**MOVING THE DIAL ON YOUTH WELLBEING**

*A YouthREX Research to Practice Report*

# Changing Leaders, Leading Change

*A leadership development model for marginalized youth in urban communities*

**By Rebecca Houwer**

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## ABSTRACT

This report identifies and responds to the demographic urgency for supporting long-term approaches that enable urban youth in marginalized communities to reach their full potential. With particular attention given to addressing the structural effects of marginalization through youth leadership development initiatives, the report surveys current theories and evidence on youth leadership development which it draws on in order to determine key elements of an urban youth leadership development model. It suggests approaches to evaluating the outcomes and impacts of such a model, and identifies critical knowledge gaps where more research is needed.

## KEYWORDS

Youth leadership development, critical youth work, positive youth development, community development, youth civic engagement, youth activism, community organizing

## RESEARCH TO PRACTICE REPORTS

*Moving the Dial on Youth Wellbeing* is a series of multi-source plain language Research to Practice reports that selectively review, synthesize and translate practice-relevant research, evaluation and experiential evidence applicable to the work of youth sector stakeholders across Ontario.

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"Not only do youth have the most at stake in addressing the problems that plague our social systems, but also they have important ideas and insights to contribute to the formation and advancement of reform agendas." [1]

"…We herald a deep shift in thinking and practice that regards [Canada's urban] youth not just as assets and resources, but also as leaders and stakeholders in communities."[2]
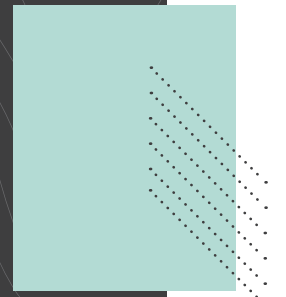
# 1.0 // INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT SETTING

*Youth leadership development opportunities benefit young individuals, their communities, and society. However, many young people face barriers to accessing, developing, and fulfilling their leadership potential.*

The benefits of youth leadership development are often framed in terms of an investment in the future of the nation state.[3] But it is important to recognize, as well, that youth participation in multiple sectors as leaders provides an array of private and public benefits in the here and now. The past twenty years have seen a shift in approach to youth development. Prior to the 1990's, institutions predominantly interacted with youth in terms of their challenges, considering them "problems to be solved". The previous risk-prevention and deficit-driven agenda has been replaced by asset-promoting strength-based approaches typical of programs grounded in positive youth development (PYD). PYD reframes notions of healthy youth development beyond a narrow focus on "problem-free" to include the cultivation of skills, behaviors, and competencies that advance youth opportunities to succeed in employment, education, and civic life.

The mantra, "problem-free is not fully prepared," encapsulates the PYD position. Unlike risk-deterrence initiatives designed to prevent, reduce, or stay potentially negative behaviour and health outcomes for youth, PYD positions youth as "community assets" to be broadly supported and nurtured through investment in and provision of individual and community developmental opportunities. The intention of this report is to focus specifically on the relationship between

PYD and youth leadership theory and practice in order to propose a model that supports the active contributions of youth, particularly those who are structurally marginalized from leadership opportunities, across all sectors of public life.

## 1.1 CONTEXT

Despite broad recognition of the value of PYD approaches in Ontario generally, and Toronto specifically, adoption and implementation of PYD has been slow and fragmented.[4] However, this is changing as evidenced by Ontario's Youth Action Plan (OYAP and E-OYAP) and Youth Opportunities Strategy which includes multiple complimentary streams of investment.[5] These policies represent a significant commitment to investing in the youth-led and youth-serving sector in order to bolster the individual and community level impacts of PYD and leadership opportunities for youth, particularly for those youth who are most at-risk of marginalization from social support systems.

The potential of youth leadership and youth leadership development has been identified as the second wave of a shift away from reactive risk management toward proactive asset-driven approaches to youth and community development. Maio and Soung (2003) assert that recognition of the importance of youth leadership development is an evolution in the paradigm shift initiated by PYD.  For Maio and Soung, as well as many others,[6] youth leadership development serves a public and private good: "it is fundamental to healthy youth and community development, especially for low-income youth" (p. 2).

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[1] Conner & Strobel, 2007.

[2] Miao & Soung, 2003.

[3] Gordon & Taft, 2010; Ilkiw 2010; MacNeil, 2006; McKay, 2009; Borden & Serido, 2009.

[4] Virani, 2008; Cohen & McDonough, 2012.

[5] See http://news.ontario.ca/mcys/en/2015/06/ontarios-enhanced-youth-action-plan.html

[6] See Mckay, 2011; Christens & Dolen, 2011; Delgado & Staples, 2008; Jones, 2009; Gordon & Taft. 2010; Hoyt, 2008; Lewis-Charp et. al., 2003; Detzler et. al., 2007; Evans & Prilleltensky, 2005. Lerner, Alberts, Jelicic & Smith, 2006; Fisher et al, 2012; Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008.

**FIGURE 1.0**

| URBANIZATION | On July 2014, almost 7 in 10 Canadians, or 24,858,600 people, were living in a census metropolitan area (Statistics Canada, 2015). |
| --- | --- |
| | More than half (54%) of Canada's racialized population lives in Ontario (National Council on Welfare, 2013). |
| | In 2006, 78% of all youth lived in urban areas (Butler-Jones, 2011). |
| ETHNIC DIVERSIFICATION | 8 out of 10 immigrants arriving in the Greater Toronto Area are identified as minorities (Toronto Vital Signs, 2012). |
| | By 2031, 63% of the GTA's population will be visible minorities (Toronto Vital Signs, 2013). |
| | 38% of the racialized population is under 25 years old, compared to 30% of the non-racialized population (National Council on Welfare, 2013). |
| RACIALIZATION OF POVERTY | Visible minorities and immigrants are highly overrepresented in entry-level work, which offers low pay and little opportunity to advance (Toronto Vital Signs, 2013). |
| | Almost 60 % of low-income families in Toronto are from racialized groups (Toronto, Vital Signs, 2013). |
| | The population of racialized persons living in poverty is young. Almost half (46%) are less than 25 years old. (National Council on Welfare, 2013) |
| | Racialized youth are less likely to be in the labour force: "Among youth aged 15 to 24 years and living in poverty, racialized youth had lower rates of labour force participation and employment than other youth." (National Council on Welfare, 2013) |
| REPRESENTATION | Visible minorities comprise 40% of the population across the GTA, but only 11% of elected officials across all three levels of government (Siemiatycki, M., 2011). |
| | Visible minorities are woefully under-represented at the municipal level – Only 7% of all 253 municipal council members in the GTA are visible minorities (Siemiatycki, M., 2011). |
| | In 2014 visible minorities represented 53.7% of the GTA but only 12.8% of the senior leadership positions (Diversity Institute, 2014). |
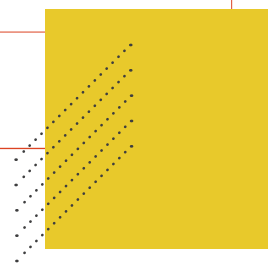
It is essential that we shift from thinking only that "leadership development is good for youth"[7] to recognizing that youth leadership development and practice is good for communities, organizations, cities, and supports positive private and public processes and outcomes.

