.g., frequency) do not reflect the specific opportunities afforded by the activity context.

Further, context-level indicators should be measured from perspectives beyond those

provided by youth, that is, from individuals at the organizational or community level.

One important analysis issue is how to capture the embeddedness of youth within

their contexts (Schulenberg, 2006). Multilevel modeling is appropriate when individuals

are nested within larger groups, such as organizations, and can address the non-

independence of these data while supporting an examination of context- and individual-

level effects and their interactions. Multilevel modeling has rarely been done in PYD

research. Additionally, many studies of the associations between youth activity contexts

and PYD are cross-sectional, and none of the studies reviewed herein used experimental

designs. The use of longitudinal, experimental, and nested approaches will be necessary to assess causal direction and contextual effects in ways that correspond to current PYD theory.

Conclusions and Rationale for the Current Studies

In summary, PYD comprises a view of youth "as a full partner in the community-child relation" (Damon, 2004, p. 19). However, overall, youth development researchers have been more interested in the potential effects of developmental contexts on youth than on the effects of youth on contexts. Nevertheless, it often may be that youth's sense of purpose and awareness of the potential for impacting the context is what makes the activity context itself so motivating and challenging, creating opportunities for PYD. Further, youth are not only a responsibility for society to support but also provide societal benefits. Researchers need to recognize these benefits, making youth → context models a priority for future study. More broadly, mutually influential development-context relations provide opportunities to promote strengths of both youth and the environments in which they develop (Damon & Lerner, 2008).

This dissertation addresses several areas highlighted by the current review as in need of further research. In both studies I sought to consider associations between youth and their context. In Study 2, more specifically, I attempted to measure concepts by relying on perceptions of both youth and adults within organizations and to address concerns related to youth's nesting within organizations by testing for the need to conduct multilevel modeling. Youth involvement in organizational decision making was selected as the area of focus, because it an area in which youth might have the potential to impact the context (i.e., the organization) and the context might have the potential to

impact youth's positive development. Hart (2008) provides additional theoretical impetus for focusing specifically on youth involvement, as an example of youth participation, in examining aspects of positive youth development and development-context relations.

Hart's model of youth participation, originally published in 1980, and re-published by UNICEF in 1992, was intended to raise discussion on effective ways to involve children and youth in research, planning, and design of children's environments. He has argued that, in North America and Europe, children and youth's informal participation with adults and meaningful community activity has been limited because of children and youth's segregation into schools and recreation programs. Hart's model takes the form of a ladder, which outlines five degrees of meaningful participation. Rungs range from lower degrees of participation (e.g., children assigned roles but kept informed) to higher degrees (e.g., child-initiated and directed participation in projects). Importantly, Hart (2008) has described the potential of youth participation, such as youth involvement in organizational decision-making, as a way that children and adults can help each other in achieving their goals. Moreover, reflecting on his model of youth participation, Hart has argued that what is needed currently is collaboration among researchers, youth workers, and youth, and ways of monitoring and evaluating the everyday practices of youth and those who work with them.

The current studies were intended to fill gaps in existing research, based on theories of youth participation and developmental psychology. Study 1 is a qualitative examination of the perceived outcomes of youth involvement in organizational decision making on adults and organizations. In study 1 I summarized the empirical qualitative research on the outcomes of youth involvement in organizational decision making on

adults and organizations. Study 2 is a quantitative study of the associations among youth

involvement, organizations' learning culture, and youth initiative. In study 2 I examined

hypothesized associations between dimensions of youth involvement and youth initiative,

as well as the potential moderating effect of one aspect of the organizational context (i.e.,

learning culture) on this association.

References

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman.

Bandura, A. (1978). The self system in reciprocal determinism. *American Psychologist, 33*, 344–358.

Benson, P. L., & Scales, P. C. (2009). The definition and preliminary measurement of thriving in adolescence. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 4*, 85–104. doi: 10.1080/17439760802399240

Benson, P. L., Scales, P. C., Hamilton, S. H., & Sesma, A., Jr. (2006). Positive youth development: Theory, research, and applications. In R. M. Lerner (Vol. Ed.) & W. Damon & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 1. Theoretical models of human development* (6th ed., pp. 894–941). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bronk, K. C., Hill, P. L., Lapsley, D. K., Talib, T. L., & Finch, H. (2009). Purpose, hope and life satisfaction in three age groups. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 4*, 500–510. doi: 10.1080/17439760903271439.

Bundick, M. J., Yeager, D. S., King, P. E., & Damon, W. (2010). Thriving across the lifespan. In W. F. Overton (Vol. Ed.) & R. M. Lerner (Ed.), *Handbook of life-span development: Vol. 1. Biology, cognition and methods across the life-span* (3rd ed., pp. 882–923). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. (1989). *Turning points: Preparing American youth for the 21st century*. Washington, DC: Author.

Catalano, R. F., Berglund, M. L., Ryan, J. A. M., Lonczak, H. S., & Hawkins, J. D. (2004). Positive youth development in the United States: Research findings on evaluations of positive youth development programs. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 591,* 98–124. doi: 10.1177/0002716203260102

Damon, W. (2004). What is positive youth development? *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 591,* 13–23. doi: 10.1177/0002716203260092

Damon, W. (2008). *The path to purpose: Helping our children find their calling in life.* New York: Free Press.

Damon, W., & Lerner, R. M. (2008). The scientific study of child and adolescent development: Important issues in the field today. In W. Damon & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Child and adolescent development: An advanced course* (pp. 3–15). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Dworkin, J., & Larson, R. (2006). Adolescents' negative experiences in organized youth activities. *Journal of Youth Development, 1.* Retrieved from http://www.youthdev.illinois.edu/Documents/DworkinLarson2006.pdf

Eccles, J., & Gootman, J. A. (Eds). (2002). *Community programs to promote youth development.* Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Edwards, C., & Lewis, M. (1979). Young children's concepts of social relations: Social functions and social objects. In M. Lewis & L. Rosenberg (Eds.), *The child and its family* (Vol. 2, pp. 241–266). New York: Plenum Press.

Flicker, S. (2008). Who benefits from community-based participatory research? A case

study of the Positive Youth Project. *Health Education & Behavior, 35*, 70–86.

doi: 10.1177/1090198105285927

Gifford-Smith, M., Dodge, K. A., Dishion, T. J., & McCord, J. (2005). Peer influence in

children and adolescents: Crossing the bridge from developmental to intervention

science. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 33*, 255–265. doi:

10.1007/s10802-005-3563-7

Hart, R. (2008). Stepping back from 'the ladder': Reflections on a model of participatory

work with children. In A. Reid, B. B. Jensen, J. Nikel, & V. Simovska (Eds.),

Participation and learning: Perspectives on education and the environment,

health and sustainability (pp. 19–31). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.

Henderson, K. A., Thurber, C. A., Scheuler Whitaker, L., Bialieschki, M. D., & Scanlin.

M. M. (2006). Development and application of a Camper Growth Index for youth.

Journal of Experiential Education, 29, 1–17.

Jones, M. I., & Lavallee, D. (2009). Exploring the life skills needs of British adolescent

athletes. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 10,* 159–167. doi: 10.1016/

j.psychsport.2008.06.005

Komro, K. A., Perry, C. L., Murray, D. M., VeblenMortenson, S., Williams, C. L., &

Anstine, P. S. (1996). Peer-planned social activities for preventing alcohol use

among young adolescents. *Journal of School Health, 66,* 328–334. doi:

10.1111/j.1746-1561.1996.tb03413.x

Larson, R. W. (2000). Toward a psychology of positive youth development. *American Psychologist, 55,* 170–183. doi: 10.1037//0003-066X.55.1.170

Larson, R. W. (2006). Positive youth development, willful adolescents, and mentoring. *Journal of Community Psychology, 34,* 677–689. doi: 10.1002/jcop.20123

Larson, R. W., & Hansen, D. (2005). The development of strategic thinking: Learning to impact human systems in a youth activism program. *Human Development, 48,* 327–349. doi: 10.1159/000088251

Larson, R. W., Hansen, D., & Moneta, G. (2006). Differing profiles of developmental experiences across types of organized youth activities. *Developmental Psychology, 42,* 849–863. doi: 10.1037/0012-1649.42.5.849

Larson, R. W., Pearce, N., Sullivan, P. J., & Jarrett, R. L. (2007). Participation in youth programs as a catalyst for negotiation of family autonomy with connection. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 36,* 31–45. doi: 10.1007/s10964-006-9133-7

Larson, R. W., & Walker, K. C. (2006). Learning about the "real world" in an urban arts youth program. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 21,* 244–268. doi: 10.1177/0743558405285824

Larson, R., Walker, K., & Pearce, N. (2005). A comparison of youth-driven and adult-driven youth programs: Balancing inputs from youth and adults. *Journal of Community Psychology, 33,* 57–74. doi: 10.1002/jcop.20035

Lawson, H. A., Claiborne, N., Hardiman, E., Austin, S., & Surko, M. (2007). Deriving theories of change from successful community development partnerships for youths: Implications for school improvement. *American Journal of Education, 114,* 1–40.

Leffert, N., Benson, P. L., Scales, P. C., Sharma, A. R., Drake, D. R., & Blyth, D. A. (1998). Developmental assets: Measurement and prediction of risk behaviors among adolescents. *Applied Developmental Science, 2,* 209–230. doi: 10.1207/s1532480xads0204_4

Lerner, R. M. (1986). *Concepts and theories of human development* (2nd ed.). New York: Random House.

Lerner, R. M. (2004). *Liberty: Thriving and civic engagement among America's youth.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Lerner, R. M. (2009). The positive youth development perspective: Theoretical and empirical bases of a strength-based approach to adolescent development. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of positive psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 149–163). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Lerner, R. M., Fisher, C. B., & Weinberg, R. A. (2000). Toward a science for and of the people: Promoting the civil society through the application of developmental science. *Child Development, 71,* 11–20.

Lerner, R. M., Lerner, J., Almerigi, J. B., Theokas, C., Phelps, E., Gestsdottir, S.,…von Eye, A. (2005). Positive youth development, participation in community youth development programs, and community contributions of fifth-grade adolescents. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 25,* 17–71. doi: 10.1177/0272431604272461

Lerner, R. M., Phelps, E., Alberts, A., Forman, Y., & Christiansen, E. D. (2007). The many faces of urban girls; Features of positive development in early adolescence. In B. Leadbeater & N. Way (Eds.), *Urban girls revisited: Building strengths* (pp. 19–52). New York: New York University Press.

Lerner, R. M., & Steinberg, L. (2009). The scientific study of adolescent development: Historical and contemporary perspectives. In R. M. Lerner & L. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology: Vol. 1. Individual bases of adolescent development* (pp. 3–14). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Lerner, R. M., von Eye, A., Lerner, J. V., Lewin-Bizan, S., & Bowers, E. P. (2010). Special issue introduction: The meaning and measurement of thriving: A view of the issues. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 39*, 707–719. doi: 10.1007/s10964-010-9531-8

Lewis, S. R., Murphy, T., & Baker, M. (2008). The Nevada 4-H Program: Impacts on Nevada Public School Youth. *Proceedings of the 2008 Western Region AAAE Research Conference, Volume 27*. Retrieved from: http://www.usu.edu/aste/ ag_ed/wraec/ PDF/E3.pdf.

Linver, M. R., Roth, J. L., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2009). Patterns of adolescents' participation in organized activities: Are sports best when combined with other activities? *Developmental Psychology, 45*, 354–367. doi: 10.1037/a0014133

Magnusson, D., & Stattin, H. (2006). The person in the environment: Towards a general model for scientific inquiry. In W. Damon & R. M. Lerner (Series Eds.) & R. M. Lerner (Vol. Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 1. Theoretical models of human development* (6th ed., pp. 400–464). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Mahoney, J. L., Larson, R. W., & Eccles, J. S. (Eds.). (2005). *Organized activities as contexts of development: Extracurricular activities, after-school, and community programs*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Mitra, D. L. (2009). Collaborating with students: Building youth-adult partnerships in

schools. *American Journal of Education, 15*, 407–436. doi: 10.1086/597488

Morrissey, K. M., & Werner-Wilson, R. J. (2005). The relationship between out-of-

school activities and positive youth development: An investigation of the

influences of communities and family. *Adolescence, 40*, 67–85.

Overton, W. F. (2010). Life-span development: Concepts and issues. In W. F. Overton

(Vol. Ed.) & R. M. Lerner (Ed.), *Handbook of life-span development: Vol. 1.*

Biology, cognition and methods across the life-span (3rd ed., pp. 1–29). Hoboken,

NJ: Wiley.

Pearce, N. J. & Larson, R. W. (2006). How teens become engaged in youth development

programs: The process of motivational change in a civic activism organization.

Applied Developmental Science, 10, 121–131.

Piaget, J. (1965). *The moral judgment of the child.* New York: Free Press.

Roth, J. L., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2003a). What is a youth development program?

Identification and defining principles. In F. Jacobs, D. Wertlieb, & R. M. Lerner

(Eds.), *Handbook of applied developmental science: Promoting positive child,*

adolescent, and family development through research, policies, and programs:

Vol. 2. Enhancing the life chances of youth and families: Public service systems

and public policy perspectives (pp. 197–223). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Roth, J. L., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2003b). What exactly is a youth development program?

Answers from research and practice. *Applied Developmental Science, 7*, 94–111.

Scales, P. C., Benson, P. L., Leffert, N., & Blyth, D. A. (2000). Contribution of developmental assets to the prediction of thriving among adolescents. *Applied Developmental Science, 4,* 27–46. doi: 10.1207/S1532480XADS0401_3

Scales, P. C., Benson, P. L., & Mannes, M. (2006). The contribution to adolescent well-being made by nonfamily adults: An examination of developmental assets as contexts and processes. *Journal of Community Psychology, 34,* 401–413. doi: 10.1002/jcop.20106

Scales, P. C., Benson, P. L., & Roehlkepartain, E. C. (2011). Adolescent thriving: The role of sparks, relationships, and empowerment. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 40,* 263–277. doi: 10.1007/s10964-010-9578-6

Schulenberg, J. E. (2006). Understanding the multiple contexts of adolescent risky behavior and positive development: Advances and future directions. *Applied Developmental Science, 10,* 107–113. doi: 10.1207/s1532480xads1002_6

Scott, B. G., & Weems, C. F. (2010). Patterns of actual and perceived control: Are control profiles differentially related to internalizing and externalizing problems in youth? *Anxiety, Stress & Coping, 23,* 515–528. doi: 10.1080/10615801003611479

Stattin, H., Kerr, M., Mahoney, J., Persson, A., & Magnusson, D. (2005). Explaining why a leisure context is bad for some girls and not for others. In J. L. Mahoney, R. W. Larson, & J. S. Eccles (Eds.), *Organized activities as contexts of development: Extracurricular activities, after-school and community programs* (pp. 211–244). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Sullivan, H. S. (1953). *The interpersonal theory of psychiatry.* New York: Norton.

Theokas, C., Almerigi, J. B., Lerner, R. M., Dowling, E. M., Benson, P. L., Scales, P. C.,
    & von Eye, A. (2005). Conceptualizing and modeling individual and ecological
    asset components of thriving in early adolescence. *Journal of Early Adolescence,*
    25, 113–143. doi: 10.1177/0272431604272460

Theokas, C., & Lerner, R. M. (2006). Observed ecological assets in families, schools, and
    neighborhoods: Conceptualization, measurement, and relations with positive and
    negative developmental outcomes. *Applied Developmental Science, 10,* 61–74.
    doi: 10.1207/s1532480xads1002_2

Thurber, C. A., Scanlin, M. M., Scheuler, L., & Henderson, K. A. (2007). Youth
    development outcomes of the camp experience: Evidence for multidimensional
    growth. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 36,* 41–254. doi: 10.1007/s10964-006-
    9142-6

Tseng, V., & Seidman, E. (2007). A systems framework for understanding social settings.
    American Journal of Community Psychology, 39, 217–228. doi: 10.1007/s10464-
    007-9101-8

Walker, J., Marczak, M., Blyth, D., & Borden, L. (2005). Designing youth development
    programs: Toward a theory of developmental intentionality. In J. L. Mahoney, R.
    W. Larson, & J. S. Eccles (Eds.), Organized activities as contexts for development
    (pp. 399–418). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Weems, C. F., & Silverman, W. (2006). An integrative model of control: Implications for
    understanding emotion regulation and dysregulation in childhood anxiety. *Journal*
    of Affective Disorders, 91, 113–124. doi: 10.1016/j.jad.2006.01.009.

Wynn, J., Richman, H., Rubinstein, R. A., & Littell, J. (1987). *Communities and adolescents: An exploration of reciprocal supports.* Chicago: University of Chicago, Chapin Hall Center for Children.

Zarrett, N., Fay, K., Li, Y., Carrano, J., Phelps, E., & Lerner, R. M. (2009). More than child's play: Variable- and pattern-centered approaches for examining effects of sports participation on youth development. *Developmental Psychology, 45,* 368–382.

Zeldin, S. (2000). Integrating research and practice to understand and strengthen communities for adolescent development: An introduction to the special issue and current issues. *Applied Developmental Science, 4*(Suppl. 1), 2–10. doi: 10.1207.S1532480XADS04Suppl_1

CHAPTER 3: STUDY 1

Organizational Outcomes of Youth Involvement in Organizational

Decision Making: A Synthesis of Qualitative Research

In 2000, Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes, and Calvert published a seminal report on a study of youth involvement in organizational decision making, which they identified as the first to examine the effects of youth involvement in organizational decision making on organizations and adults. Youth involvement in organizational decision making occurs when youth work, usually in collaboration with adults, to set the policy direction of organizations. Examples of such involvement include program planning or delivery, advocacy, and membership on advisory teams. Zeldin et al. argued that although organizations had done much to integrate youth into decision-making practices in organizations and institutions, research had not kept pace with practice. In particular, although there was at least some research indicating that responsibility, decision making, and partnerships with adults in activity engagement was related to positive outcomes for youth (e.g., Yates & Youniss, 1996), it was unclear whether adults and organizations also benefited from youth involvement. Zeldin et al. found that when youth meaningfully participated in the process of decision making, adults in the organization developed more energy and greater commitment in their work and had a better understanding of relevant program issues and the needs of youth. In addition, organizations gained a more focused mission, were more responsive to youth needs, and were more appealing to funders. However, Zeldin et al. also highlighted the need for further exploration in the field to replicate their findings with other organizations and other methodologies.

In the decade following Zeldin et al.'s (2000) report, further research has been conducted on the outcomes of youth involvement for adults and organizations. However, perhaps because of the applied nature and early stage of the research, these studies have tended to be isolated case studies, exploratory qualitative reports, and studies published outside of the peer-reviewed literature (e.g., Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin, & Sinclair, 2003; Randolph & Eronen, 2007). During this same time period, more researchers and theorists have emphasized the importance of examining the effects of youth involvement on adults and organizations (London, Zimmerman, & Erbstein, 2003; Zeldin, Larson, Camino, & O'Connor, 2005) and, more broadly, of considering the contributions of youth as agents of change in their environments (e.g., Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem, & Ferber, 2003). In sum, although qualitative studies and reports on the adult and organizational outcomes of youth involvement in organizational decision making exist, there is a need to systematically review and summarize this literature. Thus, the current study is a synthesis of empirical qualitative research on the outcomes of youth involvement in organizational decision making on adults and organizations.

Method

The current study used a qualitative research synthesis methodology. A qualitative research synthesis is a means of systematically reviewing and integrating findings from qualitative studies (Sandelowski, 2007; Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007). The method originated in health research, as a means of accumulating knowledge gained from multiple qualitative studies (Sandelowski, Docherty, & Emden, 1997). It was used in the current study in order to summarize and map the extant qualitative knowledge of adult and organizational outcomes of youth involvement in organizational decision

making. As closely as possible, the method used followed the procedures and analysis guidelines set out by Dixon-Woods, Booth, and Sutton (2007) and Sandelowski and Barroso (Sandelowski; Sandelowski & Barroso).

Sampling Strategy

In this review I used the following criteria to select studies for inclusion:

- Conducted as direct-observation studies of youth involvement in organizational decision making, with findings pertaining to adults and organizational functioning;

- Published between January 2000 and May 2011, to encompass the approximate decade that followed Zeldin et al.'s (2000) initial report;

- Published in the English language and occurring within Western European or North American cultures, to maximize the coherence and applicability of the results of the current study, given that youth involvement likely differs by sociopolitical context;

- Published in peer-reviewed journals, *gray literature*, which report on original research that has not necessarily been peer-reviewed (e.g., program reports; American Psychological Association, 2010), or *fugitive literature*, which is not published in traditional venues (e.g., doctoral dissertations). Because much of the research has been conducted in applied settings or as part of program evaluations, this was considered more appropriate and productive than limiting the review to formal peer-reviewed publications (e.g., Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2009);

- Not including studies in which youth participation was solely in the areas of research, advocacy, or community change, unless these tasks were also related to a definable organization; and

- Not including schools, which likely have policies, structures, and funding provisions that differ from the youth-serving and charitable organizations that were expected to comprise most of the sample.

These inclusion criteria provided a means of standardizing the search criteria, and balancing the need to consider all of the reports in a relevant domain while avoiding a sample size so large as to make intensive analysis impossible (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007).

A comprehensive search of the social science and psychology literature was conducted using PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, PsycBOOKS, and e-Journals@Scholars Portal. The following combinations of keywords were used: ((("youth in decision-making") or ("youth in decision making")) or (("youth involvement") and organization*) or (("youth in govern*") or ("youth govern*")) or (("youth engage*") and (organization* or institution*)) or (("youth participa*") and (organization* or institution*)). In addition, given Zeldin's leadership in youth involvement research (e.g., Zeldin et al., 2000; Zeldin, 2004), an author search was conducted using "Zeldin, S.", to expand the search to include works authored by Shepherd Zeldin and citing his work. Further, given that some studies might not be available through standard databases, I also examined publications, resources, and bibliographic lists from websites of organizations with a focus on youth engagement and a history of publishing reports and articles in the area (e.g., the Laidlaw Foundation (http://www.laidlawfdn.org), the McConnell Foundation (http://mcconnellfoundation.ca), Chapin Hall (chapinhall.org), and the Innovation Center (http://theinnovationcenter.org). Finally, the review included a follow-up of key citations. This technique, also known as footnote chasing (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007), involves

following up on studies referenced in other reports that are reviewed during the search

process.