At the very least, opportunities for youth to exercise their leadership potential demonstrates a commitment to democratic principles and practices that recognize youth as valuable community members, current contributors to civic life, and as present rather than future citizens.[8] Indeed, the need for youth leadership development, specifically of urban and marginalized youth, has never been timelier. There is a demographic shift taking place across Canada exemplified by data from Toronto that tells a story about the state of our democracy and also intersects with issues of leadership, access and representation (Figure 1).

It is clear that across all sectors, for both adults and youth, our leadership is not reflective of our diversity.[9] There is a tremendous need to create leadership opportunities for people experiencing conditions of social exclusion. Leaders from structurally marginalized communities are better able to understand and respond to community needs.  In 2004, the United Way of Toronto sponsored a watershed report entitled Poverty by Postal Code which advocated for the "strong need to build community capacity in low-income disadvantaged neighbourhoods, by promoting partnerships among local organizations and residents so that residents

can build the leadership skills and knowledge necessary to advance the interests of the community."[10] Youth are among the residents that need to be included in the work of advancing community interests. Without the inclusion of youth, we develop only partial solutions, potentially ineffective responses, and risk alienating a significant segment of the urban population.

Contrary to pervasive stereotypes and media messages lamenting youth apathy, research demonstrates that youth want to contribute to their communities and that doing so provides them not only with pro-social skills, attitudes, and knowledge but with "a sense of mattering" and feelings of self-efficacy.[11] Opportunities for civic engagement through leadership help to cultivate a social identity that combats the deleterious effects of social exclusion.[12] Toronto's recent Youth Equity Strategy puts forward this vision: "all youth can equally pursue their hopes, dreams and aspirations free of barriers based on race, gender, economic status, geography and fear, and have the opportunity to meaningfully contribute to Toronto's strength, vitality and governance".[13] The Youth Equity Framework commits to develop an "age-friendly city" and to employ an equity lens to promote youth development and meaningful inclusion based on a PYD approach. The City of Toronto, the United Way of Toronto, the Ontario Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities, the Trillium Foundation, and the Toronto District School Board, among others, recognize that meaningful youth inclusion must include opportunities for youth to participate in "the planning, decision-making and program delivery of all the important parts of our system – our government, our organizations and our communities."[14]

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[7] MacNeil, 2006, p. 35.

[8] Gordon & Taft, 2010.

[9] Toronto Vital Signs, 2012.

[10] Way, 2004, p. 7.

[11] Jones, 2009.

[12] Anyon, Ghosh, Mikelson, 2007; Galabuzi, 2004.

[13] City of Toronto, 2013.

[14] City of Toronto, 2013, see also Cohen & McDonough, 2012; TDSB, 2010; McMurtry

There is ample evidence, presented in the research review section of this report, which suggests meaningful civic involvement and leadership development are beneficial for youth and for communities. However, there are significant barriers for accessing these opportunities for youth "at-risk" of marginalization from social structure and supports. We must move beyond recognition of the potential of marginalized urban youth to contribute their leadership to positively affect structural changes to redistribution of opportunity structures that productively promote their inclusion. Ginwright and James (2002) point out that marginalized youth are regularly framed as the passive recipients of good will or services. When marginalized youth are cast in the role of patient or client, over time, this creates a sense of detachment "from the professional, communal, and political processes affecting their lives."[15]

Disengagement and detachment are outcomes of developmental processes fostered by non-responsive, disempowering, and objectifying social systems and practices.[16] Organizations and institutions currently developing policies and practices in order to advance PYD, must strive to go beyond PYD to the concomitant active creation of youth leadership opportunities.

While there is broad support for the promotion of youth leadership opportunities as part of a holistic response to the challenges facing the City,[17] urban youth growing up in these marginalized neighborhoods experience multiple and overlapping exclusions and barriers to accessing PYD and leadership development opportunities. McMurtry and Curling (2008) identify high youth unemployment; low household incomes; youth alienation and hopelessness; racism; poor levels of educational attainment; peer delinquency; mental

health issues; and poor physical health outcomes as the "roots of youth violence". These "roots" are intertwined with experiences of racism, sexism, class inequalities, and religious intolerance.[18] Moreover, the cumulative effects of growing up on the margins and at the intersections of these many exclusions "can have profound effects for youth development and pose significant threats to the development of positive social identities among youth."[19]

Opportunities for civic engagement through leadership help to cultivate a social identity that combats the deleterious effects of social exclusion.
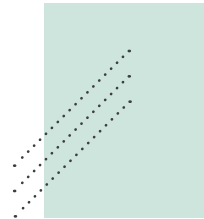
When the systems that are supposed to support vulnerable youth fail to do so, when opportunities to participate and contribute to positive social change are out of reach, this embodies a message to youth about their value to society. Despite this, youth who have been let down by these systems "are often motivated by the desire to change the societal forces that relegate them to the margins."[20] McMurtry and Curling (2008) argue that in order to ameliorate the effects of systemic marginalization, we must take an integrated approach that addresses poverty, racism, insufficient community infrastructure and development, lack of quality affordable housing, poor education, family issues, barriers to health, well-being and youth voice, meaningful economic opportunities, community safety and justice issues. The Ontario Youth Action Plan recognizes that youth leadership can support these aims. Figure 2 on the next page highlights a selection of possible areas for youth to contribute their leadership vision and skills to community development.

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[12] Anyon, Ghosh, Mikelson, 2007; Galabuzi, 2004.

[13] City of Toronto, 2013.

[14] City of Toronto, 2013, see also Cohen & McDonough, 2012; TDSB, 2010; McMurtry & Curling, 2008.

[15] Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007, p. 688.

[16] Zeldin, Camino & Calvert, 2007.

[17] Virani, 2008.

[18] Mickelson, 2003 cited in Anyon, Ghosh, Mikelson, 2007. p. 277.

[19] Anyon, Ghosh, Mikelson, 2007. p. 277.

[20] Lewis-Charp et al, 2003.

**FIGURE 2.0**

**Communities Supporting Young People, Young People Contributing to Communites**
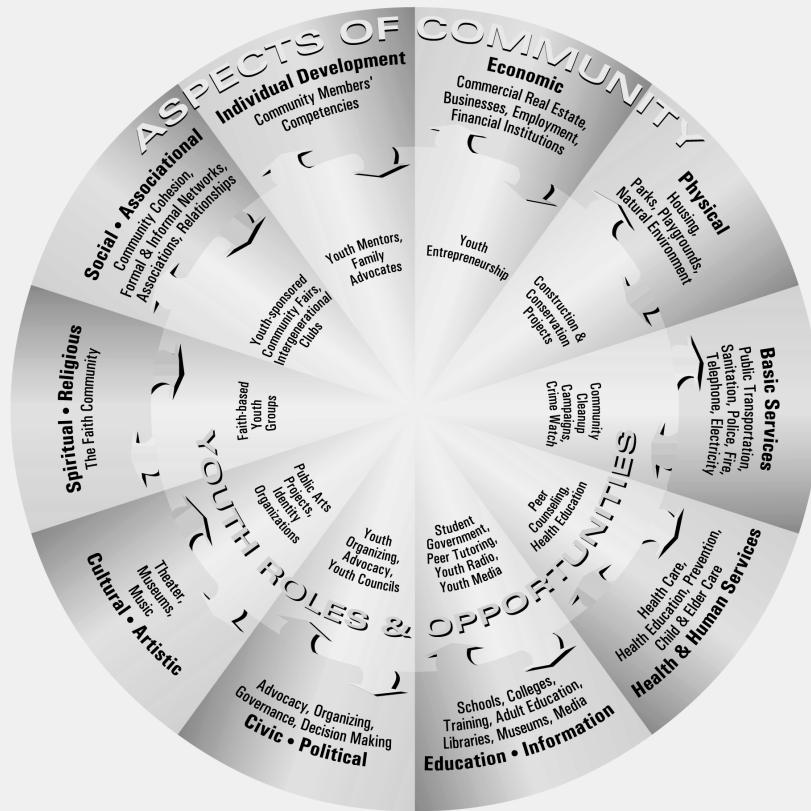


An informal survey of publications produced by foundations, intermediaries, research institutions and others revealed ten types of community assets that various types of "community development" efforts attempt to enhance. It is critical to ensure that quality services, supports and opportunities are offered to young people and their families in each of these areas. It is also important to realize that young people can make real contributions in all aspects of community life (emphasized in this rendition of the community spheres picture by the arrows pointing outwards). Embedded in each area are examples of the range of ways that young people can contribute throughout the community.

Source: Adapted from *Pathways for Youth and Community Development* (The Forum for Youth Investment, 1998), a discussion paper of the International Learning Group. For a complete version of this paper, including the full set of "community/youth" slides as well as comments by ILG members, visit www.forumforyouthinvestment.org

## 1.2 RATIONALE

Many communities are presently facing significant challenges not limited to the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the geographic spatial concentration and racialization of poverty, and the outcomes of excluding young people who live in these conditions from opportunities for meaningful civic participation. This report responds to a demographic and democratic urgency to deepen our approaches to engaging urban youth who face structural barriers to equitable and meaningful social inclusion; it advocates for long-term investments at individual, program, community, and system levels that support marginalized youth and their communities to shape their present and future realities. Consequently, this report demonstrates that there is a bi-directional interactive benefit generated for youth, especially those at-risk of or experiencing social exclusion, and their communities when youth leadership development opportunities are advanced.

The purpose of this report is to support the development of a leadership model built on PYD but incorporating a social justice perspective that recognizes that youth in "marginalized" urban communities experience social, political and economic forces such as racism, sexism, poverty, zero-tolerance and unemployment that are "toxic" to their wellbeing. The proposed approaches to youth leadership development recognize that "urban youth," a term often used as a short-hand descriptor for "underserved, poor, marginalized, ethnic minority youth,"[21] are not a homogenous undifferentiated group but "diverse individuals based on different characteristics such as developmental stage, gender, ethnicity, urban/rural dwellers, those living with family or those estranged."[22] Therefore, while we appreciate that experiences of marginalization have cross-cutting deleterious effects across multiple individual, social, and political domains we also acknowledge the need for differentially responsive policies, programs, and practices. The report identifies best and promising evidence-based practices for engaging and building the leadership capacity of youth and youth-led organisations that are attentive to the structural constraints that youth in marginalized urban communities experience.

## 1.3 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of *Changing leaders, leading change: A leadership development model for marginalized youth in urban communities* is to analyse best and promising practices that build the leadership capacity of youth and youth-led organisations. With particular attention given to addressing the structural effects of marginalization through youth leadership development initiatives, the report surveys current theories and evidence on youth leadership development which it draws on in order to determine key elements of an urban youth leadership development model. It suggests approaches to evaluating the outcomes and impacts of such a model, and identifies critical knowledge gaps where more research is needed.

Disengagement and detachment are outcomes of developmental processes fostered by non-responsive, disempowering, and objectifying social systems and practices.