Analysis

A screening of titles and abstracts provided an initial identification of articles for

potential inclusion. Publications were chosen following further assessment of full texts.

Reports were appraised using Sandelowski and Barroso's (2002) 14-item guide for

appraising qualitative studies in research syntheses, which extracts information such as

research questions, data collection procedures, methodology, and findings. (See

Appendix B for an abbreviated version of the adapted appraisal guide that was used in the

current analysis). The status of uncertain publications was determined through a process

of negotiation and consensus with a second reviewer, based on a review of the 14-item

appraisal guide and the criteria for inclusion listed above. Items, or categories, in the

appraisal included research questions, literature review, methodology, sampling strategy,

findings, and validity. For example, to be chosen for inclusion, the "findings" item

required that studies described a discernable set of results, substantiated with data, and

sufficiently analyzed and interpreted. To optimize trustworthiness, a clear audit trail,

which is a record of actions taken during the search, screening, and selection process

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985), was kept. For the current study, the audit trail included citation

information for all 2180 documents that resulted from the database search; search details,

such as exact dates of searches; the complete list of organizational websites that were

included in the search and citation information on documents passing title search; details

on follow-ups of key citations; and appraisal guides and study appraisals.

Results

Seventeen publications were chosen as meeting the inclusion criteria. (See Appendix C, Table A-1 for examples of appraisals of included and excluded studies.) Results are presented in Table 3-1, which includes citation information, a description of the organization, youth, and study, and the perceived outcomes of youth involvement in decision making on organizations. A single quantitative study (Jones & Perkins, 2006) also was found, and is not listed in the table, but is included in the summary of outcomes. Perceived organizational and adult outcomes of youth involvement in decision making were summarized according to three forms of the perceived organizational impact of youth involvement on (a) service provision; (b) staff within the organization (primarily front-line youth workers and management); and (c) more general organizational functioning (e.g., decision-making processes). It must be noted that these are *perceived* outcomes, as identified by research participants, and cannot be taken as causal effects, as might be found in quantitative experimental research studies. Organization and study descriptions and outcomes are summarized below.

Organization and Study Descriptions

Studies involved organizations in the non-profit, health, social service, activism, recreation, community development, and voluntary sectors, although some religious, government, and justice organizations also participated. The size of study samples varied widely. Three of the studies included only a single organization. A study by Green (2000), in contrast, involved 89 organizations. Youth ages also ranged widely, from approximately 10 to 25 years, although most studies focused on high school aged youth. Youth were involved in governance, community development, program planning and

Table 3-1

Studies on Organizational Outcomes of Youth Involvement

Report[a]	Organization and Study Description	Relevant Findings
Chen, Weiss, Nicholson, & Girls Incorporated ® (2010)	Organizations: Girls Incorporated® and five Girls Inc. affiliate sites. Girls Incorporated® uses research-based programs and public education efforts to strengthen girl empowerment. Youth were involved in decision making through a Participatory Action Research (PAR) evaluation project. The team involved Girls Inc. members (10-20 in each site, ages 10-15), program staff from affiliates, and research staff from the national Girls Inc. organization. Study: Evaluation of the PAR evaluation. Methods were program document review, field notes, staff evaluations, and a group reflection session with youth participants at conclusion of project.	Outcomes of YI for service provision: • Evaluation provided insight for future program development. Some specific recommendations from the PAR were enacted. For example, as a result of recommendations for more science programs, one affiliate wrote grant applications to increase the funding for these programs Outcomes of YI for staff: • Youth taught adult staff from other sites how to engage girls in participatory evaluation • Adults gained new understanding of youth's developmental needs and capacity for growth Outcomes of YI for general organization: • The PAR re-affirmed the Girls Inc. organization's philosophy and approach to empowering girls

[a]Denotes report published in gray literature.

Report[a]	Organization and Study Description	Relevant Findings
Christens & Dolan (2011)	Organizations: Inland Congregations United for Change (ICUC), which engages people in community change through faith-based institutions. Youth were involved the organization's community organizing efforts. Study: Case study. Methods were review of organizational and press coverage documents, and interviews with 20 young leaders, ages 16-20, 2 non-staff adult supporters, and one former adult staff member.	Outcomes of YI for service provision: • Improved program implementation. Youth organizers pushed schools to implement new antiviolence programs and influenced the city to have greater youth involvement and change community policing. • Made progress toward a community labor agreement. • Older youth mentored younger youth's leadership skills. Outcomes of YI for staff: • None described. Outcomes of YI for general organization: • Institution building, by youth's creating a reputation for themselves and for the organization as a well-respected and powerful institution • More equitable relationships between youth in the organization and adults in power in the community • Established policy change, such as a youth council (later disbanded)
Conner & Strobel (2007)	Organization: Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL), an after-school program in which youth are trained to study issues to make policy recommendations. Youth age appeared to range from grade 8 through high school. Study: Embedded case study. Study focused on two Latina youth in YELL, beginning in grade 8 and studied over 3 years. Methods included keeping field notes, focus groups, and repeated	Outcomes of YI for service provision: • Structured opportunities developed for youth to offer their own feedback about programs • Changes to program curriculum to incorporate goal setting and self-reflection exercises Outcomes of YI for staff: • Adults became more aware of giving feedback to youth, informally and in structured meetings throughout the year. Outcomes of YI for general organization: • Greater recognition and emphasis on a variety of leadership skills, with youth and in staff meetings • Development of an "open door" policy for youth to always be welcomed back into program

Report[a]	Organization and Study Description	Relevant Findings
	interviews with two youth and four staff.	• Organizational directors became intentional in monitoring how opportunities were offered to youth and ensuring that youth received attention and adults were connected with, and informed about, individual youth
Flicker (2008)	Organization: The Positive Youth Project was a collaborative research project intended to improve the lives of youth with HIV. It involved two community organizations, one that provided services to HIV-positive youth and one that provided treatment information to the HIV/AIDS community. The Project involved 79 HIV-positive youth ages 12 to 25. Study: Case study/grounded theory analysis to evaluate the Project. Methods were observation, field notes, and interviews with 10 youth, 2 academics partners and 2 service providers.	Outcomes of YI for service provision: • Better integration of knowledge of youth issues into service provision Outcomes of YI for staff: • Adults felt that greater knowledge contributed to more effective advocacy on behalf of youth. • Staff better trained on youth issues • Collaborative nature of research project contributed to additional responsibility, heightened workload, and persistent frustration, leading to personal costs for staff; lack of clarity around roles and decision making; and loss of control Outcomes of YI for general organization: • New partnerships, leading to better support for other initiatives and new research and funding opportunities • More attention to youth needs
Green (2000)[a]	Organizations: Organizations with youth involvement in decision making in programs or projects, organizational management or in youth-led organizations. Organizations included social services organizations, youth	Outcomes of YI for service provision: • Identification of service gaps and modifications to services. Services were made more user friendly, to meet the expressed needs of youth, and services, facilities, and activities were enhanced. Outcomes of YI for staff: • Increased staff motivation

Report[a]	Organization and Study Description	Relevant Findings
	projects and youth activism, and services for youth with disabilities. Youth, ages 10 to 25, were involved in decision making through consultations, evaluations, activity planning, service delivery, and management. Study: Mixed methods survey mailed to a wide variety of organizations ($n = 89$), followed by case studies of some of these organizations ($n = 12$).	Outcomes of YI for general organization: • Youth involvement influenced organizations structures, policies, and procedures, for example, by influencing strategic plans • Greater organizational pride and ownership, and higher standards and future vision for the organization
Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin, & Sinclair (2003)[a]	Organizations: 29 organizations with youth involvement in decision making, in areas including community development, sports, youth work, health, justice, art, social care, courts, and youth parliaments. Young people from a wide age range, but most were between 12 and 16. Study: Case studies. Methods were program document review, interviews and informal group discussions with staff and young people in each organization.	Outcomes of YI for service provision: • Improved service development to better suit young people's needs (e.g., new services, changes in staff recruitment, differences in service design, improvements to the physical sites) • Improved support for clients, as a result of listening and attempting to understand young people's perspectives • Increased service utilization, and more positive experiences of services by young people, more youth ownership of programs and physical program sites • More participatory practices in working with service users Outcomes of YI for staff: • Improved skills and practice, such as improved listening skills, better non-verbal skills, and greater creativity in engaging youth • Increased knowledge about young people's needs and greater confidence in their ability to support young people

Report[a]	Organization and Study Description	Relevant Findings
		Outcomes of YI for general organization: • None described.
Lewis-Charp, Yu, Soukamneuth, & Lacoe (2003)[a]	Organizations: 12 identity-support, youth organizing, or civic activism programs targeting marginalized or at-risk youth. Organizations received funding to build capacity and increase civic activism as a youth development strategy. Youth were involved in decision making in different roles and to varying degrees. Youth ages varied, although most youth were ages 14 through 20. Study: Participatory evaluation, mixed methods case study. Methods were focus groups, observations, program documents review, youth survey ($n = 283$) and interviews with youth and adults at each site.	Outcomes of YI for service provision: • None described. Outcomes of YI for staff/individuals: • Changes in adult attitudes about youth, such as greater awareness of youth's capacities Outcomes of YI for general organization: • More integration of youth leadership into organizational structure and decision making, both in program operation and governance Note: The funded initiative included training and networking to help organizations' youth involvement efforts. The outcomes from increased youth involvement could not be distinguished from the outcomes of organizations' participation in these additional activities.
Marks (2008)	Organizations: Two sites of Youth Advocate Programs, Inc., which provides non-residential programming to involuntary youth in the child welfare or justice systems, and who might otherwise be in compulsory	Outcomes of YI for service provision: • Service activities at times included contributing to the organization (e.g., designing promotional materials) • Changes in staff-youth relationships, such as improved interactions Outcomes of YI for staff: • Successful youth involvement led to greater youth engagement in

Report[a]	Organization and Study Description	Relevant Findings
	residential care. Youth were involved in service projects that involved youth voice and leadership. Study: Case study. Methods were document review, interviews with 12 current or former participants, ages 13 to 18, and 13 staff, including 5 administrators, and follow-up focus groups with staff.	programs, which enhanced staff's self-efficacy, empowerment and engagement, confidence, and job satisfaction. These outcomes, in turn, led to greater support for more youth involvement. • In one site, one indication of greater staff engagement was staff giving their own time and personal social capital for the benefit of the service projects in which youth were involved, the service projects themselves, and the greater community • When attempts to involve youth were unsuccessful, for example, where there were not sufficient resources (e.g., staffing) to support youth involvement, or when staff experienced stress because of added responsibilities, staff efficacy and empowerment decreased. Outcomes of YI for general organization: • None described.
Messias, Jennings Fore, McLoughlin, & Parra-Medina (2008)	Organizations: Four organizations identified by key community leaders as having a positive impact on local youth: Youth Service, No to Drugs, Action against Tobacco, and Unity Program. Approximately 40 youth, ages 11-18, were engaged in a photoessay project on "youth making a difference in the community" (p. 162). Study: Grounded theory analysis of a photoessay project. Methods included debriefing focus groups, which involved 32 of the youth.	Outcomes of YI for service provision: • In the Unity Program, which promoted unity and diversity, youth were involved in a community activity for the organization, providing entertainment for a senior citizens group and serving them lunch Outcomes of YI for staff: • None described Outcomes of YI for general organization: • In Youth Service, a community service program, youth's advocacy and community clean-up efforts influenced a local recreation director to keep a community facility open. • For Youth Service, recognition in the community of youth efforts as part of their organizational activities.

Report[a]	Organization and Study Description	Relevant Findings
O'Leary (2001)[a]	Organizations: Organizations included community development projects, government, educational and training committees and organizations, voluntary organizations, and youth information centres. Youth, approximately ages 10 to 25, were involved in providing input into program planning or improvement, evaluation, consultation, service planning or delivery, and management. Study: Mixed methods survey mailed to a wide variety of organizations. Outcomes were based on the responses of approximately 72 of the organizations that identified some level of youth involvement and from case studies of some of these organizations ($n = 6$).	Outcomes of YI for service provision: • Changes made in how new initiatives were planned Outcomes of YI for staff/individuals: • None described Outcomes of YI for general organization: • Youth involvement outside of the initiative, for example, in community development projects or youth organizing • Key organizational learning experiences, including learning the importance of involving youth in planning initiatives from the beginning, listening to and respecting youth's views, acting on youth input, and articulating why input was not acted on as quickly as possible
Sloper & Lightfoot (2003)	Organizations: Health service organizations with youth involvement in service development. Young people were disabled and chronically young people under age of 21, most between the ages of 12 to 18, involved in consultations or direct decision	Outcomes of YI for service provision: • Changes to the physical site (e.g., recreation facilities), routines, clinic schedules, and food • Formalized processes for obtaining youth input • Changes in services being offered or service priorities • Better information sharing with young people • Changes were reported by 17 of the organizations reporting youth

Report[a]	Organization and Study Description	Relevant Findings
	making regarding services such as hospital inpatient or community health services.	involvement. Outcomes of YI for staff: • None described Outcomes of YI for general organization: None described.
	Study: Mixed methods survey of 27 organizations.	
Spielberger, Horton, Michels, & Halpern (2004)[a]	Organizations: 9 public libraries involved in a youth development initiative. 737 youth participated in a variety of ways, including youth advisory groups, producing newsletters, providing homework and computer help, conducting youth summits, providing public presentations, and leading and participating in program delivery. Age appeared to vary widely, from approximately grade 6 to post high school. Study: Program evaluation. Methods included observation, review of administrative data, 142 interviews with youth, nearly 400 interviews with library staff and community informants, and mixed methods surveys with youth, staff, and community informants (N = 530)	Outcomes of YI for service provision: • Increased youth patronage and better youth-adult interactions. Some libraries also reported increased adult patronage as a result of youth involvement, and improved ability to serve diverse groups. • Youth contributed by taking on a variety of roles in the library, providing a variety of valuable services that were helpful to staff. Outcomes of YI for staff: • Youth and staff reported that library staff gained improved skills and attitudes in working with youth. Outcomes of YI for general organization: • Involvement in positive youth development connected libraries to new networks of youth organizations and new policy discussions. • More awareness of library resources by other community organizations • Greater visibility in the community and new leadership roles with regard to youth issues

Report[a]	Organization and Study Description	Relevant Findings
Treseder & Crowley (2001)[a]	Organizations: Organizations included social services and voluntary organizations and health authorities. Youth, primarily ages 10-25, were involved in providing input into program planning or improvement, evaluation, consultation, service delivery, policy development, and management. Study: Mixed methods survey mailed to a wide variety of organizations. Outcomes were based on the responses of 67 organizations that identified some level of youth involvement and from case studies of some of these organizations ($n = 5$).	Outcomes of YI for service provision: • Changes to services and program activities, such as youth centres being open during holidays, discount cards for youth, and child-friendly paperwork Outcomes of YI for staff: • None described Outcomes of YI for general organization: • Links to other organizations that made an impact, such as the development of new policies for staff training
Watson-Thompson, Fawcett, & Schultz (2008)	Organization: A neighborhood organization, the Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council. Youth were members of the Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council Youth Project, ages 12 to 18. Adults were community partners (e.g., substance use counsellor, pastor). Study: Case study, which used an online documentation system for	Outcomes of YI for service provision: • The Youth Council developed several programs and events to address youth violence and mobilize the community, including a weekly after school program, an ongoing youth neighbourhood development program, and a crime awareness rally. Outcomes of YI for staff: • None described. Outcomes of YI for general organization: • The INC developed a subsidiary organization, the Ivanhoe Youth Council, and a Youth Council Action Plan.

Report[a]	Organization and Study Description	Relevant Findings
	documenting and analyzing change. Data were entered into the system by the community mobilizer (a staff member) and five committee chairs, who were a mixture of youth and adults.	
Wright (n.d.)[a]	Organizations: Town of Markham Mayor's Youth Task Force, a youth group serving as an advisory group to a governing body; Memorial Boys' and Girls' Club in the City of London, in which a youth member sat on the governing body; "Flipside" Mobile Skateboard Park and Youth Centre, which was a largely youth-governed program; and the Regional Multicultural Youth Council, which was an almost solely youth-governed organization. Youth ages varied, from approximately grade 6 to age 25.

Study: Case study. Methods were site visits, interviews with staff, focus groups and/or interviews with youth and council/board members at each site. | Outcomes of YI for service provision:
• Increased participation because more youth knew of the program, it met youth needs better, the organization and program were more respected by youth than programs or organizations in which there was not youth involvement, and there were fewer problems with property damage and vandalism
Outcomes of YI for staff:
• None described
Outcomes of YI for general organization:
• Some reports that involvement caused youth to be more aware of youth needs and therefore more targeted in responses
• No evidence that youth involvement significantly shifted organizations' missions or strategic directions |

Report[a]	Organization and Study Description	Relevant Findings
Zeldin (2004)	Organizations: 8 organizations providing a range of youth services, with at least 5 youth in key governance roles. Youth were involved in organizational governance. Study: Phenomenology/extended case method, grounded theory analysis. Methods were interviews with 16 youth, ages 14 to 20, and 24 organizational leaders.	Outcomes of YI for service provision: • Greater connection to larger circles of youth, for better enrollment and diversity in programs. Outcomes of YI for staff: • Initial ambivalence to youth involvement, primarily due to lack of experience • Overcoming stereotypes about youth • Greater recognition of youth competencies, strengths (e.g., verbal skills, ability to formulate an argument), and diversity • Adults experienced an enhanced sense of personal efficacy and belonging and better, more confident decisions. • Reinforcement of collective purpose and feelings of commitment Outcomes of YI for general organization: • New perspectives in decision making, strengthened connections between organizational leaders and programming • Governance became more entrepreneurial, innovative, less inhibited and more open to debate • Greater connection to larger circles of youth was seen to lead to more emphasis on diversity, representation, outreach and advocacy
Zeldin, Petrokubi, & Camino (2008)[a]	Organizations: Oasis Community IMPACT, which worked to mobilize neighborhoods to increase opportunities for youth. Youth mobilizers partnered with staff to conduct and disseminate action research. Austin Voices for Education and Youth mobilized communities to enhance opportunities for youth.	Outcomes of YI for service provision: • Organizations were more responsive, with improved resources, policies, and programs that allowed them to serve youth and communities better. Outcomes of YI for staff: • Impacts on adult staff development, in the form of greater confidence and competence (especially with regard to gaining skills and attitudes that allow them to share power with youth), and generativity (in passing their experience on to a new generation)

Report[a]	Organization and Study Description	Relevant Findings
	supporting advocacy and consultation to the school systems, organizations, and government. Study: Case studies. Methods were document review, observations, and interviews with 22 youth mobilizers, 3 staff who were former youth mobilizers, 12 staff and board members, and 8 community partners.	Outcomes of YI for general organization: • Successful in achieving organizational goals • Positive impact on communities, as youth participation began to become an institutionalized expectation, civic agendas better reflected youth voice, new community coalitions were created with a range of community partners, and public institutions were responding to address community needs

delivery, consultation, evaluation, youth organizing and advocacy, and a range of other roles.

Most studies reported using a case study methodology, although, as is perhaps the case in many of the studies relying on this methodology, the type of data gathered and the type of analysis used in these case studies varied widely. Almost all of the studies relied on multiple sources of data, most notably interviews, focus groups, and surveys with youth and adults, as well as site observations and document review. Case studies with no identifiable findings section were excluded from the current review. Of the thirty-three studies that were selected for full appraisal, 16 studies were excluded, and approximately 6 of these lacked a distinguishable findings section. In sum, studies included a diverse body of organizations, largely excluding private businesses and schools, as per the inclusion criteria, and tended to rely on grounded theory analysis (e.g., Corbin & Strauss, 2008) or other, unspecified thematic analysis and

several sources of qualitative data.

Perceived Outcomes for Service Provision

Improved services and more service utilization. The most frequently reported finding seemed to be that youth involvement in decision making improved services, increasing the likelihood that services would meet youth's needs. Improvements included practical changes to facilities and routines, program enhancements, staff hiring, and the development of new services where they were needed (e.g., Sloper & Lightfoot, 2003). Youth also appeared to be more likely to use services because greater youth involvement made current and new service users more aware of the services, and because service improvements made them more appealing (e.g., Wright, n.d.). These improvements to services and service use extended beyond youth, to adult and diverse populations (e.g., Spielberger et al., 2004; Zeldin, 2004) and to greater success in reaching community development goals (e.g., Christens & Dolan, 2011; Zeldin et al., 2008).

Other perceived outcomes included *youth delivery of services, improved youth-adult interactions,* and *more participatory practices.* Many studies provided examples of youth designing and implementing programs (e.g., Watson-Thompson et al., 2008) and contributing in ways such as designing promotional materials for programs (e.g., Marks, 2008). Another example was when more experienced youth shared the skills and abilities they had learned and which were necessary for program delivery through mentorship of younger youth (e.g., Christens & Dolan, 2011). Improved interactions with youth were indicated by reports of improved staff-youth interactions (e.g., Marks) and more listening and attempting to understand youth's perspectives (e.g., Kirby et al., 2003). Relatedly, adults reported providing more opportunities for youth to participate, with more informal

and formal opportunities for feedback (e.g., Conner & Strobel, 2007) and more information sharing with youth (e.g., Sloper & Lightfoot, 2003) as a result of youth involvement.