The report is informed by a systematic and extensive desk review of the literature using both national and international sources and focused on three lines of research 1) critical positive youth development; 2) critical youth work; and, 3) youth leadership development. Searches for recent publications on these topics were conducted through the York University Library Catalogue, appropriate research databases, and Google Scholar. The literature selected includes books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and on-line reports/papers from universities/major philanthropic organizations published after 1990. The limits of this review include the lack of longitudinal studies and the limited availability of empirical short or medium-term studies for all three research strands as well as language constraints beyond English and French.

## 1.4 ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

Section two provides a review of the state of the youth leadership development field, its lineages, definitions, central concepts, facilitators and barriers and identifies gaps in knowledge and areas for further research. The third section presents promising practices in the form of an integrated evidence-based model for cultivating youth leadership among marginalized youth. The report concludes with suggested evaluation strategies and tools that assess both process and outcomes at individual, organizational, and community levels.

[21] Nygreen, Ah Kwon & Sanchez, 2006.

[22] Virani, 2008, p. 18.

# 2.0 // WHAT DO WE KNOW? A LITERATURE REVIEW

*The recognition that youth are key community stakeholders with the capacity to contribute essential perspectives, valuable ideas, and creative solutions to community challenges has spawned a proliferation of programs dedicated to promoting youth civic engagement and leadership.[23]*

### 2.1 STATE OF THE FIELD

Acknowledgement that youth have expert insights into their lives and communities is critical to the generation of inclusive and responsive problem-solving processes and outcomes;[24] youth standpoints offer solutions to challenges that adults may not be able to see.[25] Zeldin, Camino, and Calvert identify three theoretical rationales for civic youth involvement through leadership "ensuring social justice and youth representation, building civil society, and promoting youth development" (i.e. legal, democratic, and developmental).[26] Meaningful youth participation through leadership opportunities align with core human rights frames internationally acknowledged in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Beyond these foundational principles for inclusion, youth leadership provides a reciprocal benefit to both individual and community development. Barry Checkoway, a leading researcher in the field of positive youth development and civic engagement, suggests that the following long-lasting social effects may derive from meaningful youth involvement in leadership: "new ideas and more relevant and responsive practices, increased social cohesion and intergenerational relationships, opportunities to exercise democratic citizen rights, practice decision-making

and implementation, strengthened organizational capacity and social development."[27]

Despite broad acknowledgement of its potential and wide adoption of the language of youth leadership development, researchers point to significant gaps in our knowledge.[28] Practice has outpaced theory and research.[29] MacNeil in agreement with Gambone, Yu, Lewis-Charp, Sipe and Lacoe,[30] portends that "while there is much to suggest that developing youth leadership is important for youth, adults, and their organizations and communities, there are still many questions about how this can be accomplished most effectively."[31]

A primary challenge is the lack of conceptual consistency of what youth leadership development entails. Conner and Strobel (2007) observe that the term " "youth leadership" functions as a Rorschach test, [a formal psychological test that asks people to interpret inkblots] susceptible to various interpretations". Critiques include that "leadership" is a poorly conceived buzzword that is applied so liberally that it loses any meaning.[33] More specifically, programs often fail to distinguish between the youth development field generally and youth leadership development specifically. Kress (2006) summarizes:

> **"By confusing leadership and youth development, we force youth leadership programs to reside within the egalitarian mandate of the broader youth development field. This forces youth leadership to be seen through a lens that insists that nearly everyone can be a leader and that leadership abilities are distributed equally among various talent areas. This assumption contributes to leadership programs being watered down."**

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[23] Wheeler & Edlebeck, 2006; Conner & Strobel, 2007; Detzler, Van Liew, Dorward, Jenkins, & Teslicko, 2007.

[24] Jones, 2009.

[25] MacNeil, 2006.

[26] Zeldin, Camino, and Calvert, 2007.

[27] Checkoway, 1998, p. 770.

[28] Jones, 2009; MacNeil, 2006; Libby et al., 2006; Ricketts & Rudd, 2002; McNae, 2010; Murphy & Johnson, 2011.

[29] Conner & Strobel, 2007.

[30] Gambone, Yu, Lewis-Charp, Sipe and Lacoe, 2004.

[31] MacNeil, 2006.

[32] Klau, 2006.

Because youth leadership remains a "fuzzy concept"[33] it is difficult to define and therefore operationalize as a construct. Scholars have repeatedly pointed out "the field's problematic lack of clarity and coherence."[34] This lack of clarity presents a challenge for "assessing the state of the field." As Lerner, Alberts, Jelicic and Smith (2006) point out, "people do not measure what they cannot name, and they often do not name what they cannot measure". Consequently, research and evaluations of youth leadership development processes and outcomes are, by in large, idiosyncratic and lack comparability; and, outcomes are context-specific and not generalizable. While leadership is necessarily interactive, research and evaluation findings typically represent short-term individual changes often limited to self-reporting of skill-acquisition.[35] Furthermore, rather than responding to youth context and youth needs, much youth leadership training curricula are extrapolated from research on "industrial" approaches to adult leadership exercised within "large, complex organizations such as businesses, governments, and the military."[36] There is little doubt about the value of youth leadership development. However, the field resounds with calls for concerted efforts to deepen our understanding of purposes, processes, outcomes, and impacts.

## 2.2 LINEAGES AND CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Practitioners and theorists of youth leadership development are not alone in the struggle to define and operationalize a single conceptualization of leadership. After an extensive review of the literature, MacNeil (2006) concludes that "leadership remains an elusive concept" (p. 27). Similarly, Stodgill (1974) observes that "there are almost as many

definitions of leadership development as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept."[37]

Interest in what makes a "great leader" dates back to Plato. However, as an interdisciplinary academic field of study, leadership studies gained ascendency in the latter half of the twentieth century.  It is closely aligned with organizational studies. Theories of leadership capability traditionally focused on innate natural born qualities or traits such as authenticity, persuasiveness, decisiveness, and charisma. The great leaders who served as exemplars were typically Caucasian males. Leadership roles were hierarchical: the leader exercised authoritarian power and occupied, in title, a recognized leadership position. The latter is often described as transactional leadership – task-oriented leadership that exercises power over others in order to accomplish a goal. This is often contrasted with transformational leadership, which takes a relational approach to produce influence.[38] Hoyt and Kennedy (2008, citing Mumford et al, 1993) contend that "traits alone are poor predictors of leadership emergence and organizational performance." Haber (2011) and others argue that leader-centric trait theories are restrictive and limited by virtue of their characterization of leadership as residing solely within individuals rather than as a process and product of interaction.

The field resounds with calls for concerted efforts to deepen our understanding of purposes, processes, outcomes, and impacts.

Moreover, temporal, cultural and social factors affect leadership possibilities.[39] For example, a Black President of

[33] Conner & Strobel, 2007.

[34] Klau, 2006.

[35] Jones, 2009; Apaliyah, Martin, Gasteyer, Keating & Pigg, K., 2012.

[36] Apaliyah, Martin, Gasteyer, Keating & Pigg, K., 2012.

[37] Stodgill, 1974, cited by Ricketts & Rudd, 2002, p. 259.

[38] Van Linden & Fertman, 1998.

[39] Murphy & Johnson, 2011.

Conceptualizations of leadership vary across cultures and time and as we become more globalized we are likely to come into contact with different leadership norms.

the United States would not have been imaginable at the time of the American Independence. Likewise, a female President is imaginable today but would not have been when America was founded. Today a young girl in Canada can aspire to be the Prime Minister but in a different historical period or in a different region of the world, social conditions would greatly impact the possibilities to realize let alone have such aspirations.[40] Murphy and Johnson describe how cultural context and social expectations shape leadership recognition and possibilities: "there is a strong cultural bias that defines what leaders should be and do" (p. 466). Conceptualizations of leadership vary across cultures and time and as we become more globalized we are likely to come into contact with different leadership norms. Research suggests that there is a relationship between cultural and leadership identity:

> "...individuals from Asian and Hispanic cultures tend to hold more interdependent identities than individuals from more independent cultures, potentially impacting their leadership identities. Collectivistic individuals who live in an individualistic society may perceive the misfit between their developmental experiences, which might manifest as shared leadership in a group, and society's expectation for individualistic leaders."[41]

Murphy and Johnson (2012) further explain that social expectations shape how others see us and how we see ourselves: "if society does not expect an individual to be a leader [consequently, the risk is] that the individual will not

expect themself to be a leader" (p. 467). For the purposes of our study, this raises important questions and requires significant reflection and inquiry. Who, how, and where do we "see" youth leadership, particularly for those who are most marginalized from leadership development opportunities? What leadership qualities are we developing? Are these aligned with the youth's cultural, gendered, class, sexual orientation and other identities? The first youth leadership development programs did not consider these questions. Rather, they drew significantly on traditional trait-focused adult leadership models.[42] However, current youth leadership development theorists and practitioners are taking a more differentiated and responsive approach.[43] Dempster and Lizzio (2007) report that differences exist between youth and adult conceptualizations of leadership. Adelma Roach and colleagues (1999) found that youth "emphasize 'the group, the situation, and the moment' and value 'mutual shifting and emerging' types of leadership." Youth are more committed to process than personality, to "how leadership happens" than "who leads."[44] Youth demonstrated a preference for leadership frameworks that emphasized group processes and collective action over "heroic" conceptualizations that privileged "individual, competitive, incremental" approaches.[45]

Interestingly, contemporary adult leadership theories are beginning to align with the more process-driven, relational and egalitarian approaches to leadership favoured by youth. Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella and Osteen (2006) contend that the leadership qualities required in post-industrial globalized contexts are primarily relational. Relational approaches to leadership move away "from the concept of leadership residing in one person, toward a

[40] Murphy & Johnson, 2011.

[41] Murphy & Johnson, 2012, p. 467, citing Markus & Kitayama, 1991; see also Hu, 2011.

[42] MacNeil, 2006.

[43] Kress, 2006.

[44] Roach, 1999, cited in Dempster & Lizzio.

[45] Dempster & Lizzio, 2007.

[46] MacNeil, 2006, p. 28.

[47] Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella & Osteen, 2006; Haber, 2011; McKibbon, 2013.

[48] Komives and Wagner, 2009; Komives, Lucas, and McMahon, 2007; Shankman and Allen, 2008.

concept of leadership residing in the relationship between and among individuals."[46] Leaders are in a dialogic relationship with other leaders – leaders with different but complimentary leadership qualities – this conceptualization supports another dominant framework, that of democracy. Relational leadership gives attention to cultivating and leveraging synergies in order to achieve collective goals. At a time when we are facing highly complex "wicked problems", we require collaborative, distributed, and relational leadership processes and skills.[47]

**Haber (2011) identifies the following qualities of this emergent leadership perspective:**

- Relational leadership is a process, not a position.[48]

- Collaboration and relationships between group members produces collective leadership impact.[49]

- Relational leaders work toward or serve a good beyond oneself.[50]

- Relational leadership has a moral and ethical grounding.[51]

- Relational leaders are reflective and self-aware.[52]

Differentiated, relational, and emergent leadership strategies cultivate collaborative synergies and require an appreciation of complexity, a respect for others, an awareness of multiple domains of action and change and an ability to be dynamic in leader and "follower" roles.[53]

The recent embrace of more adaptive and dynamic conceptualizations of leadership point to the advantages of resisting the impulse to be overly deterministic in our quest for a single or final definition of leadership. However, this does not mean that youth leadership need be "watered down" or rudderless. Rather, it should be grounded in time, place, and culture (without forsaking "vision") and draw on a wide palette of standpoints and skill-sets in order to generate synergistic individual/community benefit. An emergent, differentiated, relational approach to youth leadership development works against "one-size-fits-all" approaches that may be developmentally and culturally inappropriate.[54] Being open to a range of youth leadership development styles provides youth and communities with opportunities to benefit from diversity and enhance our democracies.[55] Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, and Osteen (2006) summarize:

> **"These findings call attention to the risks of relying on a single, static definition of leadership that may alienate those youth who cannot or do not wish to be cast in that specific part. A broader, more flexible conceptualization of leadership can play to different youth's strengths, improving the likelihood that they will become engaged in the organization and in their communities in meaningful ways."**

Leadership is inherently a social process the outcomes of which are both individual and collective. It emerges from the interaction of internal and external domains. Moving forward, the dimensions of youth leadership development to give particular heed are the characteristics, qualities, processes, outcomes, and impacts of individual/community interaction and consequent changes across multiple levels.