Perceived Outcomes for Staff

Staff reported changes to *attitudes, knowledge, and skills in their work with youth.* This included a better understanding of youth development (e.g., Chen et al., 2010), as well as improved skills in engaging and listening to youth (e.g., Kirby et al., 2003), and experiences of overcoming stereotypes and recognizing youth's capacities (e.g., Lewis-Charp et al., 2003). Similarly, in their quantitative study of youth and adults in community-based organizations, Jones and Perkins (2006) found that youth and adults participating in youth-led collaborations had more positive attitudes toward youth involvement than youth and adults participating in adult-led collaborations. Staff outcomes also included *increased motivation, self-efficacy, engagement, and confidence.* These outcomes were related to adults' improved skills and abilities, organizational pride and ownership, and reinforcement of purpose (e.g., Green, 2000), as well as feelings of generativity, which arose from adults' passing their experience on to a new generation (Zeldin et al., 2008).

One interesting finding was that, despite positive outcomes, youth involvement also contributed to staff experiencing *greater stress and responsibility, and the need for resources, such as additional staffing.* Although this might have been particularly the case when youth involvement was perceived as unsuccessful (e.g., Marks, 2008), the costs of youth involvement were also acknowledged in seemingly successful youth involvement projects. Successful projects were described as those in which adults

perceived youth to be cognitively and emotionally engaged in the process, for example, demonstrating pride in accomplishments related to youth involvement and wanting to continue their involvement beyond the conclusion of specific projects (Marks, 2008). The negative experience reported by staff included additional responsibilities and workload, frustration, lack of clarity and loss of control over programs and projects (e.g., Flicker, 2008).

Perceived Outcomes for Organizational Functioning

Youth involvement was perceived to impact organizations' *reputation and links with other organizations*. This occurred because of the positive reputation organizations gained in the community for their involvement of youth (e.g., Christens & Dolan, 2011), and through the activities in which youth participated as affiliates of the organization and which connected the youth to other community groups or government (e.g., Messias et al., 2008; Treseder & Crowley, 2001). The development of new partnerships was reported, at times, to lead to better support for other initiatives and new funding opportunities (e.g., Flicker, 2008). Other reported organizational effects related to *advances in organizational learning and governance*. Organizational learning included learning the importance of involving youth, how to involve youth successfully, how to act on their input, and the need for information sharing about organizational responses to youth input (O'Leary, 2001). Organizational improvements also occurred in governance and policy decisions, as youth influenced policies and procedures, such as strategic plans; overall organizational governance became more entrepreneurial and innovative; and organizations clarified or re-affirmed their future vision or philosophy (Chen et al., 2010; Green, 2000) and placed more emphasis on diversity and representation (Zeldin, 2004). It

is interesting to note that Wright (n.d.) reported no clear evidence that youth involvement significantly shifted organizations' mission or strategic direction. No evidence is provided to support this point, however, and Wright did not note any negative impacts on organizations' mission or strategic direction, so it is not clear whether this area was explicitly explored and no impact was noted or whether the investigators did not make specific inquiries and it did not arise as a theme in the data. A separate finding was that organizations became *better at achieving organizational goals*, including those not directly targeted to youth, such as advocacy and community change (e.g., Messias et al.).

Other organizational outcomes pertained to organizations' connections to youth. As a result of youth involvement, organizations reported *further increases in youth involvement in decision making*. These included the creation of new youth councils (e.g., Watson et al., 2008) and more integration of youth into governance (e.g., on the board of directors) and the general organizational structure (e.g., Lewis-Charp et al., 2003). Organizations also demonstrated *greater connection between the organization and youth needs*. Examples include the development of a policy to ensure that youth could always be welcomed back into a program (Conner & Strobel, 2007) and stronger connections to youth needs and youth programming beyond front-line staff and across all levels of staff and management (e.g., Wright, n.d.; Zeldin, 2004).

Discussion

In the current first known synthesis of studies on perceived organizational outcomes of youth involvement in decision making, the findings suggest a number of outcomes for service provision, staff, and broader organizational functioning. These

included both positive perceived benefits to organizations, as well as some costs. I will consider the implications of each of these findings in turn.

Perceived outcomes for service provision included improved services, more service utilization, delivery of services by youth, improved youth-adult interactions, and more participatory practices. Although Zeldin et al.'s (2000) original study on the impacts of youth involvement in decision making on adults and organizations did not separately describe outcomes for services, in outlining the benefits to the greater organization they did similarly describe adults' and the organizations' greater connection and responsiveness to youth, leading to program improvements. Kirby et al. (2003) and Zeldin, Camino, and Calvert (2007) described the primary reasons organizations give for youth involvement as practical benefits to service, promoting positive youth development, and greater citizenship, inclusion, and concern for children's participation rights. Notably, then, many organizations already recognize the benefit of youth involvement in services, and this motivation for involving youth is upheld by current research.

Perceived outcomes for staff included improvements in attitudes, knowledge, and skill in staff's work with youth and increased motivation, self-efficacy, engagement, and confidence. Similarly, Zeldin et al. (2000) concluded that adults gained recognition of the competence of youth, a better understanding of youth needs and programming issues, increased confidence and sense of efficacy in their work with youth, and enhanced commitment and energy. Despite the length of time that has elapsed since Zeldin et al.'s report, organizations do not appear to identify staff benefits as a motivator for youth

involvement (Kirby et al., 2003; Zeldin et al., 2007), suggesting that they might continue to have a low level of awareness regarding these potential benefits.

Some negative outcomes for staff were also noted, including greater stress, responsibility, and the need for sufficient resources. Although negative outcomes were only described in three of the included studies, other studies identified similar concerns in descriptions of the process of youth involvement or as lessons learned. For example, Kirby et al. (2003) summarized common factors that helped organizations institutionalize youth involvement, including funding for staff's skill development and the provision of staff time to learn, reflect, and take on new responsibilities. They also described the need to acknowledge the conflict and resistance that is likely to occur with changes to ways of working and as adults begin to share control with youth. Chen et al. (2010) and Green (2000) similarly outlined emerging lessons, which emphasized the need for sufficient staffing and resources for training, staff time, and other costs. Green also highlighted the need for this funding to be sustained. Zeldin et al. (2000) did not note the costs of youth involvement for staff in their report, focusing instead on the positive influences of youth involvement. Despite positive outcomes for adult staff, it appears necessary to recognize the costs of youth involvement, and to provide sufficient resources to minimize potential negative staff outcomes.

Perceived outcomes for the broader organization included more positive reputation and links with other organizations, advances in organizational learning and governance, more youth involvement in decision making, and greater connection between the organization and youth needs. Several of these coincide with Zeldin et al.'s (2000) findings of organizational outcomes, which included recognition of youth involvement by

funders, clarification of and focus on the organization's mission and vision, more diversity and representation, embedding youth involvement principles as part of organizational culture, and more connections between decision-makers and the work of the organization. Further, children and youth's participation rights have been identified as a motivator for youth involvement (Kirby et al., 2003; Zeldin et al., 2007). Greater youth involvement was identified as an outcome both for service provision and for the broader organization, indicating that organizations' motivation to involve youth in decision making to ensure youth's right to participate is well-founded. Nevertheless, aside from greater youth participation, no other benefits of youth involvement for the broader organization were noted as motivators for youth involvement by either Kirby et al. or Zeldin et al. (2007). This finding suggests that, again, organizations might be unaware of some of the potential benefits of youth involvement for the broader organization.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study had some limitations. First, the search strategy might have excluded some relevant studies, such as those that used terms not included in the current search to describe youth involvement or that were stored in databases other than those that were searched. Second, the quality of this review depends upon the quality of the papers that were included. Some studies involved small samples, with data often gathered at a single time point designs (with some exceptions, such as Conner & Strobel, 2007 and Lewis-Charp et al., 2003), perhaps, in part, due to the resource-intensive nature of qualitative designs. Although this limits an understanding of the longitudinal outcomes of youth involvement and the generalizability of my findings, I believe that this limitation was balanced by the benefits of the depth of understanding of those organizations under

study. Further, most studies were exploratory rather than confirmatory, and study designs preclude making conclusions about causality. Again, however, an exploratory focus is likely more appropriate for the early state of research in youth involvement in organizational decision making. It is hoped that this synthesis of qualitative studies can provide some basis for more confirmatory, longitudinal studies with larger samples of youth and organizations in the future.

An additional limitation of the studies is that their focus was often not on organizational outcomes. Studies of youth involvement in decision making have tended to focus on youth development; many of the studies reviewed did not have a primary focus on outcomes at the staff, service, or broader organizational levels. Although qualitative studies tend to be more open-ended in nature and allow researchers more of an ability to explore than quantitative studies, there are still limits to this exploration, and in many of the studies reviewed, organizational outcomes were found even though they were not included as primary research questions (e.g., Watson-Thompson et al., 2008). In such cases, however, these findings might not have been explored to their fullest extent.

A further limitation to the current study was the necessarily narrow focus on organizational outcomes. Future research should seek to learn more about both adult and youth experiences and outcomes from youth involvement. For example, the stressors identified by some adults suggest that issues such as job satisfaction or staff turnover might be relevant and could have significant implications for organizations' youth involvement. Further, with regard to youth, although some research has suggested benefits for youth as a result of youth involvement (e.g., Yates & Youniss, 1996), there

does not appear to be significant literature on negative outcomes for youth. This is also an area for future research with potential implications for organizations and policy-makers.

Future directions for research are also indicated by similarities and differences between findings from the current study and those of Zeldin et al. (2000). The current findings supported Zeldin et al.'s findings of perceived improvements to staff attitudes, knowledge, and skills in working with youth as a result of youth involvement in decision making. Both studies also similarly included findings that youth involvement created greater connections with other organizations and funders, and a better ability to meet youth's needs. However, the current study extends Zeldin et al.'s findings in at least two ways. Of interest to youth service organizations, the current findings specifically describe the perceived outcomes of youth involvement in decision making for services and service delivery. They also describe negative outcomes for staff, another area not included in the report by Zeldin et al. In future, researchers should continue to extend each of these findings, to discover if they can be replicated in other samples and by other methodologies, as well as the circumstances under and degree to which these perceived outcomes might be found in organizations.

Implications

Findings from the current study have several implications for practice and policy. My findings indicate that some of the rationales organizations have given for their youth involvement have a basis in research, but that there are additional reasons for organizations to consider increasing youth involvement. For example, organizations might contemplate increasing youth involvement in order to strengthen links to the community and other organizations, and to enhance organizational learning and

governance by building a more entrepreneurial, innovative organization with more

diverse representation. Youth-serving organizations, in particular, might consider

incorporating youth involvement as a way to increase staff skill and engagement in their

work, and to keep all levels of the organization connected to the needs of youth. Even

organizations with services not primarily aimed at youth, such as advocacy and

community change, might explore greater youth involvement as a means of reaching their

goals more effectively.

Another implication is the cost of youth involvement for staff in terms of stress

and workload. As noted by Green (2000), youth involvement is not resource neutral. It

requires the support of all levels of staff and management, high quality intergenerational

training, and financial sustenance. Policy makers, funders, and administrators need to

ensure that sufficient resources, including staff time, are allocated to youth involvement

efforts so that these efforts can be successful and so that the potential benefits of youth

involvement are not offset by substantial costs to staff well-being or to staff effectiveness

in other job responsibilities. Additional research into the process of successful youth

involvement initiatives, beyond the provision of these resources, might also help

organizations and staff to limit the negative implications of youth involvement, especially

given the finding that youth involvement that was perceived to be successful was also

considered to have less negative impacts on staff (Marks, 2008).

An additional implication that became clear through the current review is the need

for organizations, funders, and policy-makers to implement rigorous research to continue

to evaluate the outcomes of youth involvement in decision making. Many studies and

reports were not included because they were case studies without clear findings or results

separate from program descriptions, one of Sandelowski and Barroso's (2002) criteria for appraising studies in qualitative research syntheses. The relatively high number of these excluded studies might be an indication that the extent of youth involvement in decision-making and the needs of practitioners are far in advance of current research. The current study suggests the need for specific findings regarding the process and outcomes of youth involvement, rather than the program descriptions that might be more helpful if youth involvement was a newly introduced concept. In this area, it appears that the rigor of qualitative research is not keeping pace with the needs of practice. Further, because youth involvement researchers must collaborate with organizations to conduct research, it is likely that organizations will require dedicated funding, not just for youth involvement practice, but also for accompanying evaluations. Thus, the commitment of researchers, practitioners, and funders are required to ensure that the field moves forward in a progressive fashion.

Conclusion

Despite limitations, findings from the current study provide organizations and policy makers with some indication of the potential costs and benefits of involving youth in organizational decision making. One strength of the study was the qualitative research synthesis methodology, which provided a systematic method of reviewing studies and aggregating findings from multiple qualitative studies (Sandelowski, 2007). The current study also included the gray literature, which can play a valuable role in supplementing formal, traditionally peer-reviewed publications (APA, 2010).

Continued study of the organizational outcomes of youth involvement will be critical because of the practical implications of such research. It should also form an

important next step in positive youth development research, to create a better understanding of the positive potential of youth to impact, not just on their own development (Larson, 2011), but also those around them. For organizations to have the tools they need to engage youth successfully, and for youth to reach their full potential as producers of their own development, applied developmental researchers need to do more to measure the resources that are required for youth involvement and the potential benefits for everyone involved and for the organizations in which they function.

References

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Chen, P., Weiss, F. L., Nicholson, H. J., & Girls Incorporated®. (2010). Girls study Girls Inc.: Engaging girls in evaluation through participatory action research. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 46*, 228–237.

Christens, B.D., & Dolan, T. (2011). Interweaving youth development, community development, and social change through youth organizing. *Youth & Society*, 43, 528–548. doi: 10.1177/0044118X10383647

Conner, J. O., & Strobel, K. (2007). Leadership development: An examination of individual and programmatic growth. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 22*, 275–297.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (3rd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Dixon-Woods, M., Booth, A., & Sutton, A. J. (2007). Synthesizing qualitative research: A review of published reports. *Qualitative Research, 7,* 375. doi: 10.1177/ 1468794107078517

Flicker, S. (2008). Who benefits from community-based participatory research? A case study of the Positive Youth Project. *Health Education & Behavior, 35*, 70–86.

Green, R. (2000). *Taking the initiative: Promoting young people's involvement in public decision making: Northern Ireland report.* London: Carnegie Young People Initiative.

Hagger, M. S., & Chatzisarantis, N. L. D. (2009). Integrating the theory of planned

behaviour and self-determination theory in health behaviour: A meta-analysis.

British Journal of Health Psychology, 14, 275–302. doi:

10.1348/135910708X373959

Jones, K. R., & Perkins, D. F. (2006). Youth and adult perceptions of their relationships

within community-based youth programs. *Youth & Society, 38*, 90–109.

Kirby, P., Lanyon, C., Cronin, K., & Sinclair, R. (2003). *Building a culture of

participation: Involving children and young people in policy, service planning,

delivery and evaluation.* London: Department for Education and Skills.

Larson, R. W. (2011). Positive development in a disorderly world. *Journal of Research

on Adolescence, 21*, 317–334. doi: 0.1111/j.1532-7795.2010.00707.x

Lewis-Charp, H., Yu, H., Soukamneuth, S., & Lacoe, J. (2003). *Extending the reach of

youth development through civic activism: Outcomes of the Youth Leadership for

Development Initiative.* Takoma Park, MD: Innovation Center for Community

and Youth Development.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

London, J. K., Zimmerman, K., & Erbstein, N. (2003). Youth-led research and

evaluation: Tools for youth, organizational, and community development. In K.

Sabo (Ed.), Youth participatory evaluation: A field in the making. *New Directions

for Evaluation, 98*, 33–12. New York: Jossey Bass.

Marks, M. B. (2008). A theoretical and empirical investigation of co-production

interventions for involuntary youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice

systems. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section A. Humanities and Social

Sciences, 70*(1-A), 352.

Messias, D. K., H., Jennings, L. B., Fore, M. E., McLoughlin, K., & Parra-Medina, D.

(2008). Societal images of youth: Representations and interpretations by youth

actively engaged in their communities. *International Journal of Qualitative

Studies in Education, 21*, 159–178

O'Leary, E. (2001). *Taking the initiative: Promoting young people's involvement in public

decision-making in Ireland*. London: Carnegie Young People Initiative.

Pittman, K., Irby, M., Tolman, J.,Yohalem, N., & Ferber, T. (2003). *Preventing

problems, promoting development, encouraging engagement: Competing

priorities or inseparable goals?* Washington, DC: The Forum for Youth

Investment, Impact Strategies, Inc.

Randolph, J. J., & Eronen, P. J. (2007). Developing the learning door: A case study in

youth participatory program planning. *Evaluation and Program Planning, 30*, 55–

65. doi:10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2006.06.004

Sandelowski, M. (2007). From meta-synthesis to method: Appraising the qualitative

research synthesis report. In C. Webb and B. Roe (Eds.), *Reviewing research

evidence for nursing practice* (pp. 88–111). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Sandelowski, M., & Barroso, J. (2007). *Handbook for synthesizing qualitative research*.

New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Sandelowski, M., & Barroso, J. (2002). Reading qualitative studies. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 1*, Article 5. Retrieved June 15, 2010 from http://www.ualberta.ca/~ijqm/

Sandelowski, M., Docherty, S., & Emden, C. (1997). Focus on qualitative methods qualitative metasynthesis: Issues and techniques. *Research in Nursing & Health, 20*, 365–371.

Sloper, P., & Lightfoot, J. (2003). Involving disabled and chronically ill children and young people in health service development. *Child Care, Health and Development, 29*, 15–20.

Spielberger, J., Horton, C., Michels, L., & Halpern, R. (2004). *New on the Shelf: Teens in the library.* Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

Treseder, P. & Crowley, A. (2001). *Taking the initiative: Promoting young people's participation in decision-making in Wales.* London: Carnegie Young People Initiative.

Watson-Thompson, J., Fawcett, S. B., Schultz, J. A. (2008). A framework for community mobilization to promote healthy youth development. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 34*, S72–S81

Wright, S. (n.d.) *Youth as decision-makers.* Toronto, ON: Laidlaw Foundation.

Yates, M., & Youniss, J. (1996). A developmental perspective on community service in adolescence. *Social Development, 5,* 85–111.

Zeldin, S. (2004). Youth as agents of adult and community development: Mapping the processes and outcomes of youth engaged in organizational governance. *Applied Developmental Science, 8,* 75–90.h

Zeldin, S., Camino, L., & Calvert, M. (2007). Toward an understanding of youth in community governance: Policy priorities and research directions. *Análise Psicológica, 1,* 77–95.

Zeldin, S., Larson, R., Camino, L., & O'Connor, C. (2005). Intergenerational relationships and partnerships in community programs: Purpose, practice, and directions for research. *Journal of Community Psychology, 33,* 1–10. doi: 10.1002/jcop.20042

Zeldin, S., McDaniel, A. K., Topitzes, D., & Calvert, M. (2000). *Youth in decision-making: A study on the impacts of youth on adults and organizations.* Washington, DC: National 4-H Council.

Zeldin, S., Petrokubi, J., Camino, L. (2008). *Youth-adult partnerships in public action: Principles, organizational culture and outcomes.* Washington, D.C.: The Forum for Youth Investment.

CHAPTER 4: STUDY 2

Youth Involvement in Organizational Decision Making, Youth Initiative, and

Organizational Context

The interplay between youth and their context is integral to the theory and practice of positive youth development (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2006; Damon, 2004), and researchers in the field have taken some steps in examining these youth-context relations. For example, research in positive youth development has demonstrated both that youth development programs can promote positive changes for youth (Benson et al.) and that increases in the characteristics of positive youth development tend to predict greater youth contributions to the community and environment (e.g., Jelicic, Bobek, Phelps, Lerner, & Lerner, 2007). Despite such findings, Benson et al. have pointed out that research on transactional community-youth change that involves the potential effects of youth on their community and environment is lacking. Lerner and Overton (2008) have gone farther, arguing that there is a need to study not only bidirectional associations between youth and their contexts, but to examine associations between youth and their context as relational units of analysis. According to Lerner and Overton, developmental research must begin to address questions about which youth in which contexts will experience more positive youth development and greater contributions to the self, family, community, and society. In sum, although some steps have been taken in examining youth-context relations, there is a need for more studies of the outcomes of youth contributions on the contexts in which they occur, as well as of the interactions between youth characteristics and contexts as predictors of positive youth outcomes.

As contexts for youth development, community programs (e.g., recreation centres, youth groups) may provide unique opportunities for youth to develop the skills and competencies necessary for adulthood and contribute to meaningful change in their environment (Larson, 2000). Youth participation in community programs might be particularly impactful when programs provide opportunities for youth to be involved in responsible decision making, such as when youth have roles in project or program planning and delivery, as members of youth advisory teams, or in youth advocacy. In exploratory studies, Larson and colleagues (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003; Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003) have found links between the processes of youth involvement in organizational or program activities (e.g., making decisions, planning, and problem-solving) and aspects of initiative (e.g., the capacity to set realistic goals and display effort and perseverance). In taking responsibility for decision making, youth also have the potential to contribute to changes in service delivery and organizational functioning (Conner & Strobel, 2007; Zeldin, 2004). The focus of the current study was to extend the existing, largely exploratory literature on youth involvement in organizational decision making by testing associations among youth involvement in organizational decision making, youth initiative, and the organizational context of youth involvement.