**2.3 YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**
Youth leadership development has been a focus of well-known youth organizations such as 4-H and Scouts since their inception more than a century ago.[56] Throughout

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[49] Komives, Lucas, and McMahon, 2007; Komives and Wagner, 2009; Shankman and Allen, 2008; Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, 2009; Kelley, 1995.

[50] Komives, Lucas, and McMahon, 2007; Komives and Wagner, 2009.

[51] Burns, 1978; Komives, Lucas, and McMahon, 2007.

[52] Shankman and Allen, 2008; Komives and Wagner, 2009; Kelley, 1995.

[53] Connor & Strobel, 2007.

[54] Connor & Strobel, 2007.

[55] Libby, Rosen & Sedonaen, 2005.

[56] Mohamed & Wheeler, 2001.

Communities that invest
in youth development
opportunities *go* beyond
providing a service *for* youth.
Youth leadership development
is a strategy for renewing and
revitalizing the sector.
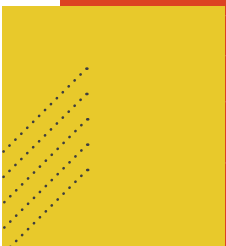
their history, leadership conceptualizations were primarily informed by adult leadership theories and future-oriented civic roles. Recent conceptualizations of youth leadership development, however, have changed with the introduction of positive youth development frameworks. While all youth (and adults) undergo developmental processes and experiences, PYD is intentional about pursuing positive, pro-social, developmental outcomes through a focus on cultivating internal and external assets. PYD recognizes that youth development entails more than bio-physical changes and is the result of complex interactions between internal and external domains. School, community, family, peer and other socio-political, economic, and cultural contexts have significant influence on youth developmental pathways.

The shift from deficit to asset-driven PYD models ushered in new ways of thinking about youth leadership development.[57] *Youth leadership benefits from, and in turn generates, a PYD foundation.* Van Linden and Fertman (1998) argue that "youth leadership develops from self-motivation, contextual receptiveness including supportive adults and organizational and social structures."

**Four key pillars that enhance PYD can also contribute to youth leadership development:**

- Strong relationships between youth and non-family adults

- Youth engaged in designing programs and decision-making to positively influence themselves and their communities

- Intentional skill-building in multiple aspects of a young person's life to achieve physical, emotional, intellectual, psychological and social health

- High expectations for youth[58]

However, although they are compatible, youth leadership and positive youth development should not be confused as one and the same. **Youth leadership development programs should be designed to either:**

**a)** draw upon foundations established by positive youth development, or

**b)** to create synergies with PYD through a design that is concordant with but not limited to the former's aims.[59]

**The foundations of PYD programs can also serve to advance the aims of youth leadership development. Lerner, Alberts, Jelicic and Smith (2006) identify the "Big Three" design features of effective positive youth development programs:**

1. youth have opportunities to participate in leadership of activities

2. programs nurture the development of core life skills

3. youth develop sustained caring relationships with non familial adults

**Additional characteristics of PYD programs that can also support youth leadership development include:**

- goals are clearly identified, communicated, and supported

- recognize and respond to assets or "funds of knowledge" of diverse youth, their families, communities, and culture

- programs are an accessible and positive space

- programs draw on community strengths

- programs work collaboratively with other youth-serving organizations

[57] Russell, Mielke, & Reisner, 2008; McNae, 2010;McKay, 2011; Edelmen, Gil, Comerford, Larson & Hare, 2004.

[58] Cohen & McDonough, 2012.

[59] Detzler, Van Liew, Dorward, Jenkins & Teslicko, 2007; Edelman, Gill, Comerford, Larson, Hare, R. 2004; Ferguson, Kim & McCoy, 2010; Serido, Borden & Perkins, 2011.

- programs provide integrated support with other key supports

- programs actively engage in cycles of evaluation, reflection, and applied learning

- programs work within their spheres of influence to advocate for youth[60]

Fundamentally, meaningful youth inclusion, non-dominating supportive adult relationships, and skill building are the bedrocks upon which effective PYD programs are built.[61]

Youth are motivated to participate in meaningful purpose-driven action. Purpose is at the heart of the model; it is leadership "fuel."

The interconnections between PYD and youth leadership development specifically through civic engagement is increasingly being recognized by leading theorists and practitioners of PYD. Wheeler (2003) explains: "the rediscovery of youth leadership development as a core component of PYD strategies and programs... validates a growing recognition...that personal development and social development are essential conditions for strengthening a community's capacity to respond to its problems and build its future."[62] Effective youth development and leadership programs engage the system of individual and contextual variables affecting youth development opportunities. The contexts within which youth leadership development takes place should be safe, interesting, and provide appropriate expectations and challenges for participating youth. [63]

Moreover, scholars argue that youth leadership development opportunities must offer more than abstract leadership concepts. Youth are motivated to participate in meaningful purpose-driven action. Therefore the purpose behind the exercise of leadership should be central to the consequent program operationalization.[64] Purpose is at the heart of the model; it is a leadership "fuel."

## 2.4 ECOLOGICAL APPROACHES AND SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

One of the key characteristics of PYD is its recognition that youth development is embedded in nested interacting contexts. However, recognition of the important influence of contextual factors has not consistently translated into intentional engagement with these factors. Youth opportunities to develop decision-making, interpersonal, cultural competence, and conflict resolution skills (to name a few), do not always accompany opportunities to apply these in leadership roles in order to influence and change the contextual factors that are developmentally significant in their lives.[65] It is relatively uncommon for PYD identified programs to actively involve youth at the level of community change as a strategy for promoting the development of both individual youth and the broader community. Jones (2009) argues that "young people need more than access to resources with means to build skills, but they must also utilize these skills by serving as active contributors within their communities." Community engagement through leadership opportunities provides youth with feelings of self-efficacy and a sense of mattering.[66] It provides a sense of purpose for mutually reinforcing investments in identity and community development. Mohamed and Wheeler (2001) contend that

[60] Dryfoos, 1990, 1998; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Lerner, 1995; Little, 1993; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a; Schorr, 1988, 1997, cited in Lerner, Alberts, Jelicic & Smith, 2006; see also, Russell, Mielke & Reisner, 2008.

[61] Lerner, Alberts, Jelicic & Smith, 2006.

[62] in Lerner, Alberts, Jelicic & Smith, 2006.

[63] Lewis-Charp et al, 2003.

[64] Haber 2011; Edelman, Gill, Comerford, Larson & Hare, 2004.

[65] Mohamed & Wheeler, 2001; Jones, 2009; Lerner, Alberts, Jelicic & Smith, 2006; Lewis-charp et al, 2003.

[66] Jones, 2009.

PYD programs advocate for youth voice and empowerment but in practice often succumb to "adultism" and fall short of providing opportunities for youth to exercise their voice and power, provide input, and contribute to decision-making. Moreover, as others point out, PYD reflects a particular cultural and historical bias. In order to extend its relevance beyond "White, Western, middle-class youth," PYD must develop a critical analysis of context that encourages youth, programs, and communities to engage with "the interface between individuals and social aspects of human development, structural conditions, and social participation as experienced by youth."[67,68] Developing positive attributes is not enough. Youth must be given the chance to develop and apply PYD skills to address challenges that originate outside of themselves.

The extensive literature that undergirds PYD approaches understands that opportunities for youth agency, high external expectations and skill development support youth assets. A significant and persistent critique of PYD concerns its focus on the individual to the exclusion of the structural context. Youth (especially urban and racialized youth) have historically been individually pathologized for the structural challenges they face. PYD theories and practices take context into account and consider youth to be community assets instead of risks and invest in "creating contexts with enabling supports and opportunities."[69] A critical social-justice approach to PYD goes a step further in that it undertakes a structural analysis of how operations of power impact youth developmental opportunities.[70] Ginwright and Cammarota  propose an expanded conceptualization of PYD to include "practices that encourage youth to address the larger oppressive forces affecting them and their communities. This understanding of PYD acknowledges social

A focus on system level change serves to de-pathologize individual youth experience and collectivize responsibility for creating positive developmental pathways for all youth.

contexts and highlights the capacity of youth to respond to community problems and heal from the psycho/social wounds of hostile urban environments" (p. 87).

Critical approaches to PYD, aligned with critical relational youth leadership and "ecological" conceptualizations of youth development,[71] go beyond recognition of the interactive impacts of macro and micro developmental contexts, todirectly engaging in the work of systems-level change. A focus on system level change serves to de-pathologize individual youth experience and collectivize responsibility for creating positive developmental pathways for all youth.[72]

Critical ecological approaches to youth development and leadership hold that strategies for improving youth wellbeing must actively work across multiple developmental contexts. Evans and Prilletensky (2007) explain:

> **"Youth cannot significantly alter their level of well-being in the absence of concordant environmental changes. Conversely, any strategy that promotes well-being by environmental changes alone is bound to be limited. There is ample evidence to suggest that the most promising approaches combine strategies for personal, relational, and collective change. It is not one or the other, but it is the combination of them all that is the best avenue in which to seek higher levels of well-being" (p. 684).**

Irby, Ferber and Pittman (2001) caution that over-emphasis on either individual-side or community-side development

[67] Lewis-Charp et al,2003.

[68] Mohamed & Wheeler, 2001, p. 4.

[69] London & Chabron, 2004, p. 45.

[70] Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002.

[71] Bronfenbrenner, 1979.

[72] Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007.

**Figure 3 - Leadership Tasks and Skills for Youth***

| Age Range | New leadership tasks and skills |
|---|---|
| **Preschool Years (ages 2-5)** | • Influencing Others<br>• Getting others to like you<br>• Communicating wishes<br>• Increased need for emotional intelligence in interactions with others (reading the emotions of others and delaying gratification) |
| **Elementary School (ages 6-11)** | • Coordinating others in teams<br>• Early school leadership tasks (eg. classroom monitor; or teacher's helper)<br>• Fundraising (e.g. selling candy, etc)<br>• Public speaking to express ideas<br>• Increased need for social intelligence in interactions with others (understanding social situations and acting appropriately) |
| **Middle School to Early Adolescene (ages 12-14)** | • Coordinating teams for fundraising or student project<br>• Self-management (e.g. goal setting, self-observation & evaluation)<br>• Serving in elected office and other student government activities<br>• Public speaking as a leader to gain support for a cause |
| **High School to Late Adoloscence (ages 15-19)** | • Organizing complex projects<br>• Motivating team members<br>• Organizational skills required by after school or summer jobs<br>• Working with others to complete a work product in after school or summer jobs |
| **College to Young Adulthood (ages 19-22)** | • Establishing grassroots organizations<br>• Complex supervisory skills required during internships<br>• Serving as a leader with multiple constituents |

*The tasks important at an earlier age still appropriate at older ages. The tasks listed for older ages are those more unique to that developmental stage.
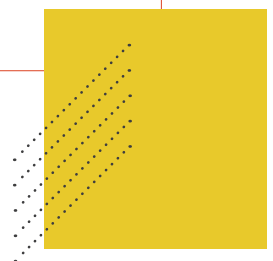
can detract from both. Fisher, Busch-Rossnagel, Jopp and Brown (2012) agree that a balance must be found between investments in individual and community-level development. Both agree that a sole focus on youth development and leadership without engagement with the broader context is inadequate and works against the achievement of the goals of PYD. Moreover, concurrent with invitations to youth to partake of leadership opportunities, adults and organizations must work "to change the fundamental structures in order to best support the invitation."[73]

### 2.5 YOUTH LEADERSHIP AS A DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS

Youth leadership is both a process and outcome of psychosocial, cognitive, behavioural, and socio-political development.[74] Just as conceptualizations of leadership are dependent on historical and cultural context, Murphy and Johnson (2011) explain that leadership evolves with age. For example, students in middle school "rate personality, dominance, popularity, and physical appearance as important to leadership."[75] For older youth, "integrity, listening skills, and knowledge are rated as important leader characteristics, whereas compassion, consistency, and flexibility are rated as less unimportant."[76] Murphy and Johnson (2011) present the idealized trajectory of youth leadership development seen in Figure 3.