Youth Involvement in Decision Making and Youth Initiative

Larson and colleagues have conducted a number of studies exploring the link between initiative, defined as "the capacity to direct cumulative effort over time toward achievement of a long-term goal" (Larson, Hansen, & Walker, 2005, p. 160), and youth activity participation. In reviewing a series of studies on contexts of adolescents' daily experiences (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984), Larson (2000) concluded that

although the development of initiative requires intrinsic motivation, concerted attention in the environment, and sustained effort, the contexts in which youth tend to spend the majority of their time fail to provide all three. School tends to evoke high levels of concentration and provide challenges that require effort, but youth report limited levels of intrinsic motivation; conversely, unstructured leisure activities tend to evoke high levels of intrinsic motivation but require limited concentration or effort over time. Structured youth activities, in contrast, tend to provide contexts for intrinsic motivation, attention, and sustained effort.

In follow-up studies, Larson and colleagues found links between youth activity participation and experiences involving aspects of initiative, including effort and perseverance, time management, responsibility, and realistic goal-setting (Dworkin et al., 2003). Further, these initiative experiences were more likely to occur in structured activities, such as participation in community organizations or sports, than in school or socializing with peers (Hansen et al., 2003; Larson, Hanson, & Moneta, 2006). Exploratory studies intended to examine the process of the development of initiative in activity settings have indicated that youth-driven activities, youth perceptions of ownership over program activities, and responsibility for making decisions about the direction of the program may optimize youth's development of initiative (Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005; Wood, Larson, & Brown, 2009). Thus, youth involvement in organizational decision making may be ideal for providing opportunities for youth initiative to develop.

Despite providing evidence that activity involvement is related to higher levels of initiative, these studies have been limited in that they have only examined the extent to

which youth have demonstrated initiative in their program activities (e.g., Larson et al., 2006) or findings have been derived by exploratory methods (e.g., Wood et al., 2009). Further research is needed to examine youth's levels of initiative more globally, rather than only as it pertains to the activities in which they are involved, and using confirmatory methods to measure specific aspects of youth involvement in organizational decision making, such as sense of ownership, as predictors of initiative. Research is also needed to consider whether these aspects of youth involvement are the source of potential benefits, not just for youth, but also for organizations.

Youth Involvement in Decision Making and Organizational Functioning

In the context of community organizations, youth involvement in decision making may benefit adults working within the organization and broader organizational issues and processes. Wheeler (2000) has suggested that the process of involving youth in organizational decision making requires staff to embrace change and be innovative thinkers and skilled listeners. It also requires organizations to reflect on their functioning and goals, foster an atmosphere of ongoing learning, and increase collaboration and spread of information. Wheeler has argued that the characteristics organizations develop in this process are compatible with the culture of learning organizations. Learning organizations (Senge, 2006) are businesses committed to ongoing learning and adaptation. Learning culture is a multi-dimensional concept. Although measured at the individual level, the dimensions of learning culture are considered to exist at the levels of people (e.g., continuous learning and a culture of dialogue and inquiry), teams (e.g., team learning), and the organization (e.g., empowering people toward a shared vision) (Marsick & Watkins, 2003).

Findings from the qualitative and gray literature support Wheeler's (2000) argument. Related to the person-level dimensions of learning culture, continuous learning could be reflected in findings that youth involvement in organizational decision making contributes to improved organizational knowledge and skills in a variety of areas (Flicker, 2008; Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin, & Sinclair, 2003), as well as patience and persistence in attempts to reach goals (Conner & Strobel, 2007). A culture of dialogue and inquiry might be reflected in findings that youth involvement contributes to changes in how adults and organizations think about youth, as organizations appear to be more likely to reflect on adultism and shift assumptions about youth in general, and youth abilities in particular (Checkoway, Allison, & Montoya, 2005; Lewis-Charp, Soukamneuth, & Lacoe, 2003; Treseder & Crowley, 2001), as well as in organizational attempts to ensure bidirectional opportunities for feedback (Conner & Strobel). At the team level, learning might be reflected in examples of changes that have occurred based on ideas from, and collaboration with, youth (Checkoway et al.; O'Leary, 2001; Sloper & Lightfoot, 2003). Further, many of the challenges that have been described by these same organizations in involving youth in decision making, such as frustration, demands on staff time, and the need for training (Sloper & Lightfoot; Treseder & Crowley), are likely necessities of the difficult process of team learning in general. Finally, broader-level organizational dimensions and overall learning culture might be indicated by findings of concrete goal-setting (Conner & Strobel), more focused organizational mission and vision (Green, 2000; Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes, & Calvert, 2000) and galvanized identity, especially as it pertains to work with youth (Lewis-Charp et al.). Thus, these exploratory studies suggest preliminary support for Wheeler's contention that youth

involvement contributes to learning culture, at different levels, in separate dimensions, and in overall organizational climate.

Youth Involvement in Decision Making in Context

As well as an outcome of youth involvement in organizational decision making, organizational culture might serve as a moderator of the potential association between greater youth involvement and positive youth outcomes. In addition to considering the contributions of youth to their environment, Lerner and colleagues (e.g., Lerner, Alberts, Jelicic, & Smith, 2006; Lerner & Overton, 2008) have discussed developmental systems theories of adolescent and human development, which consider the relations among individual variables and the physical and social environment. When the positive resources of youth and their context are aligned, positive youth outcomes are more likely than when not aligned. Individual and systems level variables interact to predict positive youth development (Lerner et al., 2005; Zimmerman, Phelps, & Lerner, 2008). For example, the potential for positive youth development might be optimized when adults in the youth's environment recognize and direct youth's specific strengths. Relevant to the current study, Lerner, von Eye, Lerner, Lewin-Bizan, and Bowan (2010) have further argued that there is important impetus from researchers and policy makers to discern which resources for promoting positive youth development are present in contexts such as community-based programs.

The context for youth involvement in organizational decision making is the broad organizational environment. Eccles and Gootman (2002) have described features of positive developmental settings, such as opportunities for skill-building, and Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) have described characteristics of positive youth development

programs, such as positive program goals. However, these are proximal characteristics of activities in which youth are involved, which are likely influenced by the more distal features of the broader organizational environment (Walker, Marczak, Blyth, & Bordon, 2005). Further, and perhaps unlike many of the positive youth development programs referred to by Eccles and Gootman and Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003), youth involvement in organizational decision making ideally involves meaningful youth participation in multiple structures and programs across the organization (Camino & Zeldin, 2002). Youth involvement, then, might not occur within a specific youth program, but instead is embedded into the broader organization.

Thus, the context of youth involvement is the entire organization, and such context should be measured at organizational level. This measurement would include characteristics of the atmosphere that may optimize positive youth development, such as empowerment (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003), opportunities for learning (Eccles & Gootman, 2002), and team-building (Mitra, Sanders, & Perkins, 2010). In discussing youth-adult partnerships in community programs, Zeldin, Larson, Camino, and O'Connor (2005) emphasized the importance of supportive organizational cultures involving reflection, dialogue, information-sharing, and an atmosphere of learning and teaching. Thus, although learning culture is likely an outcome of youth involvement in organizational decision making, it may also serve as a moderator of youth outcomes such that youth involvement in organizations with an atmosphere of learning, dialogue, empowerment, and information-sharing may be associated with more positive youth outcomes than youth involvement in organizations without such an atmosphere.

The Current Study

In the current study, I extended past research by testing associations among youth involvement, youth initiative, and the dimensions of the learning organization. First, with regard to adults within organizations, I anticipated that greater youth involvement in organizational decision making, measured at the adult level, would predict greater learning culture. Yang, Watkins, and Marsick (2004; Watkins & Marsick, 1996) have argued that the culture of the learning organization begins at the person level and builds into increasingly larger team and organizational units. Thus, a fully mediated model was anticipated in which greater youth involvement would predict higher scores on the person-level dimensions of the learning organization, which in turn would predict higher scores on the team-level dimension of the learning organization.

Second, with regard to youth, I anticipated that greater youth involvement, measured at the youth level, would predict greater youth initiative. To help address the possibility that potential associations were caused by pre-existing differences among youth and adults experiencing different degrees of youth involvement, I also controlled for a range of self-selection factors.

The third and final hypothesis examined youth outcomes within the organizational context. Extending hypothesis 2, I anticipated that the association between greater youth involvement and greater youth initiative would be moderated by the organization's overall level of learning culture. That is, the association between higher youth involvement and higher youth initiative, measured at the youth level, would be stronger for organizations with higher overall culture as learning organizations, measured at the organizational level.

Method

Participants

Participants were youth involved in organizational decision making and front-line youth workers and managers from the same organizations. At the youth level, participants were 136 youth ages 12.2 to 30.9 years ($M = 17.1$, $SD = 3.9$; 53.7% female, 46.3% male; 76.5% Network 1, 23.5% Network 2) involved in organizational decision making at 19 organizations. Mean level of average school grades was between "70 to 79%" and "80 to 89%". The majority (66.2%) reported their ethnicity as white/English or French Canadian, 9.6% as European, 6.6% as Asian, 1.5% each as Aboriginal, Hispanic, or other, and 13.2% of participants elected not to indicate their ethnicity. Mean level of maternal education was between "some college or university" and "completed college or university".

At the adult/organizational level, participants were 72 adults, ages 19 to 72 years ($M = 38.9$, $SD = 11.3$; 77.8% female, 22.2% male; 62.5% front-line staff, 37.5% managers; 63.9% Network 1, 36.1% Network 2) from a total of 34 organizations. (See Appendix D for a categorized description of the types of organizations that participated in the study.) The majority (90.2%) reported their ethnicity as white/English or French Canadian, 4.2% as European, 2.8% as Aboriginal, 1.4% each as African and other. Mean level of education was between "some university" and "completed university".

Procedure

Participants were recruited through two networks of organizations focused on youth engagement, in Hamilton and Simcoe counties in the province of Ontario, Canada. The networks had open memberships, so that a wide range of organizations was welcome

to join. Each network met on a regular basis to share information and support regarding their own youth engagement efforts. Member organizations included, but were not limited to, recreation centres, youth-serving organizations, non-profit organizations, schools, cultural centres, and arts-based organizations. Most organizations, however, provided multiple services to youth and the community. (See Appendix E for a brief description of a sample of the organizations that participated in the study.) Organizations were invited to participate in the study at network meetings and via emails to all organizations on the networks' most current contact lists. At the request of the networks, there were no restrictions on the age range of youth, but individuals were invited to participate if they identified themselves as youth with decision-making responsibilities in the organization.

The two networks appeared to differ in several ways. Network 1 was situated in a largely rural area comprised of several small communities; in contrast, Network 2 was situated around a large urban centre. Furthermore, in Network 1, 4.0% of people identified as visible minority, compared to 13.6% in Network 1, although median income and proportion of youth in each county was approximately the same (Statistics Canada, 2010). Finally, Network 2 appeared to have a longer history and more stable base of youth involvement efforts, as was evidenced by the formalized training in youth involvement offered to its organizational members, and a seemingly larger, more stable group of organizational participants.

Youth Measures

Details on each study measure, including means, standard deviations, and correlations, are provided in Tables 4-1 (youth measures) and 4-2 (adult measures).

Table 4-1

Summary of Means, Standard Deviations, and Zero-Order Correlations (Youth Measures)

Variable	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Initiative	2.72 (0.67)	—								
2. Age	17.12	.06	—							
3. Gender	53.7%	.03	.08	—						
4. Average grades	3.42 (0.84)	.27**	-.14	.03	—					
5. Maternal education	2.32 (1.28)	.01	-.32**	.09	.35**	—				
6. Network	76.5% network 1	-.05	.49**	.03	.04	-.14	—			
7. Duration	2.34 (1.63)	-.10	.08	-.05	.01	.05	.00	—		

Youth perceptions of their involvement

Variable	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8. Ownership	2.62 (0.76)	.17	-.01	.16	.04	-.05	.03	.03	—	
9. Engagement	3.01 (0.77)	.25**	.25**	.23**	.08	-.04	.07	.00	.65**	—
10. Relationships with adults	2.86 (0.77)	.20*	.35**	.11	.05	-.14	.20	-.02	.60**	.74**

Note. Coding for categorical variables was as follows: sex (0-male, 1-female), network (0-Network 1, 1-Network 2). $n = 136$.
$*p \leq .05.$ $**p \leq .001.$

Control variables. A range of potential self-selection factors (Feldman & Matjasko, 2005) was included as control variables. Gender, age, typical average grades, ethnicity, and maternal education (a proxy for socioeconomic status) were assessed with single items. In addition, duration of participation was assessed as a control for

Table 4-2

Summary of Means, Standard Deviations, and Zero-Order Correlations (Adult Measures)

Variable	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Network	63.9% network 1	—							
2. Staff level	62.5% front-line	-.16	—						
3. Age	38.93 (11.27)	-.42**	.32**	—					
4. Gender	77.8% female	-.29*	.00	.09	—				
5. Education	4.35 (1.54)	.24*	.25*	.00	-.09	—			
6. Team learning	3.73 (0.96)	.04	-.09	-.14	-.22	-.06			
Learning culture									
7. Continuous learning	3.84 (0.95)	.05	-.04	-.23*	-.13	.02	.59**	—	
8. Dialogue and Inquiry	3.72 (0.98)	-.04	.05	-.01	-.20	.01	.78**	.58**	—
9. Adult perceptions of youth involvement	3.07 (1.13)	.34**	-.01	-.18	-.21	.09	.30**	.32**	.24*

Note. Coding for categorical variables was as follows: gender (0-male, 1-female), network (0-Network 1, 1-Network 2), staff level (0-primarily front-line, 1-primarily management). *n* = 72. * *p* ≤ .05. ** *p* ≤ .001.

behavioural aspects of youth's involvement, and was also assessed with a single item.

Responses on the average grades item could range from 0 (*below 50%*) to 5 (*90-100%*).

Responses on the maternal education item could range from 0 (*did not finish high school*)

to 4 (*finished post-graduate or professional degree*). Responses on the duration item could range from 0 (*just started*) to 5 (*more than 5 years*).

Youth perceptions of their involvement in organizational decision making. Youth involvement was assessed with the Youth Voice Survey (Wade Cater, 2006). Consistent with other conceptualizations of youth involvement (e.g., Serido, Borden, and Perkins, 2011), as well as theoretical models of youth involvement (e.g., Wong, Zimmerman, & Parker, 2010) the scale was multidimensional, separating, in particular, positive, collaborative relationships with adults from program engagement and sense of ownership. The questionnaire comprises three subscales for relationships with adults (8 items, averaged, α = .89), engagement (8 items, averaged, α = .90), and sense of ownership (5 items, averaged, α =.78). Responses could range from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). Items for each of the subscales items are provided in Table 4-3. Higher scores indicated greater youth involvement in organizational decision making.

Initiative. Initiative was assessed with the Industry/Perseverance/Persistence scale from the Values in Action questionnaire (VIA-Youth; Park & Peterson, 2006). The scale measures individuals' perceptions of their effort and persistence in setting and reaching goals (8 items, averaged, e.g., "I am a goal-oriented person", α = .78). Responses could range from 0 (*not at all like me*) to 4 (*very much like me*). Higher scores indicated greater youth initiative.

Adult/Organizational Measures

Control variables. Adult participants' gender, age, education level, staff level (i.e., identifying as primarily management or primarily staff), and data collection network were included as potential control variables. Each was assessed with a single item.

Table 4-3

Youth Involvement Subscales and Items

Relationships with Adults

Adults in these activities listen to what I have to say.
Adults in these activities involve youth in making decisions about the activities.
My ideas are heard by adults who are involved in these activities.
My ideas are respected by adults who are involved in these activities.
I help adults better understand youth.
Adults view me as a valuable resource.
I feel connected to an adult in these activities.
I trust the adults who are involved in these activities.

Program Engagement

I want to be a part of these activities.
I am proud of the work we do in these activities.
I think the activities that we are involved in with this organization are valuable.
I am an active participant in these activities.
My attendance at meetings is important.
I feel good about myself when I am involved in these activities.
It is important that I participate in meetings.
I can make a difference through my work in these activities.

Ownership

I make decisions about what we do in these activities.
I have influence in these activities.
I help choose the projects in which we are involved.
I am an active participant in planning our group's projects.
I am an equal partner with the adults who are involved in these activities.

Items from the Youth Voice Survey (Wade Cater, 2006)

Responses to the education item could range from 0 (*did not finish high school*) to 7

(*finished post-graduate or professional degree*).

Adult perceptions of youth involvement in organizational decision making.

At the adult/organizational level, youth involvement in organizational decision making

was measured with a scale adapted from Shier's (2001) Pathways to Participation model. The adapted tool includes items measuring organizational readiness, opportunities, and policy on youth involvement (3 items, averaged, $\alpha = .79$). Responses could range from 0 (*youth are not listened to*) to 5 (*youth share power and responsibility for decision making*).

Learning culture. Learning culture was assessed with subscales from the Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ-A; Marsick & Watkins, 2003). I used three subscales representing the dimensions of the learning organization that are most compatible with current youth involvement research. The person-level dimension continuous learning was assessed with the Continuous Learning subscale (3 items, averaged, e.g., "In my organization, people are rewarded for learning", $\alpha = .78$). The person-level dimension dialogue and inquiry was assessed with the Dialogue and Inquiry subscale (3 items, averaged, e.g., "In my organization, people spend time building trust with each other", $\alpha = .85$). The team-level dimension team learning was measured with the Team Learning subscale (3 items, averaged, e.g., "In my organization, team/groups revise their thinking as a result of group discussions or information collected", $\alpha = .84$). On all scales, responses could range from 0 (*almost never*) to 5 (*almost always*), with higher scores indicating higher learning culture.

For the test of the third hypothesis, an overall score of learning organization culture was calculated, as an average of one item from each of the Continuous Learning, Dialogue and Inquiry, and Team Learning subscales, and four additional items from the DLOQ-A. In a number of organizations, either youth or adults completed the survey, but not both. The resulting data set, which contained all youth participants with

corresponding adult-level data, was thus reduced to 71 youth participants nested within 8

organizations (see Appendix F, Table A-2 for a full list of the number of adult and youth

participants per organization). The difficulty in conducting applied research in human

service organizations, and particularly multilevel designs, in which participants are nested

within units (e.g., organizations) has been noted by researchers in the past (Bickman &

Rog, 2009). The reduced data set for the test of the final hypothesis, although

unfortunate, appears not to be atypical in this type of research.

Seven of the eight organizations had multiple adult participants reporting on the

organization's learning culture. The question of how to measure organizational constructs

with multiple potential informants has been explored by researchers (Enticott, Boyne, &

Walker, 2009). The common practice of using the reports of top managers has been

shown to be problematic, as has the use of multiple informants, with different methods of

aggregation providing significantly different values. Taking theoretical and empirical

considerations into account, as suggested by Enticott et al., an ideal approach might be to

use the responses of the most knowledgeable staff member about the issue. However, the

existing research on learning culture does not appear to identify who might be the most

knowledgeable organizational representative, particularly in the limited research on

learning organizations in public and non-profit organizations. To minimize the problems

identified in past research, in the current study I randomly selected one reporter from

each organization to provide the measure of overall learning culture, although this does

create the possibility that the selected reporter did not provide the best representation of

organizational context.

Missing Data

Although some participants did not complete all survey questions, less than 3% of the data were missing for youth participants, and approximately 3.3% of the data were missing for adult participants. Therefore, missing values were imputed using the EM algorithm in SPSS (Schafer & Graham, 2002). Analyses were also tested using listwise deletion and yielded the same pattern of results.

Results

Hypothesis 1—Greater Youth Involvement Will Predict Greater Individual-Level Dimensions of the Learning Organization, Which Will in Turn Predict Greater Organizational-Level Dimensions of the Learning Organization

The first hypothesis predicts a multiple mediator model, in which greater youth involvement (measured at the adult level) predicts greater continuous learning and dialogue and inquiry, which in turn predict greater team learning. In many cases, there were multiple participants within the same organization. The non-independent nature of the data, in which participants are nested within groups, can violate the independence assumptions of multiple regression. Although multilevel linear modeling can address this problem, the current sample size was not large enough to allow for this type of analysis (Maas & Hox, 2005). Thus, the first and second hypotheses were tested with multiple hierarchical regression analysis.

The analysis followed Baron and Kenny's (1986) causal steps approach to testing mediation (see Figure 4-1). First, to test for potential covariates, bivariate associations with adult participants' gender, age, education level, staff level, and network were examined. None were significantly related to team learning, so they were not retained in
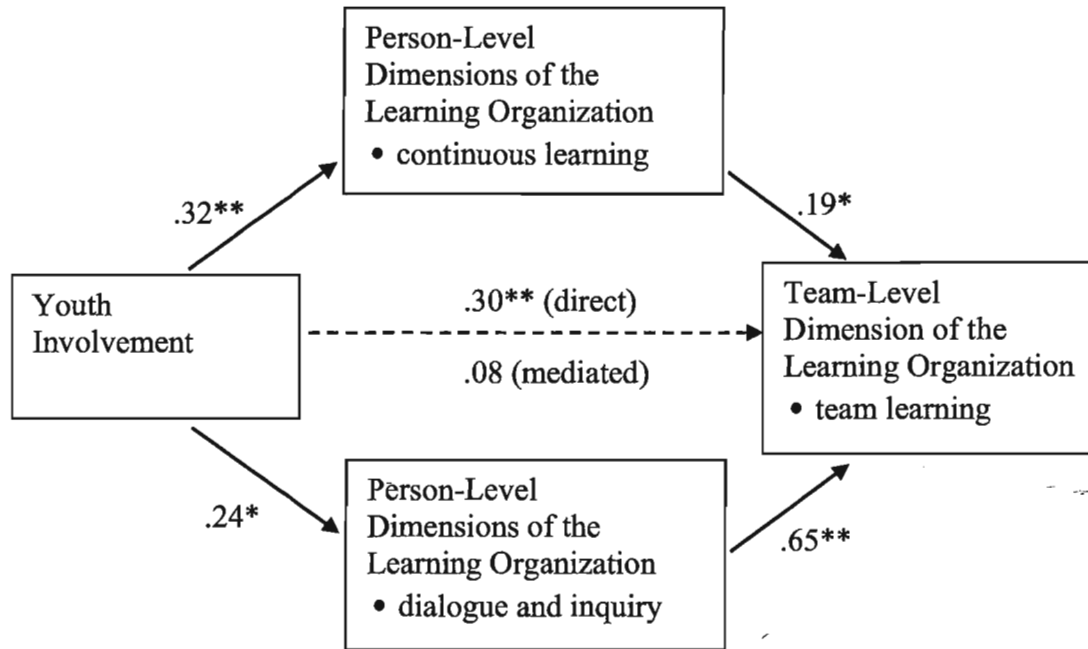
Figure 4-1. Mediated model of youth involvement and person- and team-level

dimensions of the learning organization. Coefficients are zero-order correlations and

standardized regression coefficients from the final regression analysis. $n = 72$.

the main analyses.[1] Because no covariates were included in the model, steps 1 and 2 of

Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach, which test the association between the independent

variable and both the dependent variable and the hypothesized mediators, were

established by an examination of the bivariate correlations. As shown in Table 4-2, and as

---

[1] Although including potential covariates might control for unnecessary variance, and

thus increase the likelihood of finding significant associations if they exist, it might also

reduce power due to a reduction in degrees of freedom. Although mediation also was

tested with the potential covariates included, as results were consistent with the simpler

analysis, the simpler analysis is described in the current report.

anticipated, youth involvement in organizational decision making was significantly and positively correlated with team learning, the team-level dimension of the learning organization.

Also as anticipated, youth involvement was significantly and positively correlated with the hypothesized mediators, the person-level dimensions of continuous learning and dialogue and inquiry. Steps 3 and 4 test the unique associations between both the independent variable and the hypothesized mediators and the dependent variable. Full mediation is indicated if the independent variable no longer significantly predicts the dependent variable in the final step. Steps 3 and 4 were tested in a single analysis, in which the team-level dimensions of the learning organization were regressed simultaneously onto youth involvement and the person-level dimensions of the learning organization. As expected, both of the person-level dimensions of the learning organization, continuous learning and dialogue and inquiry, significantly and positively predicted youth initiative. Finally, when all of the variables were in the model, the person-level dimensions of the learning organization significantly and positively predicted the team-level dimension of the learning organization, but youth involvement no longer significantly predicted the team-level dimension of the learning organization, indicating full mediation.

Additional models. To examine the consistency of our findings, five additional models were estimated in which adult participants' staff level, gender, age, education level, and network each were added as control variables in the first step of the models, and interaction terms between predictors from the main model and control variables each were added separately as a third step to the model. The added step was significant in two

of the models. The paths from both continuous learning and dialogue and inquiry to team learning were moderated by adult participants' education level and network. More specifically, over and above the other variables in the model, interaction plots (not shown) suggested that higher continuous learning was related to higher team learning, but that this association was stronger for those with higher education than for those with lower education. Higher dialogue and inquiry was related to greater team learning, and this association was stronger for adults with higher education than for adults with lower education. With respect to network, higher dialogue and inquiry was related to greater team learning, and this association was stronger for Network 2 than it was for Network 1. Finally, higher continuous learning was related to higher team learning for participants in Network 1, but did not appear to be associated with team learning for participants in Network 2. The model was consistent across staff level, gender, and age.

Hypothesis 2—Greater Youth Involvement Will Predict Greater Youth Initiative

The second hypothesis, that greater youth involvement (measured at the youth level) would predict greater youth initiative, was measured with multiple hierarchical regression analysis.[2] First, bivariate associations between the control variables and initiative were tested (see Table 4-1). Only the relation between initiative and average school grades was significant, so no other control variables were included in further

---

[2] Due to the wide range in the ages of youth participants, the same analysis also was conducted on a data set trimmed of data for youth participants over the age of 24. This step reduced the sample size from 136 to 129. This analysis, which included the test of the second hypothesis and the additional models to test for potential moderators, was consistent with the original analysis.

analyses. Bivariate correlations between two of the youth involvement variables (relationships with adults and engagement) and initiative were positive and significant, but the correlation between the third youth involvement variable (ownership), was not significant. Thus, it was not included in further analysis. In step 1 of the regression, youth initiative was regressed onto average grades. This predictor explained 7.0% of the variance in initiative ($\beta = .27$, $p = .002$). In step 2, youth initiative was regressed simultaneously onto the two youth-level youth involvement variables, engagement and relationships with adults. Together, the two dimensions of youth involvement accounted for a significant and additional 5.3% of the variance in initiative, however, when engagement ($\beta = .20$, $p = .10$) and relationships with adults ($\beta = .04$, $p = .73$) were entered simultaneously, neither uniquely predicted youth initiative over and above the other variables in the model.

Additional models. To examine the consistency of our findings, six additional models were estimated in which youth's age, gender, average grades, maternal education, network, and duration each were added in the first step of the model, and interaction terms between the youth involvement predictors and control variables each were added separately as a third step to the model. The added step was not significant in any of the models, indicating that the model did not vary by age, gender, average school grades, maternal education, network, or duration of involvement.

Hypothesis 3—The Association Between Youth Involvement and Youth Initiative Will Be Moderated by Learning Culture

The third hypothesis was that the organization's overall learning culture would moderate the positive association between youth involvement and youth initiative

predicted in hypothesis 2. Organizations' scores for learning culture were the same for each individual youth within an organization. As an added precaution, because of this additional degree of non-independence and despite the small sample size, an unconditional means model was tested, using multilevel modeling, in the first step of the analysis. The unconditional means model estimates the average value of the outcome (in this case, initiative) in the absence of predictors. It indicates whether there is sufficient group-level variability to warrant the inclusion of the organizational grouping variable in a multilevel analysis, rather than conducting simpler regression. The unconditional means model demonstrated significant individual-level variability ($p < .001$), but non-significant group-level variability ($p = .42$). Thus, learning culture was treated as an individual-level variable, and hypothesis 3 was tested using multiple hierarchical regression.

Bivariate associations between the main variables are presented in Table 4-4. Bivariate associations between demographic variables and initiative were also tested, but none were significant. They were not included in subsequent analyses. The bivariate correlation between youth initiative and one of the involvement variables (relationships with adults) was positive and significant. Youth initiative was not significantly related to the other two youth involvement variables. Learning culture was significantly related to program engagement, such that higher organizational learning culture was associated with lower youth program engagement.

In step 1 of the regression, youth initiative was regressed simultaneously onto the three youth-level youth involvement variables (ownership, engagement, and relationships with adults) and organizational learning culture. This step was not significant ($R^2 = .07$, $p = .30$), however, significant main effects are not required in tests of moderation. In step 2,

Table 4-4

Summary of Correlations Between Youth and Organizational Measures

Variable	1	2	3	4
Youth measures				
1. Initiative	—			
2. Ownership	.08	—		
3. Engagement	.17	.64**	—	
4. Relationships with adults	.24*	.61**	.70**	—
Organizational measures				
5. Learning culture[a]	-.12	-.15	-.29*	-.17

Note. n (youth measures) = 71; *n* (organizational measures) = 8.
*p ≤ .05. ***p* ≤ .001.

interaction terms between organizations' overall learning culture and each of the three

youth involvement variables were entered into the model. Together, the interaction terms

accounted for a significant and additional 13.3% (p = .02) of the variance in initiative.

However, only the interaction between relationships with adults and organizational

learning culture uniquely predicted youth initiative over and above the other variables in

the model (β = -2.30, p = .005).

To support hypothesis 3, it was anticipated that the positive association between

youth perceptions of youth involvement and youth initiative would be greater for

organizations with higher overall levels of learning culture. The interaction plot (see

Figure 4-2) presents the significant interaction, using predicted values of initiative for
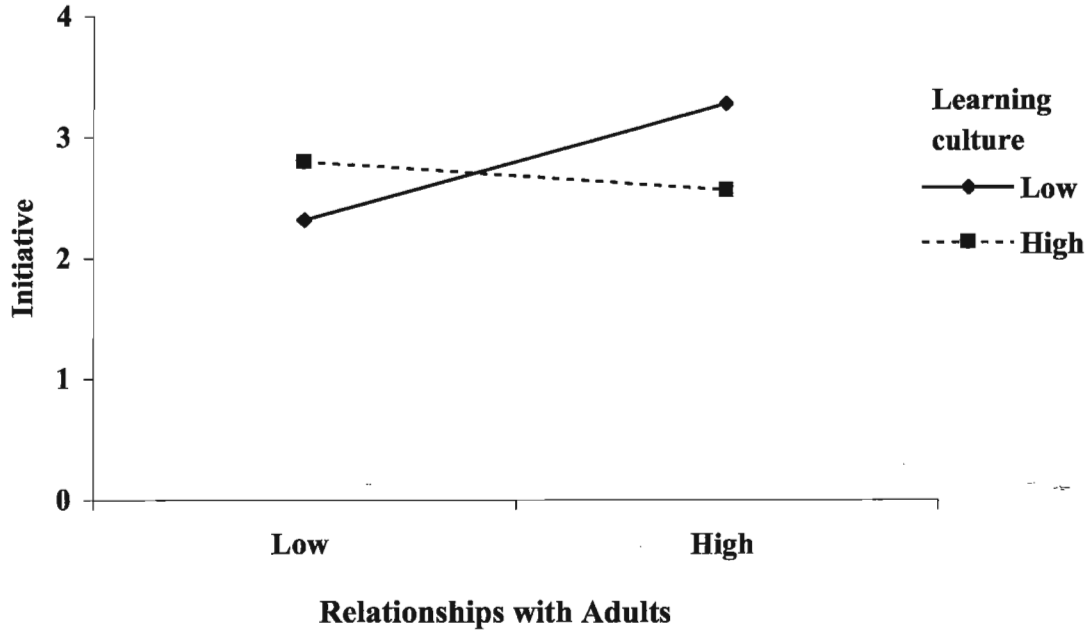
Figure 4-2. Hypothesized association between relationships with adults and youth initiative, moderated by organizational learning culture.

individuals with high (one standard deviation above the mean) and low (one standard deviation below the mean) values of learning culture. The plots indicate that a more positive relationship with adults was related to higher initiative; however, in contrast to the hypothesis, this association was only significant in organizations with low learning culture (Fig. 4-2: solid line).

Discussion

The current study built on past research in examining outcomes of youth involvement in organizational decision making for youth and adults. First, I examined youth involvement from an organizational-level perspective and found that, as hypothesized, greater youth involvement in organizational decision making predicted

higher scores on individual-level dimensions of the learning organization, which in turn predicted higher scores on the team-level dimension of the learning organization. Second, also as hypothesized, I found that greater youth involvement, measured as greater program engagement and relationships with adults, was related to greater youth initiative. Third, I found a moderated association between relationships with adults and youth initiative. Contrary to my hypothesis, I found that this association was only significant in organizations with low learning culture. I will consider the implications of each of these findings in turn.

Hypothesis 1—Youth Involvement Predicting Individual-Level Learning Organization Dimensions, and in Turn Predicting Organizational-Level Learning Organization Dimensions

In support of my hypothesis, a fully mediated model of youth involvement and organizational learning culture was found. Specifically, greater youth involvement in organizational decision making predicted higher scores on the person-level dimensions of the learning organization (continuous learning and a culture of dialogue and inquiry), which in turn predicted higher scores on the team-level dimension of the learning organization (team learning). Further, this model was consistent across different adult participant ages, genders, and for management and frontline staff. Although some specific paths in the mediated model were moderated by data collection network and adult level of education, these interactions largely suggested that certain effects were stronger for some participants (e.g., those reporting more formal education) than for others, rather than that the model only applied to certain participants. Although this finding thus had little implication for the overall test of the hypothesis, future research

should continue to explore the role of potential moderators of these associations, including education level.

In general, these findings support Wheeler's (2000) original hypothesis that youth involvement in organizational decision making is related to learning culture. They also build on findings from past literature on outcomes of youth involvement, such as improved organizational skills (e.g., Flicker, 2008), greater self-reflection and shifts in assumptions, and new ideas and collaborations (e.g., Checkoway et al., 2005). Findings on the link to learning culture might provide a coherent framework for these seemingly differentiated outcomes of youth involvement in organizational decision making.

Hypothesis 2—Youth Involvement Predicting Youth Initiative

I found that, together, two of the youth involvement dimensions (measured at the youth level), engagement and relationships with adults, significantly predicted greater youth initiative, over and above average school grades. These findings were consistent with my hypothesis, and with literature on adult-youth relationships and program engagement. For example, Serido et al. (2011) similarly found that collaborative, trusting relationships with adults and youth voice, which appears to parallel the engagement measure in the current study, predicted perceived benefits for youth.

Sense of ownership, which focuses more on youth's effectance and influence in program activities than the other two dimensions of youth involvement, was not significantly related to youth's level of initiative. Ownership generally has been considered a positive feature of youth involvement in decision making, and has been linked to benefits such as the development of strategic thinking (Larson & Angus, 2011). However, findings from Kirshner (2008) suggest that specific skills might be developed

better by organizations that take an apprenticeship approach to youth involvement, rather than an approach in which adults attempt to minimize their roles in an effort to maximize youth ownership. If youth initiative is considered a measure of specific youth skills, such as goal-setting and project completion, then it is reasonable that the ownership dimension of youth involvement would not promote youth initiative, in contrast to the other dimensions of youth involvement.

The finding that greater youth ownership was not related to higher initiative might also support models of youth involvement that do not consider youth-led programs as ideal. For example, Hart's (2008) ladder, perhaps the foremost model of participatory work with children and youth, contains five degrees of meaningful participation. Rungs range from lower degrees of participation (e.g., children assigned roles but kept informed) to higher degrees (e.g., child-initiated and directed participation in projects). It is notable, however, that the highest of the rungs, above child-initiated and directed participation, is child-initiated participation with shared decision-making with adults. Hart has argued that the highest degree of citizenship occurs when people recognize the rights of others, and that this level is morally superior to children being in full control. Findings from the current study indicate that the highest levels of youth ownership also might not be ideal with regard to the promotion of youth's positive development, at least the development of youth initiative.

Hypothesis 3—Youth Involvement and Youth Initiative as Moderated by Learning Culture

In the test of the third hypothesis, the association between one of the three youth involvement in decision making dimensions, relationships with adults, and initiative was

moderated by learning culture. Although such an interaction was hypothesized, this interaction was in the opposite direction of that predicted. More positive relationships with adults was related to greater initiative, but only in organizations with relatively low learning culture.

One potential explanation for this contrary finding might be a lack of structure in organizations with higher learning culture. Garvin, Edmondson, and Gino (2008) have identified characteristics of learning organizations, such as willingness to craft novel approaches and to take risks with the untested and unknown, which might be less likely to be observed in more highly structured organizations. Further, although in some cases the appropriate type of structure would likely facilitate organizational learning, it does not appear that this is generally the case (Ebrahim, 2005). Researchers, however, have identified structure as critical for successful youth engagement. For example, Wood et al. (2009) described the need for an a priori structure to youth's involvement, with defined duties and expectations. Also, and as already noted, the level of structure required might differ depending on the desired youth outcome. In a study of youth involved in leadership programs, Larson and Angus (2011) found that more facilitative, rather than directive, support promoted the development of strategic thinking; however, more directive, structured support promoted youth's learning to mobilize effort. Their definition of learning to mobilize effort involved persistence, regulated effort, and time management, and was very similar to the measure of initiative in the current study. These findings suggest that, in general, the structure required for the development of youth initiative might be more likely to be found in organizations with relatively low learning culture.

Another possible explanation is that, in organizations with relatively higher learning culture, youth-adult relationships are less critical for the development of youth initiative. That is, in organizations with atmospheres containing higher levels of characteristics such as continuous learning, information-sharing, team-building, and empowerment, in general, collaborative and respectful relationships between youth and adults are less essential for youth initiative to develop.

A final possibility for the direction of the interaction effect is that organizations lower in learning culture attract a different population of youth than those higher in learning culture. For example, among the potential control variables that were measured in the current study, the bivariate association between learning culture and age was significant and positive, indicating that the youth involved in organizations higher in learning culture tended to be older than those in organizations lower in learning culture. Thus, it is possible that it was the characteristics of youth involved in organizations with lower learning culture (e.g., younger age of youth) that might have fostered the stronger association between relationships with adults and youth initiative in these organizations. Similarly, it is also possible that other youth characteristics (e.g., a history of other youth involvement experiences), which were not measured in the current study, might account for the significant moderated effect.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study had a number of limitations that might have implications for the reliability and generalizability of my findings, and for the validity of my interpretation of the results. First, the study was limited by the cross-sectional nature of the data. Some attempt to address this limitation was made through the inclusion of potential self-

selection variables and testing of alternate models where appropriate, and these additional analyses are among the strengths of the current study. However, future longitudinal studies are needed to explore directionality of associations. The study was also limited by a relatively small sample size. Future research should attempt to follow up on key findings in other organizations and with larger numbers of youth and adults. Relatedly, the age range of youth was also quite broad, because practitioners were clear that youth should be welcome to participate regardless of their age. However, the potential developmental contributions of youth involvement across this age range could be expected to differ. Although the association between youth involvement and initiative was not moderated by age in the current sample, future research should continue to examine differences in these associations in different ages, perhaps focusing on more specific ages in contexts where it would be acceptable to youth and practitioners. An additional limitation is the current study's exclusive reliance on self-report measures. Youth and adult perceptions were used where they were considered the most appropriate and meaningful method for measuring youth involvement and outcomes, and surveys are typically used to measure learning culture (e.g., Garvin et al., 2008; Yang et al., 2004). However, future research might benefit from the use of observational methods or analysis of program documents to triangulate self-report measures.

An additional potential limitation to the test of the third hypothesis is the use of a single informant as a measure of organizational culture. This decision was made with careful consideration to past research on gathering data from multiple informants within organizations (e.g., Enticott et al., 2009), and the data available from the results of the current survey. Nevertheless, this limitation suggests that the test of the third hypothesis

should be considered largely exploratory. Based on Enticott et al.'s suggestions, studies

with similar samples and research questions to that presented by hypothesis three would

likely benefit from an additional step to determine the best reporter of organizational

culture. This might include additional survey questions, both for adults and for youth, to

determine which adult in the organization would most likely transmit or be aware of the

organizational atmosphere that would potentially impact youth's experiences. In tests of

organizational culture in adult-dominated organizations, adults are likely the most

meaningful reporters, and determining who that is would require a better understanding

of both adult and youth's perspectives than was gathered in the current study. In the

future, and depending on the research question at hand, youth involvement researchers

will need to experiment with different types of sampling schemes to determine the best

reporter or combination of reporters of organizational context.

A final limitation is the large disparity in the number of participants who

completed the survey per organization (Appendix F). This was due, in part, to the

already-mentioned difficulty in conducting applied research (Bickman & Rog, 2009), as

well as the initial recruiting strategy in Network 1, which did not permit researchers to

have direct contact with potential participants. Instead, the chair of Network 1 acted as an

intermediary, extending invitations to participate to representatives of member

organizations. This lack of direct contact might have made more likely that isolated adult

allies who were supportive of youth involvement research would participate, rather than

that organizations as a whole would commit to the research process, leaving many

organizations with a single research participant. Nonetheless, the existence of single

participants from organizations would not likely impact the testing of hypothesis one,

which included only the adults, or hypothesis two, which included only the youth. It would not likely even be noted in more typical studies, which include only youth or adults participants. It does, however, introduce error into the test of hypothesis three, give that a number of organizations were excluded from the analysis because they did not have both youth and adult reporters. As noted in the previous paragraph, hypothesis three should be considered exploratory. However, due to the limited amount of extant research on youth involvement that includes youth and adult participants, the current findings might still provide a starting point for future research questions. Thus, the test of hypothesis three continues to have value for that purpose despite its exploratory nature and significant limitations.

Implications and Contributions

Despite its limitations, findings from the current study have implications for program and policy directions in youth-serving organizations, and for lifespan development theory. With regard to practice, the interaction between relationships with adults and organizational culture in predicting initiative might suggest that organizations with a goal of developing youth initiative need to provide a framework of clear structure and expectations for youth's involvement in decision making. This framework does not necessarily exclude the culture of reflection, dialogue, an atmosphere of learning and teaching described as important by Zeldin et al. (2005). For example, Bess, Perkins, Cooper, and Jones (2011) provide an illustrative case example of an organization with both a high level of structure and high organizational learning. The organization achieved this by developing numerous structures for collaboration and communication, an open membership that considered all stakeholders to potential resources, and clearly defined

roles and departmental structures.

With regard to theoretical implications, an important strength of the current study is the examination of community organizations and youth services as contexts for youth development. In testing contextual factors as both a moderator and an outcome of youth involvement, this study represents early steps in examining two critical aspects of these contexts of development. The need for studies, first, of characteristics of the contexts that might promote positive youth development and, second, of the effects of youth on their context have been noted by lifespan scholars as key areas for future research (Lerner & Overton, 2008; Lerner, Phelps, Forman, & Bowers, 2009; Mahoney, Vandell, Simpkins, & Zarrett, 2009). Despite the extensive attention in theory in recent psychology literature, the empirical literature on the role of context is limited (e.g., Ramey & Rose-Krasnor, in press). These findings thus make an important contribution to lifespan literature in suggesting that contextual measures of youth engagement can provide insight into the outcomes of youth involvement and that youth might have a positive impact on the organizations in which they are involved, as suggested in past qualitative literature.

Conclusion

Despite limitations, in considering associations among youth involvement in organization decision making, organizational context, and youth initiative, the current study makes an important contribution toward the early stages of context-level analyses of youth development. Findings suggest positive implications of youth involvement for organizations, and new insight into the potential of youth organizations in promoting the development of youth initiative.

References

Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator–mediator variable distinction in

social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations.

Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51, 1173–1182.

Benson, P. L., Scales, P. C., Hamilton, S. F., & Sesma, A., Jr. (2006). Positive youth

development: Theory, research, and applications. In R. M. Lerner (Vol. Ed.) & W.

Damon & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Theoretical*

models of human development (6th ed., Vol. 1., pp. 894–941). Hoboken, NJ: John

Wiley.

Bess, K. D., Perkins, D. D., Cooper, D. G., Jones, D. L. (2011). A heuristic framework

for understanding the role of participatory decision making in community-based

non-profits. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 47,* 236–252. doi:

10.1007/s10464-010-9396-8

Bickman L., & Rog, D. J. (2009). *The SAGE handbook of applied social research* (2nd

ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Camino, L., & Zeldin, S. (2002). From periphery to center: Pathways for youth civic

engagement in the day-to-day life of communities. *Applied Developmental*

Science, 6, 213–220.

Checkoway, B., Allison, T., & Montoya, C. (2005). Youth participation in public policy

at the municipal level. *Children and Youth Services Review, 27,* 1149-1162.

Conner, J. O., & Strobel, K. (2007). Leadership development: An examination of

individual and programmatic growth. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 22,* 275–

297.

Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Larson, R. W. (1984). *Being adolescent.* New York: Basic Books.

Damon, W. (2004). What is positive youth development? *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 591,* 13–24. doi: 10.1177/0002716203260092

Dworkin, J. B., Larson, R., & Hansen, D. (2003). Adolescents' accounts of growth experiences in youth activities. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 32,* 17–26. doi: 0047-2891/03/0200-0017/0

Ebrahim, A. (2005). Accountability myopia: Losing sight of organizational learning. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 34,* 56–87. doi: 10.1177/0899764004269430

Eccles, J., & Gootman, J. A. (Eds.). (2002). *Community programs to promote youth development.* Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Enticott, G., Boyne, G. A., & Walker, R. M. (2009). The use of multiple informants in public administration research: Data aggregation using organizational echelons. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 19,* 229–253. doi:10.1093/jopart/mun017

Feldman, A. F., & Matjasko, J. L. (2005). The role of school-based extracurricular activities in adolescent development: A comprehensive review and future directions. *Review of Educational Research, 75,* 159. doi: 10.3102/00346543075002159

Flicker, S. (2008). Who benefits from community-based participatory research? A case study of the Positive Youth Project. *Health Education & Behavior, 35,* 70–86.

Garvin, D. A., Edmondson, A. C., & Gino, F. (March 2008). Is yours a learning organization? *Harvard Business Review*, 1–10.

Green, R. (2000). *Taking the initiative: Promoting young people's involvement in public decision making: Northern Ireland report.* London: Carnegie Young People Initiative.

Hansen, D. M., Larson, R. W., & Dworkin, J. B. (2003). What adolescents learn in organized youth activities: A survey of self-reported developmental experiences. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 13*, 25–55.

Hart, R. (2008). Stepping back from 'the ladder': Reflections on a model of participatory work with children. In A. Reid, B. B. Jensen, J. Nikel, & V. Simovska (Eds.), *Participation and learning: Perspectives on education and the environment, health and sustainability* (pp. 19–31). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.

Jelicic, H., Bobek, D. L., Phelps, E., Lerner, R. M., & Lerner, J. V. (2007). Using positive youth development to predict contribution and risk behaviors in early adolescence: Findings from the first two waves of the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 31*, 263–273. doi: 10.1177/0165025407076439

Kirby, P., Lanyon, C., Cronin, K., & Sinclair, R. (2003). *Building a culture of participation: Involving children and young people in policy, service planning, delivery and evaluation.* London: Department for Education and Skills.

Kirshner, B. (2008). Guided participation in three youth activism organizations: Facilitation, apprenticeship, and joint work. *The Journal of the Learning Sciences, 17*, 60–101. doi: 10.1080/10508400701793190

Larson, R. W. (2000). Toward a psychology of positive youth development. *American Psychologist, 55*, 170–183. doi: 10.1037//0003-066X.55.1.170

Larson, R. W., & Angus, R. M. (2011). Adolescents' development of skills for agency in youth programs: Learning to think strategically. *Child Development, 82*, 277–294. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01555.x

Larson, R. W., Hansen, D., & Moneta, G. (2006). Differing profiles of developmental experiences across types of organized youth activities. *Developmental Psychology, 42*, 849–863. doi: 10.1037/0012-1649.42.5.849

Larson, R., Hansen, D., & Walker, K. (2005). Everybody's gotta give: Development of initiative and teamwork within a youth program. In J. L. Mahoney, R. W. Larson, & J. S. Eccles (Eds.), *Organized activities as contexts of development: Extracurricular activities, after-school and community programs* (pp. 159–183). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Larson, R., Walker, K., & Pearce, N. (2005). A comparison of youth-driven and adult-driven youth programs: Balancing inputs from youth and adults. *Journal of Community Psychology, 33*, 57–74. doi: 10.1002/jcop.20035

Lerner, J. V., Phelps, E., Forman, Y. E., & Bowers, E. (2009). Positive youth development. In R. M. Lerner & L. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology: Individual bases of adolescent development* (3rd ed., Vol. 1, pp. 524–558). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Lerner, R. M., Alberts, A. E., Jelicic, H., & Smith, L M. (2006). Young people are

resources to be developed: Promoting positive youth development through adult-

youth relations and community assets. In E. G. Clary & J. E. Rhodes (Eds.),

Mobilizing adults for positive youth development (pp. 19–39). New York:

Springer.

Lerner, R. M., Lerner, J., Almerigi, J. B., Theokas, C., Phelps, E., Gestsdottir, S.,…von

Eye, A. (2005). Positive youth development, participation in community youth

development programs, and community contributions of fifth-grade adolescents.

Journal of Early Adolescence, 25, 17–71. doi: 10.1177/0272431604272461

Lerner, R. M., & Overton, W. F. (2008). Exemplifying the integrations of the relational

developmental system: Synthesizing theory, research, and application to promote

positive development and social justice. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 23,* 245–

255. doi: 10.1177/0743558408314385

Lerner, R. M., von Eye, A., Lerner, J. V., Lewin-Bizan, S., & Bowan, E. P. (2010).

Special issue introduction: The meaning and measurement of thriving: A view of

the issues. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 39,* 707–719. doi: 10.1007/s10964-

010-9531-8

Lewis-Charp, H., Yu, H., Soukamneuth, S., & Lacoe, J. (2003). *Extending the reach of*

youth development through civic activism: Outcomes of the Youth Leadership for

Development Initiative. Takoma Park, MD: Innovation Center for Community

and Youth Development.

Maas, C. J. M., & Hox, J. J. (2005). Sufficient sample sizes for multilevel modeling.

Methodology, 1, 85–91. doi: 10.1027/1614-1881.1.3.85

Mahoney, J., Vandell, D., Simpkins, S., & Zarrett, N. (2009). Adolescent out-of-school

activities. In R. M. Lerner & L. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent

psychology: Contextual influences on adolescent development* (3rd ed., Vol. 2, pp.

229–269). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Marsick, V. J., & Watkins, K. E. (2003). Demonstrating the value of an organization's

learning culture: The dimensions of the learning organization questionnaire.

Advances in Developing Human Resources, 5, 132–151.

Mitra, D. L., Sanders, F. C., & Perkins, D. F. (2010). Providing spark and stability: The

role of intermediary organizations in establishing school-based youth-adult

partnerships. *Applied Developmental Science, 14,* 106–123. doi:

10.1080/10888691003738285

O'Leary, E. (2001). *Taking the initiative: Promoting young people's involvement in public

decision-making in Ireland.* London: Carnegie Young People Initiative.

Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2006). Moral competence and character strengths among

adolescents: The development and validation of the Values in Action Inventory of

Strengths for Youth. *Journal of Adolescence, 29,* 891–909. doi:

10.1016/j.adolescence.2006.04.011

Ramey, H. L., & Rose-Krasnor, L. (in press). Contexts of structured youth activities and

positive youth development. *Child Development Perspectives.*

Roth, J. L., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2003). What exactly is a youth development program?

Answers from research and practice. *Applied Developmental Science, 7,* 94–111.

Schafer, J. L., & Graham, J. W. (2002). Missing data: Our view of the state of the art.

Psychological Methods, 7, 147–177.

Senge, P. M. (2006). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization* (2nd ed.). New York: Doubleday.

Serido, J., Borden, L. M., & Perkins, D. F. (2011). Moving beyond youth voice. *Youth & Society, 43*, 44–63. doi: 10.1177/0044118X09351280

Shier, H. (2001). Pathways to participation: Openings, opportunities and obligations. A new model for enhancing children's participation in decision-making, in line with Article 13.1 of the UNCRC. *Children & Society, 15*, 107–117.

Sloper, P., & Lightfoot, J. (2003). Involving disabled and chronically ill children and young people in health service development. *Child Care, Health and Development, 29*, 15–20.

Statistics Canada. (2010). *2006 Community Profiles*. Ottawa: Author. Retrieved October 1, 2010 from: http://www.statcan.gc.ca.

Treseder, P. & Crowley, A. (2001). *Taking the initiative: Promoting young people's participation in decision-making in Wales*. London: Carnegie Young People Initiative.

Wade Cater, M. D. (2006). *How voice affects perceptions of relationship with adults, ownership, and engagement in youth*. (Doctoral dissertation, Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College). Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/305317159?accountid=9744

Walker, J., Marczak, M., Blyth, D., & Bordon, L. (2005). Designing youth development programs: Toward a theory of developmental intentionality. In J. Mahoney, R. Larson, & J. Eccles (Eds.), *Organized activities as contexts of development* (pp. 399–418). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Watkins, K. E., & Marsick, V. J. (1996). *In action: Creating the learning organization.* Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training and Development.

Wheeler, W. (2000). Emerging organizational theory and the youth development organization. *Applied Developmental Science, 4,* 47–54.

Wood, D., Larson, R. W., & Brown, J. R. (2009). How adolescents come to see themselves as more responsible through participation in youth programs. *Child Development, 80,* 295–309. doi: 0009-3920/2009/8001-0022

Wong, N. T., Zimmerman, M. A., & Parker, E. A. (2010). A typology of youth participation and empowerment for child and adolescent health promotion. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 46,* 100-114. doi: 10.1007/s10464-010-9330-0

Yang, B., Watkins, K. E., & Marsick, V. J. (2004). The construct of the learning organization: Dimensions, measurement, and validation. *Human Resources Development Quarterly, 15,* 31–55.

Zeldin, S. (2004). Youth as agents of adult and community development: Mapping the processes and outcomes of youth engaged in organizational governance. *Applied Developmental Science, 8,* 75–90.

Zeldin, S., Larson, R., Camino, L., & O'Connor, C. (2005). Intergenerational relationships and partnerships in community programs: Purpose, practice, and directions for research. *Journal of Community Psychology, 33,* 1–10. doi: 10.1002/jcop.20042

Zeldin, S., McDaniel, A. K., Topitzes, D., & Calvert, M. (2000). *Youth in decision-making: A study on the impacts of youth on adults and organizations.* Washington, DC: National 4-H Council.

Zimmerman, S. M., Phelps, E., & Lerner, R. M. (2008). Positive and negative developmental trajectories in U.S. adolescents: Where the positive youth development perspective meets the deficit model. *Research in Human Development, 5,* 153–165. doi: 10.1080/15427600802274001

CHAPTER 5: General Discussion and Conclusions

Together, the two studies that comprise this dissertation suggest integrated conclusions, theoretical considerations related to lifespan development theory, and a description and reflection on the mixed methods design of the whole, as well as strengths, limitations, and suggested areas for future research. I elaborate upon each of these areas in this final general discussion section.

Integrative Summary

This dissertation is a mixed methods study of youth involvement in organizational decision making. The first study is a qualitative synthesis of the literature on organizational outcomes of youth involvement in decision making, which builds on seminal research on organizational outcomes of youth involvement conducted by Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes, and Calvert (2000). The results suggested benefits for service provision, staff, and broader organizational functioning. Outcomes for service provision included improved services, more service utilization, delivery of services by youth, improved youth-adult interactions, and more participatory practices. Outcomes for staff included improvements in attitudes, knowledge, and skill in staff's work with youth, increased motivation, self-efficacy, engagement, and confidence. Outcomes for the broader organization included a more positive reputation and links with other organizations, advances in organizational learning and governance, more youth involvement in decision making, and greater connection between the organization and youth needs. The findings also suggest some costs for staff and organizations, including greater stress and responsibility and greater requirements for resources.

The second study expanded upon findings from Study 1 that suggested a link between youth involvement and organizational learning culture. It also tested additional links to youth's development of initiative, drawing on lifespan theories on positive youth development (e.g., Jelicic, Bobek, Phelps, Lerner, & Lerner, 2007) and youth-context relations (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2006). In Study 2, I found that greater youth involvement in organizational decision making predicted greater continuous learning and dialogue and inquiry, which in turn predict greater team learning. I also found that greater program engagement and more collaborative, respectful relationships with adults were related to greater youth initiative, but that the association between relationships with adults and youth initiative was only significant in organizations with relatively low learning culture.

Study 1 and Study 2 overlap in their contributions to the literature. Both involved examinations of youth and adult experiences of youth decision making in the context of a wide variety of community-based organizations. In this way, as well as in the findings of moderated effects in Study 2, the studies highlight the relevance of context in considering youth development. Both examine youth's level of decision making, a particularly relevant topic given that increased decision making in the contexts of youth's lives is a developmental task of adolescence (Arnett, 2000). The two studies also suggest (Study 1) and then confirm (Study 2) links between youth involvement in organizational decision making and learning culture from the perspectives of adults within organizations in the populations under study. Independent contributions, on the other hand, include findings from Study 1 on the outcomes of youth involvement that do not directly relate to organizational learning culture, and findings from Study 2 on youth involvement and

youth's level of initiative. Independent and shared contributions, however, are all firmly rooted in theories of lifespan developmental psychology.

Youth Involvement and Lifespan Development Psychology

Introductions in the most recent editions of both the *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology* (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009) and the *Handbook of Life-Span Development* (Overton, 2010) describe two major foci of lifespan psychology that are important topics in this dissertation. The first is the study of contextual systems, along with research-based applications, and the second is the understanding and promotion of positive youth development. The two studies in this dissertation involved community organizations and programs, which form a key context for youth's development (Mahoney, Vandell, Simpkins, & Zarrett, 2009). Mahoney et al. have stated that there is new awareness in developmental psychology that youth spend a large amount of time in contexts such as youth programs and extracurricular and community-based activities, and that these settings, along with the more commonly identified settings of family, school, and peers, are important contexts for youth development. Further, they argue that Bronfenbrenner's (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) bioecological theory of development particularly emphasizes the developmental consequences of the proximal process occurring in such microsystems.

Positive youth development perspectives emerged, in part, from youth-serving programs, in a move beyond the deficit view of youth that dominated developmental psychology and other fields during most of the past century (Lerner, Phelps, Forman, & Bowers, 2009). Although no common definition exists (Lerner et al.), positive youth development focuses on youth's strengths, competencies, and contributions to others and

to society. Youth's involvement in organizational decision making, which served as the predictor in both studies, not only reflects positive features of youth development, but also overlaps with other positive constructs of adolescence, such as civic participation (Zaff, Hart, Flanagan, Youniss, & Levine, 2010) and purpose (Damon, 2008).

In addition to the common grounding of both studies in current theories in lifespan development psychology, the examination of initiative in Study 2 is located quite clearly in recent trends and theoretical arguments in the field. In discussing the settings of positive youth development, Lerner et al. (2009) cite Larson's (e.g., Larson et al., 2004) body of research on several domains of development, including initiative, suggesting it as the basis for a "universal theory of change relevant to PYD in organized programs" (p. 531). Larson's discussion of the processes occurring in youth development programs, including the opportunities provided to youth and the actions of adults, might provide early steps in articulating the pathways toward positive youth development for youth in organized program settings. In assessing associations between dimensions and degrees of youth involvement in decision making in community-based organizations and youth initiative, Study 2 builds on Larson and colleagues' research in this area, further elucidating the processes occurring in these settings that can contribute to positive youth development.

More difficult to locate in the field of lifespan psychology are those elements of the two studies that relate to adult outcomes. Among the qualitative studies selected for inclusion into the synthesis, only one (Zeldin, 2004) referred to adult outcomes as "adult development" (p. 83), and none appeared to relate outcomes to theories of adult development. The potential of adults' work with youth to have an effect on adults appear

to have received very little attention from developmentalists. Nevertheless, theoretical propositions on leadership development put forward by Mumford and Manley (2003) help to situate findings on adult outcomes in the lifespan development literature.

Mumford and Manley (2003) have argued that adult leadership development should reflect theories of adult development. They point to Baltes and colleagues' selection, optimization, and compensation theory (Freund & Baltes, 2000) as the best available framework for this. In the context of adult leadership development, optimization refers to the greater effectiveness and efficiency leaders develop through their experience, which allows for more successful execution of their roles. Optimization in adult leadership development is advanced through action, or experiential-based, learning. As leaders gain practice, they increase the knowledge available for their work and develop expertise and problem-solving skills necessary for leadership. This type of optimization was evident in findings from both studies, in adults' reports of knowledge and skill in staff's work with youth, along with greater self-efficacy and confidence (Study 1), and learning at the individual and team levels (Study 2). Thus, adults working with youth who are involved in decision making reflect adult development through the optimization of skills and abilities in their work.

Although outside of the more traditional lifespan development literature, current research on the professional development of youth workers suggests that experiences of youth participation might positively and negatively impact adult development. This development includes changes in self-efficacy, confidence, and skills in youth work in general. It also includes links between youth participation, more specifically, and shifts in

personal identities, youth workers' exploration of their own life challenges, and greater enthusiasm and the creation of an empowering work atmosphere.

With respect to more general youth work, Ross, Buglione, and Safford-Farquharson (2011) have found that youth workers tend to benefit from training and support that focuses on youth workers' feelings of self-efficacy and that addresses the potentially discouraging challenges they regularly face. This is, in part, because youth workers tend to feel undervalued, and so it is necessary to honor youth worker's knowledge and experience and for youth workers to have opportunities for support and shared learning. From this perspective, some of the findings from Study 1 might speak to several elements of adult development. The findings that youth workers reported greater self-efficacy and confidence in their work, as well as improvements in their knowledge and skills in their work with youth, indicate that youth engagement might serve as an additional contributor, along with support and training, to what Ross et al. found are necessary elements of positive youth worker development. On the other hand, findings that youth workers tend to feel undervalued and discouraged suggest that, when not sufficiently resourced and/or successful, the perceived drawbacks of youth work might be very concerning with regard to adult development in youth workers.

With respect to adult experiences of youth participation, more specifically, research and theoretical arguments suggest that youth workers can experiences changes in a range of areas of personal development. Ginwright (2005), for example, has stated that, in urban communities of colour, successful youth engagement must include adult development because, otherwise, adults' rigid or traditional notions about success and youth's developmental processes will cause generational tensions instead of healthy

partnerships. In addition, personal transformation on the part of adults is a prerequisite for effective partnerships with youth because adults need to explore their own identities, life challenges, and histories in ways that connect to the changes they are trying to make in the youth-adult partnerships. Somewhat similar to Ginwright, Camino (2005) has suggested that personal and professional development in youth workers occurs due to greater exposure to diverse youth's lives. She has stated that youth adult partnerships that are solely intended for positive youth development are not effective, and that partnerships work when adults and youth shift to working toward a common good, such as community improvement. Camino (2005) has also argued that, when youth are involved in decision making, adults develop greater enthusiasm for their work.

Although speaking to the issue of adult development less directly, theoretical arguments put forward by Wong, Zimmerman, and Parker (2010) may also apply to adult development. Wong et al. discuss the actions that adults take in creating to an empowering atmosphere, which include contributing their own experience and knowledge of community history to youth engagement projects. If these actions are considered in light of arguments and findings by Ginwright (2005) and Camino (2005), they can perhaps be seen as potential outcomes for adults rather than just adult contributions. They could then be seen to reflect the honoring of youth worker knowledge found by Ross et al. (2011) as a predictor of youth worker development, and might suggest that youth workers involved in youth participation might experience increases generativity.

The Mixed Methodology

Combined, the two studies' methodology was a variant of an exploratory mixed

methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In this design, qualitative data are collected and analyzed in an initial phase and a second, quantitative phase is used to test the qualitative exploratory results. The exploratory mixed method was used because past research on organizational outcomes of youth involvement is almost exclusively qualitative. The qualitative synthesis of these studies that formed Study 1 provided an empirical basis for the quantitative methodology used in Study 2. The two studies had equivalent priority, neither taking a more prominent role in the research process.

The studies did not adhere completely to the exploratory mixed methods design for two reasons. First, data collection and analysis occurred both sequentially and concurrently. An initial phase of the qualitative synthesis was conducted, relying on a shorter time span for searching. Preliminary findings from this phase were used for the development of the quantitative study. When the quantitative study was completed, the final phase of the qualitative synthesis was conducted, extending the initial time span of the search. This process allowed the quantitative data collection to commence, without waiting for the completion of the first study. The delay in the completion of the qualitative study also meant that the qualitative study could encompass a full 10-year time span. More specifically, as Study 1 was written as a follow-up to Zeldin et al.'s (2000) study, completing the study in 2011 allowed for a full decade of research, which seemed to be a meaningful timeframe for the qualitative search. The study also might be considered not purely exploratory mixed methods because, although it was intended to provide direction for Study 2, it was also expected that Study 2 would only follow a limited number of the organizational outcomes found in Study 1. Most of the organizational outcomes were of interest for Study 1, but were not explored further in

Study 2.

Strengths of the Integration Process

One strength of the integrative process is its potential to bridge philosophical assumptions regarding research and disciplines. Extant youth involvement research likely includes both qualitative and quantitative designs, in part, because of the interdisciplinary nature of the topic. The value of qualitative versus quantitative methodologies can depend upon the disciplinary, or even subdisciplinary, context in which the research occurs (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). One strength of the integrated dissertation, then, might be the credibility added by the mixed methods design. In other words, the integration process and combination of Study 1 and Study 2 might be viewed as more credible by researchers, regardless of their philosophical assumptions regarding research, than a study that relied on only qualitative or quantitative designs.

A second strength of the integration process also pertains to the interdisciplinarity of the two studies. Wheeler's (2000) argument that youth involvement contributes to learning culture, combined with findings from Study 1, led to the application of theories and measures from a discipline outside of the field of lifespan development psychology (i.e., human resources) in Study 2. It is relatively unlikely that outcomes usually considered to "belong" to business would be incorporated into research in areas such as positive youth development in the course of more traditional, quantitative designs in psychology.

Limitations of the Integrative Process and Recommendations for Future Studies

The integrative process had several limitations, leading to recommendations for future studies. Although one purpose of an exploratory mixed methods design is to

examine qualitative findings with a new sample of participants, making findings ideally generalizable (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), the second, quantitative study relied on a modest sample. Even though the hypotheses on organizational outcomes were supported, the organizational sample cannot be said to be representative of adults within organizations, limiting the generalizability of the current findings.

A further limitation was that learning culture was the only organizational outcome from Study 1 that was tested in Study 2. Results from Study 1 pointed to a number of other organizational outcomes, both positive (e.g., improved services and more service utilization by youth) and negative (e.g., greater stress and the need for sufficient resources). However, it was not possible to examine all of these within the limited scope of the current dissertation. Future research is required to explore each of these findings further.

Finally, although potential youth -> context and context -> youth outcomes were assessed in the two studies, the studies did not address potential bidirectionality. This is an area in need of development (Ramey & Rose-Krasnor, in press). To extend theories and research in lifespan development psychology and to make a greater contribution to youth involvement research, more particularly, future longitudinal research will need to be conducted to examine mutually influential changes over time, in youth involvement in decision making and youth and adult development, and from both youth and adult perspectives.

An additional, and potentially important, avenue for future research is to explore the potential mediators of the relations between youth involvement and organizational culture found in both Studies 1 and 2. Given the limited existing research on youth

involvement and organizational change, research on organizational culture might be helpful in suggesting the potential causal mechanisms for this association. For example, Bui and Baruch (2010a, 2010b) found that factors such as organizational and team commitment, individual motivation and learning, and specific personal values predicted learning culture in both higher education and for-profit organizations. These factors might also serve as mediators of youth involvement and organizational learning culture. Findings from Study 1 on the perceived outcomes of youth involvement on staff's motivation, engagement and reinforcement of purpose, and knowledge and skill in their work, seem to overlap with several of the predictors suggested by Bui and Baruch. These, in turn, then, might lead to greater learning culture in the organization. These potential mediating relations are speculative, however, and future research is needed to consider these and other likely mediators of youth involvement and organizational outcomes.

Conclusion

In sum, despite several limitations and the need for future research, this dissertation made meaningful contributions to lifespan development psychology and interdisciplinary research in youth involvement, and has the potential to affect organizational practices in community-based organizations. It is hoped that practice-based research in youth involvement continues, and that the benefits and costs of youth involvement for youth and organizations can be delineated further through community-based research.

References

Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens

through the twenties. *American Psychologist, 55,* 469–480. doi: 10.1037//0003-

066X.55.5.469

Benson, P. L., Scales, P. C., Hamilton, S. F., & Sesma, A., Jr. (2006). Positive youth

development: Theory, research, and applications. In R. M. Lerner (Vol. Ed.) & W.

Damon & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Theoretical*

models of human development (6th ed., Vol. 1., pp. 894–941). Hoboken, NJ: John

Wiley.

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2006). The bioecological model of human

development. In R. M. Lerner (Ed.) & W. Damon & R. M. Lerner (Editors-in-

Chief), *The Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 1. Theoretical models of human*

development (6th ed., pp. 793–828). New York: Wiley.

Bui, H., & Baruch, Y. (2010a). Creating learning organizations: A systems perspective.

The Learning Organization, 17, 208–227. doi: 10.1108/09696471011034919

Bui, H., & Baruch, Y. (2010b). Creating learning organizations in higher education:

Applying a systems perspective. *The Learning Organization, 17,* 228–242. doi

10.1108/09696471011034928

Camino, L. (2005). Pitfalls and promising practices of youth-adult partnerships: An

evaluator's reflections. *Journal Of Community Psychology, 33,* 75–85. doi:

10.1002/jcop.20043

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods*

research (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Damon, W. (2008). *The path to purpose: Helping our children find their calling in life.* New York: Free Press.

Freund, A. M., & Baltes, P. B. (2000). The orchestration of selection, optimization and compensation: An action-theoretical conceptualization of a theory of developmental regulation. In W. J. Perrig & A. Grob (Eds.), *Control of human behavior, mental processes, and consciousness: Essays in honor of the 60th birthday of August Flammer* (pp. 35–58). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Ginwright, S. A. (2005). On urban ground: Understanding African-American intergenerational partnerships in urban communities. *Journal Of Community Psychology, 33,* 101–110. doi: 10.1002/jcop.20045

Jelicic, H., Bobek, D. L., Phelps, E., Lerner, R. M., & Lerner, J. V. (2007). Using positive youth development to predict contribution and risk behaviors in early adolescence: Findings from the first two waves of the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 31,* 263–273. doi: 10.1177/0165025407076439

Larson, R., Jarrett, R., Hansen, D., Pearce, N., Sullivan, P., Walker, K. et al. (2004). Organized youth activities as contexts for positive development. In P. A. Linley & S. Joseph (Eds.), *Positive psychology in practice* (pp. 540–560). New York: Wiley.

Lerner, J. V., Phelps, E., Forman, Y., & Bowers, E. P. (2009). Positive youth development. In R. M. Lerner & L. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology: Vol. 1. Individual bases of adolescent development* (3rd ed., pp. 524–558). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Lerner, R. M., & Steinberg, L. (2009). The scientific study of adolescent development: Historical and contemporary perspectives. In R. M. Lerner & L. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology: Vol. 1. Individual bases of adolescent development* (pp. 3–14). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Mahoney, J., Vandell, D., Simpkins, S., & Zarrett, N. (2009). Adolescent out-of-school activities. In R. M. Lerner & L. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology: Contextual influences on adolescent development* (3rd ed., Vol. 2, pp. 229–269). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Mumford, M. D., & Manley, G. G. (2003). Putting the development in leadership development: Implications for theory and practice. In S. E. Murphy & R. E. Riggio (Eds.), *The future of leadership development* (pp. 237–261). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Overton, W. F. (2010). Life-span development: Concepts and issues. In W. F. Overton (Vol. Ed.) & R. M. Lerner (Ed.), *Handbook of life-span development: Vol. 1. Biology, cognition and methods across the life-span* (3rd ed., pp. 1–29). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Ramey, H. L., & Rose-Krasnor, L. (in press). Contexts of structured youth activities and positive youth development. *Child Development Perspectives.*

Ross, L., Buglione, S., & Safford-Farquharson, J. (2011). Training the "wizards": A model for building self efficacy and peer networks among urban youth workers. *Child & Youth Services*, 32, 200–223. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0145935X. 2011.605310

Wheeler, W. (2000). Emerging organizational theory and the youth development

    organization. *Applied Developmental Science, 4,* 47–54.

Wong, N. T., Zimmerman, M. A., & Parker, E. A. (2010). A typology of youth

    participation and empowerment for child and adolescent health promotion.

    American Journal of Community Psychology, 46, 100-114. doi: 10.1007/s10464-

    010-9330-0

Zaff, J. F., Hart, D., Flanagan, C. A., Youniss, J., & Levine, P. (2010). Developing civic

    engagement within a civic context. In M. E. Lamb & A. M. Freund (Vol. Eds.) &

    R. M. Lerner (Ed.), *Handbook of life-span development: Vol. 2. Social and*

    Emotional Development (3rd ed., pp. 590–630). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Zeldin, S. (2004). Youth as agents of adult and community development: Mapping the

    processes and outcomes of youth engaged in organizational governance. *Applied*

    Developmental Science, 8, 75–90.

Zeldin, S., McDaniel, A. K., Topitzes, D., & Calvert, M. (2000). *Youth in decision-*

    making: A study on the impacts of youth on adults and organizations.

    Washington, DC: National 4-H Council.

Appendix A

Brock University Research Ethics Board Consent Email

QuickTime™ and a
decompressor
are needed to see this picture.
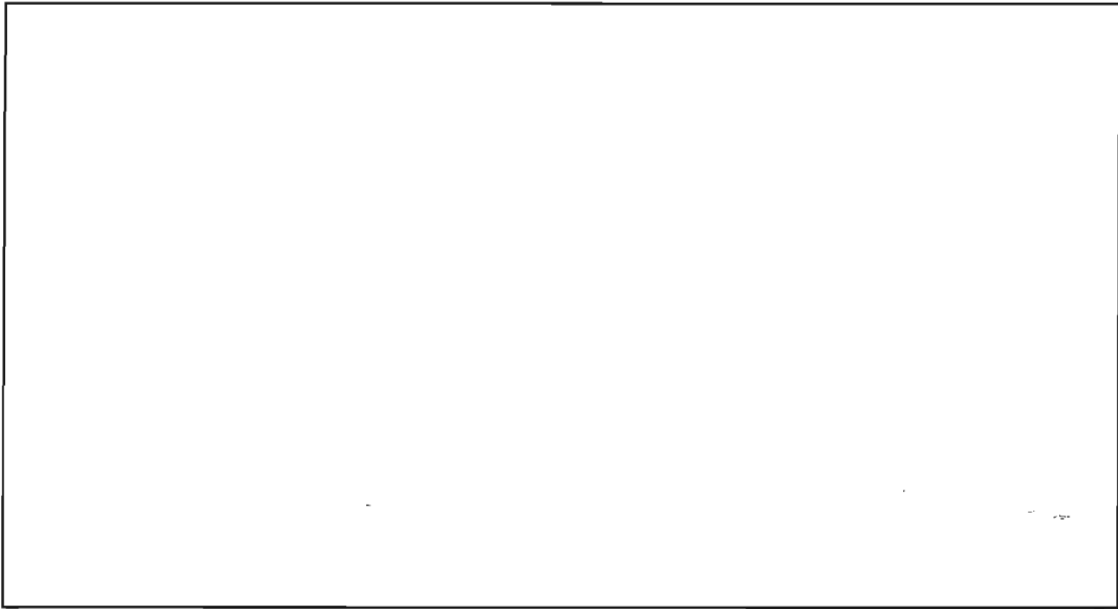
Appendix B

Abbreviated Qualitative Synthesis Appraisal Guide

Adapted from Sandelowski, M., & Barroso, J. (2002). Reading qualitative studies. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 1*, Article 5. Retrieved June 15, 2010 from http://www.ualberta.ca/~ijqm/

Reader
Approximate date of reading

Report
Identify citation
Identify publication type (e.g., authored/edited book, journal, dissertation)

1. Problem
There is a clear, discernible problem that led to the study, either explicitly stated or implied.

2. Purpose(s)/question(s)
There is a discernible set of research purposes and/or questions (e.g., goals, objectives, hypotheses), supported by the review of literature.

3. Literature review
Key studies are included, the review is related to the research problem, and points toward the research purpose.

4. Framework/Mindset toward target phenomenon
There is an explicitly stated or implied perspectives, assumptions, conceptual/theoretical frameworks, philosophies and/or other frames of reference, mindsets, or "theoretical sensitivities" guiding or informing researchers (e.g., feminism). The frame of reference fits with the study's approach

5. Method
There is a method (e.g., case study, grounded theory analysis), which fits the research purpose and is accurately rendered. Method may be stated explicitly or implicitly (e.g., phrases such as "lived experience" or Van Manen suggest phenomenology, and "theoretical sampling" or Strauss & Corbin suggest grounded theory).

6. Sampling strategy & techniques
The sampling plan, including recruitment method, fits the purpose and method.

7.   Sample
Sample size and configuration, including the age and number of youth, adults, and the number and type of organization(s), fit the purpose and sampling strategy and can support the findings. *There is at least one or more definable organization.*

8.   Data collection techniques & sources
Data collection techniques (e.g., interviews, focus groups, observations, documents) and sources are accurately rendered, correctly used, and fit the study. Look for descriptions of the orientation to, and/or manner of conducting data collection (e.g., external or internal observer).

Identify who is the reporter for organizational outcomes.

9.   Data management techniques
Data management techniques are described, correctly used, and fit the purposes of the study (e.g., preparation of field notes, transcripts of interviews, analytic approaches employed, such as discourse analysis).

Identify analytic technique.

10. Findings
There is a discernible set of results. Findings are sufficiently substantiated with data (e.g., quotes), offer new insights, fits the research purposes, and data are sufficiently analyzed and interpreted. Further, **findings are distinguished from data**, or the case descriptions, field notes, or quotes that support an interpretation, as opposed to indistinguishable as when the researcher presents several case histories but offers no interpretation of them. Findings will show varying levels of complexity.

Organizational outcomes include examples of advocacy/community change if these could be perceived as a sort of service provision (e.g., the organization has a mandate of improving the city's youth friendliness and a youth advisory team helps this to occur by providing feedback to other organizations, the organization has a mandate of protecting the environment and youth have successfully advocated the mayor's office for bylaw changes).

Summarize findings on organizational outcomes of youth involvement, according to three themes.

11. Discussion
Discussion of findings is based on the study findings previously described, linked to findings in other studies, linked to relevant literatures. The clinical, policy, theoretical, disciplinary, and/ or other significance of the findings is thoughtfully considered.

12. Validity
There is a discussion of techniques specifically intended to ensure that the study is scientifically and/or ethnographically valid or "good" and they fit the elements of the

study. For example, information about the strengths and limitations of a study, of specific topics such as reflexivity, reliability, rigor, credibility, and plausibility, and of specific procedures, such as member validation. Information about validity may be explicitly stated, or implied in discussions of sampling, the sample, data collection and analysis, and in the presentation of the findings. The distinctive limitations of the study are summarized (e.g., theoretical sampling could not be fully conducted in a grounded theory study; this is in contrast to summarizing and/or apologizing for the so-called limitations of qualitative research).

13. Ethics
Study gives no reason for concern about recruitment, consent techniques, incentives, data collection and management techniques fit the sensitivity of the subject matter and/or vulnerability of subjects.

Examples of data provided as evidence to support findings have analytical value and present subjects fairly.

14. Form
The overall literary style of the study fits its purpose, method, and findings, fits the audience for whom the report was produced. *The form of the study supports considering the findings as reflecting outcomes for youth involvement in decision-making on organizations.*

Appendix C

Abbreviated Appraisal of Qualitative Studies

(See following pages.)

Table A-1

Abbreviated Appraisal of Qualitative Studies

Report	Other Criteria (Y/N)	Method	Sample	Data Collection Technique	Data Management (Y/N/M)	Relevant Findings	Accept (Y/N/M)
1. Citation: Chen, P., Weiss, F. L., Nicholson, H. J., & Girls Incorporated®. (2010). Girls study Girls Inc.: Engaging girls in evaluation through participatory action research. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 46,* 228-237. Publication Type: journal article	Problem: Y Purpose: Y Lit review: Y Framework: Y Sampling strategy: Y Discussion: M Validity: N Ethics: Y Form: Y Note: At least two authors were internal, but PR.	Not identified. Evaluation of a PAR evaluation project.	Youth: The research team involved Girls Inc. members (10-20 in each site, ages 10-15). Adults: The research team involved program staff from affiliates and research staff from the national Girls Inc. organization. Number of youth and adults in group reflection is not reported. Organization(s): Girls Incorporated ® and five Girls Inc. affiliate sites. Girls Incorporated ® is a girl empowerment program that uses research-based programs and public education efforts.	Formal and informal documents, field notes, adult feedback forms, and a group reflection session with girls after PAR concluded.	N Not described.	Outcomes of YI for service provision: • Evaluation provided insight for future program development. Some specific recommendations from the PAR were acted upon. For example, result of recommendations for more science programs, one affiliate wrote grants to increase the funding for these programs. Outcomes of YI for staff/individuals: • Youth taught adult staff from other sites how to engage girls in participatory evaluation. • Adults gained new understanding of youth's developmental needs and capacity for growth. Outcomes of YI for general organization: • The PAR re-affirmed the Girls Inc. organization's philosophy and approach to empowering girls	Y

Report	Other Criteria (Y/N)	Method	Sample	Data Collection Technique	Data Management (Y/N/M)	Relevant Findings	Accept (Y/N/M)
2. Citation: Christens, B.D., & Dolan, T. (2011). Interweaving youth development, community development, and social change through youth organizing. Youth & Society.

Publication Type: journal article | Problem: Y Purpose: Y Lit review: Y Framework: N

Sampling strategy: Y Discussion: M Validity: N Ethics: Y Form: Y

Note: One author internal, but PR. | Case study | Youth: 20 young leaders, ages 16-20, involved in community organizing.

Adults: 2 non-staff adult supporters, one former adult staff member.

Organization(s): One: Inland Congregations United for Change (ICUC), which engages people in community change through faith-based institutions | Organizational documents, interviews. | Y

Selective coding according to themes. | Outcomes of YI for service provision:
• Improved program implementation. Youth organizers pushed schools to implement new antiviolence programs, influenced the city to have greater youth involvement, change community policing.
• Established policy change, such as a youth council (later disbanded) and progress toward a community labor agreement.
• Older youth mentoring younger youth's leadership skills.
Outcomes of YI for staff/individuals:
• None described.
Outcomes of YI for general organization:
• Institution building, by creating a reputation for themselves and the organization as a well-respected and powerful institution.
• More equitable relationships with between youth in the organization and adults in power in the community. | Y |

Report	Other Criteria (Y/N)	Method	Sample	Data Collection Technique	Data Management (Y/N/M)	Relevant Findings	Accept (Y/N/M)
3. Citation: Conner, J. O., & Strobel, K. (2007). Leadership development: An examination of individual and programmatic growth. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 22*, 275-297. Publication Type: journal article	Problem: Y Purpose: Y Lit review: Y Framework: M Sampling strategy: Y Discussion: M Validity: N Ethics: Y Form: Y Note: Authors appear to be connected to organization, but PR.	Embedded case study	Youth: Youth appear range in ages from grade 8 through high school. Study focused on two Latina youth in YELL, beginning in grade 8 and studied over 3 years. Adults: Staff. Four adults were included in interviews. Organization(s): Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL), an after-school program in which youth are trained to study issues to make policy recommendations.	Interviews with youth and staff, focus groups, field notes	Y Described as an in vivo coding system consistent with grounded theory, data coded and analyzed for themes.	Outcomes of YI for service provision: • Structured opportunities were developed for youth to offer their own feedback about programs. • Changes to program curriculum to incorporate goal setting and self-reflection exercises • Development of an "open door" policy for youth to always be welcomed back into program. Outcomes of YI for staff/individuals: • Adults became more aware of giving feedback to youth, informally and in structured meetings throughout the year. • Organizational directors became intentional in monitoring how opportunities were offered to youth and in ensuring that youth received attention and adults were connected with and informed about individual youth. Outcomes of YI for general organization: • Greater recognition and emphasis on a variety of leadership skills, with youth and in staff meetings.	Y

Report	Other Criteria (Y/N)	Method	Sample	Data Collection Technique	Data Management (Y/N/M)	Relevant Findings	Accept (Y/N/M)
4. Citation: Princes, M. R. (2008). Youth/adult perspectives: The involvement of youth in non-profit youth organization decision-making processes. Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences Vol 69(8-A), pp. 3348. Publication Type: Dissertatio	Problem: Y Purpose: Y Lit review: Y Framework: M Sampling strategy: Y Discussion: Y Validity: Y Ethics: Y Form: M Note: Evaluator/ researcher was external to organization.	Mixed methods participatory study. Findings on organizational outcomes were a result of focus groups.	Youth: Girls ages 12-17, involved in operational decision-making and evaluation in two programs within the organization: a substance abuse prevention program and an adolescent pregnancy prevention program. 16 youth participated in focus groups. Adults: Current program staff. Findings on organizational outcomes were a result of focus groups with 6 staff, ages 25 through 58. Organization(s): A youth-based organization for girls, offering informal educational programs in a variety of areas (e.g., leadership, health, sports).	Focus groups, survey.	Y Qualitative data were coded according to themes.	Outcomes of YI for service provision: Outcomes of YI for staff/individuals: Outcomes of YI for general organization: **Findings described why staff felt that youth involvement in decision-making is important, because of the outcomes it *can* have. Participants did not clearly state that these were outcomes that had actually occurred in their organization.**	N

Report	Other Criteria (Y/N)	Method	Sample	Data Collection Technique	Data Management (Y/N/M)	Relevant Findings	Accept (Y/N/M)
5. Citation: Trinidad, Alma M. O. (2009). Toward kuleana (responsibility): A case study of a contextually grounded intervention for Native Hawaiian youth and young adults. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 14*, 488-498. * one little potential outcome Publication Type: Journal article	Problem: Y Purpose: Y Lit review: Y Framework: Y Sampling strategy: N Discussion: Validity: Y Ethics: Y Form: Y	Case study	Youth: 4 youth ages 17 to 21 participated in the study. Youth were involved in leading a farm and a youth garden, and in event planning and implementation. Adults: 2 parents, one board member, one person who was a parent and board member, and one community advocate. Adult ages ranged from 28 to 55. Organization(s): A community-based nonprofit organization with a goal of moving the community toward self-sufficiency, especially with regard to food.	Interviews	Y Grounded theory analysis	Outcomes of YI for service provision: Outcomes of YI for staff/individuals: Outcomes of YI for general organization: **A description of the process of involving youth and of the general program.** **Not focused on outcomes.**	N

Appendix D
Categorized Description of Organization Types

Child, Youth, and Family Services (8 organizations)
Organizations offering services for prevention and intervention of problems, including mental health services and child protection

Health (6 organizations)
Community, public, and family health centres and services

Child & Youth Services (4 organizations)
Community neighbourhood services specifically for children and youth

Sports and recreation (4 organizations)
Community recreation services with a primary focus on sports and physical fitness, or specific sports activities

Cultural or Neighborhood Community Services (3 organizations)
Neighbourhood community centres, with clubs and regular events based on local interests (e.g., cooking, music), and services and centres with a specific cultural focus (e.g., newcomers, Francophones)

Government (2 organizations)
Local government organizations, representing cities or townships

School Boards (2 organizations)
Catholic and public school boards

Youth Advocacy (2 organizations)
Youth-adult partnerships, advocating for greater youth engagement in general or for specific causes

Employment and Training (1 organization)
Organizations offering support for people attempting to find employment, through job postings, job training, and other employee resources

Legal (1 organization)
Community support services offering alternative measures services for those charged with an offense, support and information for youth and adults charged with a criminal offense, and some preventive services

Arts-Based (1 organization)
Arts-based organizations with resources, training, and opportunities for youth interested in visual, written, media, or other arts

Appendix E
Sample Descriptions of Participating Organizations

Note. Descriptions are of organizational activities during the data collection period.

Organization 1
This organization provides over 20 services to youth, including breakfast and dinner programs, a food bank, employment programs, services for such as leadership and self-care programs for youth at risk of gang involvement, and fundraising events. Youth from the community and youth who use the organizations services are encouraged to be involved in decision making in most of the organization's programs.

Organization 2
This organization hosts an annual summit, and holds advocacy events to share information about the tobacco industry's tobacco promotion, and to protect children and youth from the tobacco industry. It followed a youth-led, adult-guided model of youth programming.

Organization 3
This organization offers life skills programs to youth, to support them around their transition into living independently. Training included budgeting, problem solving, communication, and job readiness. The organization is described as youth driven and youth led, and the program is designed according to youth-identified needs.

Organization 4
This organization promotes mental health and prevents mental illness through youth-led discussion groups and mental health screening. The organization also had a youth advisory team, to inform the larger organization and participate in and lead other community projects related to positive youth mental health.

Organization 5
This organization has a wide range of programs in multiple locations across the county. Youth can be involved in recreation facilities, leadership development programs, daycares, and youth employment and internship programs.

Appendix F
Youth and Adult Participant Frequency by Organization

Table A-2

Youth and Adult Participant Frequency by Organization

Organization Code	Number of Participants	
	Adults	Youth
Organizations with adult and youth participants		
1	1	28
2	2	10
3	4	1
25	6	5
26	2	13
27	2	2
31	2	1
34	9	11
Subtotal:	28	71
	(8 organizations)	
Organizations with adult but no youth participants		
4	1	0
5	2	0
6	5	0
7	4	0
8	4	0
9	3	0
10	2	0
11	3	0
12	2	0
13	1	0
14	2	0
15	1	0
16	1	0
17	1	0
18	1	0
19	1	0
20	1	0
21	1	0
22	1	0
23	1	0
24	1	0
28	1	0
29	1	0
30	1	0
32	1	0

33	1	0
Subtotal:	44	0
	(26 organizations)	

Organizations with youth but no adult participants

35	0	1
36	0	1
37	0	22
38	0	11
39	0	24
40	0	1
41	0	1
42	0	1
43	0	1
44	0	1
45	0	1
Subtotal:	0	65
		(11 organizations)

Appendix G
Sample Youth and Adult Consent/Assent Forms

<div align="center">Youth Consent Form (14 and older)</div>

INVITATION

If you are a youth involved at an organization in Simcoe County, we invite you to be part of this research project.

WHO WE ARE

We are researchers with the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement and Brock University, and staff from the Youth Engagement Task Group in Simcoe County.

WHY SHOULD I FILL OUT THE SURVEY?

Organizations in Simcoe County are trying to do a better job of getting youth involved in services. This survey will help them to learn about whether what they are doing is working, and how they can improve. The survey will also help researchers learn more about youth engagement, and what happens when adults and youth work together.

WHAT'S INVOLVED

If you decide to help us in our research, you will fill out a survey that will take about 30 minutes. There are questions about your involvement with this organization, skills that you have and ways you do things like make decisions, and general information about you, such as your age. We will also ask for your email address and we will email you to invite you to participate in follow-up surveys every six months, about three times in total. This will help us to see how youth engagement changes over time.

DO I HAVE TO FILL OUT THE SURVEY?

No, you do not have to do the survey or answer any questions that you do not want to answer. And, even if you decide to take part in the survey the first time, you do not have to take part in it again. The organization will not know whether you fill out the survey and your decision will not affect your involvement with them.

WILL ANYONE BE ABLE TO TELL WHAT I ANSWER?

We will ask for your name and contact information. That will let us contact you again in the future and will let us send you information about what we found out, but your name will be kept separate from your survey answers. When we do reports we will take all of the surveys and report the results for everyone as a group. **All your answers will be kept confidential**.

We will keep the surveys and computer files of the data at Brock University. The surveys will be kept for at least five years and the computer files will be kept until all of our analyses are finished. We might keep some data, without your name and identifying information, to answer other questions we have in the future. Researchers at the Centre and Brock University, their assistants, and students will be able to use this computer data. As well, the online survey will be completed on the website XX. XX is a U.S. owned company, and therefore, responses are subject to the Patriot Act. Any disclosure of your survey data because of the Patriot Act would be extremely rare, however, we are obligated to provide you with this information.

WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THE RESULTS?

The results will be presented in reports, which may be found in scientific journals, put onto websites, shared in workshops and conferences, and shared with the organizations where you are involved. If we have your email address, we will also email you reports. You might be interested in learning more about how other youth are engaged at organizations.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS IN FILLING OUT THE SURVEY?

In participating in this survey, you will be asked to share information about your experiences. We don't think there are any more risks in filling out the survey than you might experience in everyday life, but if you have any concerns, let us know or talk to one of the adults at the organization where you're involved.

WHO SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Heather Ramey or Linda Rose-Krasnor. The Research Ethics Board at Brock University (File #09-xxx) has given this project ethics clearance. If you have any concerns about being in the research, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550, ext. 3035, or reb@brocku.ca.

Heather Ramey, PhD Candidate
Psychology Department
Brock University
905-688-5550, ext. 4455
heather.ramey@brocku.ca

Linda Rose-Krasnor, PhD
Psychology Department
Brock University
905-688-5550, ext. 3870
linda.rose-krasnor@brocku.ca

I have read and understand the information above and understand that I can ask questions at any time. I agree to participate in this survey: ☐

Thank You!

Please print or keep a copy of this form in case you need to reach us.

Youth Assent Form (12 or 13 years of age)

If you are a youth involved at an organization in Simcoe County, we invite you to be part of this research project.

This questionnaire looks at what you and other youth your age do when they are involved at organizations. We want to know what happens when youth and adults work together. We know that not everyone feels the same way or does the same things. We are interested in your answers to the questions in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire is completely private. We will keep your name separate from your answers. No one except the researchers will know who answered, so please be as honest as you can. If there is a question that you do not know how to answer or do not want to answer, that's okay, just go on to the next one.

We will also ask for your email address, and we will send you an email to invite you to complete follow-up surveys about every six months, about three times in total. This will help us to see things might change over time.

If you have any questions or concerns, please talk to a staff at your organization, or call or email one of the people below:

Heather Ramey
Brock University
905-688-5550, ext. 4455
heather.ramey@brocku.ca

Linda Rose-Krasnor
905-688-5550, ext. 3870
linda.rose-krasnor@brocku.ca

<Link to parent/guardian permission form>

My parent or guardian has filled out the permission form and I agree to participate in this survey:
☐

Thank You!

Please print or keep a copy of this form to keep in case you need to reach us.

Parental Consent Form (Youth 12 or 13)

INVITATION

If your child is involved at an organization in Simcoe County, we invite him or her to be part of this research project.

WHO WE ARE

We are researchers with the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement and Brock University, and staff from the Youth Engagement Task Group in Simcoe County.

WHY SHOULD MY CHILD FILL OUT THE SURVEY?

Organizations in Simcoe County are trying to do a better job of getting youth involved in services. This survey will help them to learn about whether what they are doing is working, and how they can improve. The survey will also help researchers learn more about youth engagement, and what happens when adults and youth work together.

WHAT'S INVOLVED

If you decide to allow your child to help us in our research, and if your child also consents to participate, he or she will fill out a survey that will take about 30 minutes. There are questions about your child's involvement with this organization, skills that he or she has and ways they do things like make decisions, and general information about your child, such as his or her age. We will also ask for your child's email address, and we will email your child to invite him or her to participate in follow-up surveys every six months, about three times in total. This will help us to see how youth engagement changes over time.

DOES MY CHILD HAVE TO FILL OUT THE SURVEY?

No, your child does not have to do the survey or answer any questions that he or she does not want to answer. And, even if your child takes part in the survey the first time, he or she does not have to take part in it again. The organization will not know whether you consent or whether your child fills out the survey and your decision will not affect your child's involvement with them.

WILL ANYONE BE ABLE TO TELL WHAT MY CHILD ANSWERS?

We will ask for your child's name and contact information. That will let us contact your child again for future surveys, and let us send your child information about what we found out, but your child's name will be kept separate from their survey answers. When we do reports we will take all of the surveys and report the results for everyone as a group. **All answers will be kept confidential.**

We will keep the surveys and computer files of the data at Brock University. The surveys will be kept for at least five years and the computer files will be kept until all of our analyses are finished. We might keep some data, without your child's name and identifying information, to answer other research questions we have in the future. Researchers at the Centre and Brock University, their assistants, and students will be able to use this computer data. As well, the online survey will be completed on the website XX. XX is a U.S. owned company, and therefore, reponses are subject to the Patriot Act. Any disclosure of your child's survey data because of the Patriot Act would be extremely rare, however, we are obligated to provide you with this information.

WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THE RESULTS?

The results will be presented in reports, which may be found in scientific journals, put onto websites, shared in workshops and conferences, and shared with the organizations where your child is involved. If we

have your child's email address, we will also email reports. Your child might be interested in learning more about how other youth are engaged at organizations.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO MY CHILD IN FILLING OUT THE SURVEY?

In participating in this survey, your child will be asked to share information about his or her experiences. We don't think there are any more risks in filling out the survey than your child might experience in everyday life, but if you or your child has any concerns, we hope your child will let us know or talk to one of the adults at the organization where they're involved.

WHO SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Heather Ramey or Linda Rose-Krasnor. The Research Ethics Board at Brock University (File #09-xxx) has given this project ethics clearance. If you have any concerns about being in the research, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550, ext. 3035, or reb@brocku.ca.

Heather Ramey, PhD Candidate
Psychology Department
Brock University
905-688-5550, ext. 4455
heather.ramey@brocku.ca

Linda Rose-Krasnor, PhD
Psychology Department
Brock University
905-688-5550, ext. 3870
linda.rose-krasnor@brocku.ca

Staff and Management Consent Form

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS SURVEY?

In 2007 the Child, Youth and Family Services Coalition of Simcoe County formed a Youth Engagement Task Force. As defined by the Task Force, the purposes of the Youth Engagement project are as follows:
- build community capacity to engage youth in meaningful partnerships
- establish an overarching youth engagement strategy that would support youth engagement activities within and across agencies and sectors.

The Youth Engagement strategy includes steps to accomplish the following: (a) gather baseline data toward the completion of a report of the current state of youth engagement in Simcoe County; (b) develop a collaborative framework for a Youth Engagement strategy; (c) make the framework available to and support organizations who wish to implement it; and (d) conduct ongoing research to evaluate and improve Simcoe County's organizational capacity for youth engagement. This survey is the first step in gathering data to understand youth engagement in Simcoe County. In the future, we also are hoping to collect data from youth and use the information from both adults and young people to learn more about the engagement process.

WHO ARE WE?

We are a group of youth and adults from the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement. The Youth Engagement Task Force has invited us to partner with them in this project, in an effort to better engage youth and serve their needs in Simcoe County. The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement is a partnership of youth, youth-serving organizations, researchers, and adult supporters from across Canada, under the leadership of the Students Commission in Toronto and Brock University in St. Catharines. Our overall goal is to help understand and encourage youth involvement in activities that are meaningful to them and will lead to healthy development. Our Centre is partially funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada. We are asking for your help in obtaining more information about youth engagement in programs and services in
Simcoe County.

HOW DO WE DEFINE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT?

Youth engagement is the meaningful and sustained involvement of a young person in an activity focusing outside the self. It has three components: behavioural (e.g., going to an activity, attending a group), affective (e.g., caring about the activity, getting excited when the youth group is going well and getting frustrated when it is not); and cognitive (e.g., learning about the activity context, understanding more about the ways people interact).

WHAT'S INVOLVED

The online survey will take about 30 minutes to complete. It includes questions about your experiences working in your organization, engaging youth, and/or managing staff who have experience engaging youth. We also ask some personal questions (about age, personality, and beliefs, for example), in order to help understand how involvement may not be the same for everyone. Finally, we ask questions to help us obtain information about youth organizations and the types of support your organization has in place to engage youth effectively. You also will be invited to participate in follow-up surveys every six months, for three times in total. This will help us track, on an ongoing basis, how your organization is doing with respect to developing an organizational culture that fosters adult-youth partnerships and youth engagement.

WHY DO IT?

Your input is considered valuable to child, youth, and family services in Simcoe County, and will be used to develop a youth engagement framework. We hope that this framework will be useful tool for you in your

work. Your experiences and ideas will also contribute to the work of researchers, youth, and people in other organizations who would like to know more about youth engagement.

RISKS, VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION, AND CONFIDENTIALITY

In participating in this survey, you will be asked to share information about your experiences. Although this information will be treated as confidential, some participants may be concerned that the information they disclose may cause them to lose status or be embarrassed. Participation in this study is voluntary and will not affect your involvement in your organization, the Child, Youth and Family Services Coalition, or the Youth Engagement Task Force. All personal information will be kept strictly confidential. Your decision to participate will be held in confidence; members of the Coalition, the Task Force and management at participating organizations will not know which staff have agreed to complete the survey. If you choose to participate, you do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable and you can stop doing this study at any time.

All information will be stored in secure locations and only the Simcoe County Youth Engagement Task Force, Centre of Excellence, and Brock University researchers will be able to use it. The Task Force will not have access to identifying information. Identifying information will be separated from survey data and only a code number will be stored with your survey. Only the project and computer managers will be able to match your name with your survey responses and we will not use names in any of our reports. We will keep the computer files of the data (without names) for possible future analyses; the surveys will be kept for at least seven years after publication of reports and then destroyed. Researchers at the Centre and Brock University, their assistants, and students will be able to use this computer data. As well, the online survey will be completed on the website Zoomerang. Zoomerang is a U.S. owned company, and therefore, responses are subject to the *Patriot Act*. Any disclosure of your survey data because of the *Patriot Act* would be extremely rare, however, we are obligated to provide you with this information.

RESULTS

The information we collect will be summarized in reports, which may be published in scientific journals, reports of the Child, Youth and Family Services Coalition of Simcoe County and the Youth Engagement Task Force, and Centre publications and websites, and/or presentations at conferences. We will share the results from this project with you through interim and final reports.

ETHICS CLEARANCE

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University (File # 08-012). If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 ext. 3035 or reb@brocku.ca.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For any other questions please contact:

Heather Ramey, PhD Candidate
Psychology Department
Brock University
905 688-5550 ext. 4455
heather.ramey@brocku.ca

Linda Rose-Krasnor, PhD
Professor and Faculty
Supervisor
Psychology Department
Brock University
905 688-5550 ext. 3870

linda.rose-krasnor@brocku.ca

Stoney McCart
Executive Director
Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement
416 597-8297
stoney@tgmag.ca

CONSENT

I agree to be part of the study described above based on the information I have read. I have had the chance to ask questions about the study and I know that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may change my mind and stop being in the study at any time. Thank you for your help in this project. Please print a copy of this form to keep in case you need to reach us.

☐Click here if you agree to participate and you will be directed to the survey.

This research was commissioned by The Youth Engagement Task Force of the Child, Youth and Family Services Coalition of Simcoe County. The content does not necessarily represent the views of members of the Task Force or the Coalition, or their affiliated agencies.

Appendix H

Youth Measures

<center>

Control Variables

</center>

1. How long have you been involved?

- ☐ Just started
- ☐ 1 to 5 months
- ☐ 6 months to 1 year
- ☐ 2 to 3 years
- ☐ 4 to 5 years
- ☐ More than 5 years

2. What is your date of birth (e.g., January 15, 1993)?

3. What is your gender?

- ☐ female
- ☐ male
- ☐ transgender

4. If you are still in school, what kind of marks do you usually get?
(If you're not in school because you graduated or dropped out, what kind of marks did you usually get?)

- ☐ 90%-100%
- ☐ 80%-89%
- ☐ 70%-79%
- ☐ 60%-69%
- ☐ 50%-59%
- ☐ Below 50%

16. What's the highest grade your mother or female guardian completed?

- ☐ Did not finish high school
- ☐ Finished high school
- ☐ Some college or university
- ☐ Finished college or university
- ☐ Finished post-graduate or professional degree

Youth Involvement in Organizational Decision Making
(Youth Voice Survey; Wade Cater, 2006)

Rate your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements as it pertains to the activities you are involved in at your organization.

Response range: strongly disagree   disagree   neutral   agree   strongly agree

1. I make decisions about what we do in these activities.
2. I want to be a part of these activities.
3. I have influence in these activities.
4. I am proud of the work we do in these activities.
5. I think the activities that we are involved in with this organization are valuable.
6. I am an active participant in these activities.
7. My attendance at meetings is important.
8. I feel good about myself when I am involved in these activities.
9. It is important that I participate in meetings.
10. I can make a difference through my work in these activities.
11. I help choose the projects in which we are involved.
12. I am an active participant in planning our group's projects.
13. I am an equal partner with the adults who are involved in these activities.
14. Adults in these activities listen to what I have to say.
15. Adults in these activities involve youth in making decisions about the activities.
16. My ideas are heard by adults who are involved in these activities.
17. My ideas are respected by adults who are involved in these activities.
18. I help adults better understand youth.
19. Adults view me as a valuable resource.
20. I feel connected to an adult in these activities.
21. I trust the adults who are involved in these activities.

Initiative
(International Personality Item Pool; VIA-Youth; Park & Peterson, 2006)

Response range: not at all like me   2   3   4   very much like me

Please read each statement carefully and choose the option that best describes you in general.

1. I give up at things too easily.
2. When I start a project, I always finish it.
3. I keep at my homework (or other work I am doing) until I am done with it.
4. Whenever I do something, I put all my effort into it.
5. I keep trying even after I fail.
6. I don't put things off for tomorrow if I can do them today.
7. People can count on me to get things done.
8. I am a hard worker.

Appendix I

Adult/Organizational Measures

Youth Involvement in Organizational Decision Making
(adapted from Shier, 2001)

Please select the level that best describes your organization.

1. Adult Readiness for Youth Involvement in Your Organization

☐ *Youth share power and responsibility for decision making.* Adults are ready to share some of the adult power with youth.

☐ *Youth are involved in the decision making process.* Adults are ready to let youth join in decision making.

☐ *Youth's views are taken into account.* Adults are ready to take youth views into account.

☐ *Youth are supported in expressing their views.* Adults are ready to support youth in expressing their views.

☐ *Youth are listened to.* Adults are ready to listen to youth.

☐ *Youth are not listened to.* Adults do not listen to youth.

2. Organizational Opportunities for Youth Involvement

☐ *Youth share power and responsibility for decision making.* There are opportunities or procedures that enable youth and adults to share power and responsibility for decisions.

☐ *Youth are involved in the decision making process.* There are opportunities that enable youth to join in decision making processes.

☐ *Youth's views are taken into account.* The decision making process enables adults to take youth views into account.

☐ *Youth are supported in expressing their views.* Adults have a range of ideas and activities to help youth express their views.

☐ *Youth are listened to.* Adults work in a way that enables them to listen to youth.

☐ *Youth are not listened to.* Adults work in a way that does not include listening to youth.

3. Organizational Policy on Youth Engagement

☐ *Youth share power and responsibility for decision making.* There is a policy requirement that enables youth and adults to share power and responsibility for decision making.

☐ *Youth are involved in the decision making process.* There is a policy requirement that youth's views must be given due weight in decision making.

- *Youth's views are taken into account.* There is a policy requirement that youth's views be given due weight in decision making.
- *Youth are supported in expressing their views.* There is a policy requirement that youth must be supported in expressing their views.
- *Youth are listened to.* There is a policy requirement that youth must be listened to.
- *Youth are not listened to.* There is no policy in place that youth must be consulted in decisions affecting them.

Dimensions of the Learning Organization
(DLOQ-A; Marsick & Watkins, 2003)

Please tell us about your organization at this point in time.
(Please note, these questions are about your organization's functioning in general.)

Response range: almost never   2   3   4   5   almost always

1. In my organization, people help each other learn.

2. In my organization, people are given time to support learning.

3. In my organization, people are rewarded for learning.

4. In my organization, people give open and honest feedback to each other.

5. In my organization, whenever people state their view, they also ask what others think.

6. In my organization, people spend time building trust with each other.

7. In my organization, teams/groups have the freedom to adapt their goals as needed.

8. In my organization, teams/groups revise their thinking as a result of group discussions or information collected.

9. In my organization, teams/groups are confident that the organization will act on their recommendations.

10. My organization recognizes people for taking initiative.

11. My organization gives people control over the resources they need to accomplish their work.

12. My organization supports employees who take calculated risks.

13. My organization makes its lessons learned available to employees.

14. My organization works together with the outside community to meet mutual needs.

15. In my organization, leaders continually look for opportunities to learn.