Hannah, Avolio, Luthans and Harms (2008) argue that leadership development is a self-reinforcing process.[77] Therefore, youth who are socialized to self-identify as leaders and who are regularly exposed to contexts that provide skill-building and practice opportunities to nurture leadership competencies are not surprisingly more likely to identify as and feel comfortable in traditionally recognized leadership roles. In McNae's (2010) study of young women

Youth who have never experienced or imagined themselves as leaders may need additional time and practice to become comfortable with expressing their leadership potential.
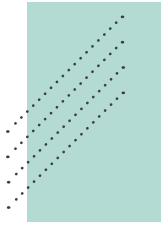
and the co-construction of leadership, she found that young women were initially uncomfortable identifying as leaders. Participants were unaccustomed to sharing ideas and bringing them to action. At first, the young women deferred to adults and lacked the confidence to exercise their voice and present divergent opinions. They were used to being the passive recipients of instruction rather than co-constructors, owners of knowledge production and implementation processes.

The foundations for leadership development are established through ongoing processes and can begin early in life. Youth who have never experienced or imagined themselves as leaders may need additional time and practice to become comfortable with expressing their leadership potential.

However, Murphy and Johnson (2011) contend that childhood and adolescence are sensitive developmental periods when "skills are more easily and readily developed" (p. 460). They explain that though development in sensitive periods happens rapidly, change may not be immediately evident and may not be observed until later in adulthood. Despite the lack of immediate outcomes, investment in leadership development for young people "sets the stage for future development to occur, barring unforeseen influences."[78] Moreover, conceptualizations of leadership change over time as youth are exposed to leadership development opportunities.[79] Komives et al. (2006) suggest that as youth mature, their ideas of leadership shift from

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[73] Mohamed & Wheeler, 2001.

[74] MacNeil, 2006, p. 30.

[75] Lease et al., 2002 cited in Murphy & Johnson, 2011.

[76] Morris, 1991 cited in Murphy & Johnson, 2011.

[77] Cited by Murphy & Johnson, 2011.

[78] Murphy & Johnson, 2011, p. 460.

[79] Komives et al, 2006.

trait to relational leadership conceptualizations. Figure 4 (following) demonstrates this shift.

In Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, and Osteen's (2006) study of youth leadership development, youth initially held simplistic leader-centric conceptions of leadership but as they matured they came to understand leadership as "a collaborative relational process."[80] Transitions from simplistic to more complex conceptualizations of leadership were facilitated by a combination of peer and adult modeling, formal and informal education, and opportunities for application of concepts. The Komives et al leadership identity development model explicates complex and non-linear processes through which individuals move from identifying leaders as external anti-democratic, individualistic, power-imposing figures to understanding their own leadership potential in relation to group processes.

It is important to remember that, as with all learning processes, individuals develop leadership skills at their own pace and their own way: "Leadership development involves engaging with learning opportunities in one's environment over time to build one's capacity or efficacy to engage in leadership. This developmental approach entails moving from simple to more complex dimensions of growth."[81] Murphy and Johnson (2011) emphasize that putting ideas of leadership into practice is absolutely essential for the development of a sense of self-efficacy in relation to one's leadership capabilities. Adult and peer influences, opportunities for meaningful participation, and ongoing reflection contribute to developmental shifts from simple to complex understandings of leadership.

## 2.6 SOCIAL CHANGE AND RELATIONAL MODELS OF YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The Social Change and Relational Models of youth leadership development are most closely aligned in purpose and process with the reported values of marginalized youth and adolescent developmental stages. The social change youth leadership model merges youth leadership and community development.[82] It takes seriously ecological development theories and recognizes that "the link that runs between context and individual is bidirectional and dynamic."[83] Therefore, social change focused youth leadership development models work across domains striving for synergistic personal, interpersonal, organizational and socio-cultural level changes in attempts to change the external conditions that are negatively affecting youth's lives.[84] Barnett and Brennan (2006) argue that "it is the merging of youth development and community development that enables youth leadership to emerge. Adolescents should become actively involved in the design of community programs and policies...Such involvement also sets the stage for long-term involvement, leadership development opportunities, and ownership of community development efforts."

The relational approach to leadership will serve youth well in the context of globalizing economies and societies and in responding to associated opportunities and challenges.

This review of academic literature suggests that a relational approach to leadership development is preferred by marginalized youth. According to Haber (2011) "students of color tend to adopt more relational and process- oriented views and styles [of leadership] than their white counterparts".

[80] Komives et. al., 2006.

[81] Komives et al, 2006, p. 401.

[82] Christens & Dolan, 2011.

[83] Conner & Strobel, 2007.

[84] Fisher et al, 2012; Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008.

For members of groups historically marginalized from leadership opportunity structures, the social change model provides a strategy for collectively challenging their exclusion. Relational leadership models enact inclusive values. Therefore, individuals who have, or are experiencing social exclusion, may value more equitable approaches to leadership development ("power with" rather than "power over"). Relational leadership models have contemporary currency as well in that they cultivate what MacNeil (2006) and Murphy and Johnson (2011) refer to as 21st century skills. Unlike the industrial leadership paradigm associated with trait theory and a "self-interested and individualistic outlook," and a "masculinized view of society", relational approaches to leadership "incorporate values such as collaboration, diversity in organizational structures and activities, and a consensus-oriented policy-making process."[85] The relational approach to leadership will serve youth well in the context of globalizing economies and societies and in responding to associated opportunities and challenges.

With Social Change identified as the purpose and Relational Leadership identified as the process, we now further explicate key dimensions of the model. The proposed model aims to develop both individual and community-level leadership knowledge, skills, and action. Consequently, we recommend that development processes initiated take place in a group rather than individual learning setting.[86] Along with Murphy and Johnson (2011), Kress (2006) and Richards-Schuster, K., & Dobbie (2011), we adopt Van Linden and Fertman's (1998) model of youth leadership development based on findings that the latter occurs as a result of (1) observation, (2) experience, and (3) general informal and formal learning. Throughout these processes, youth move from awareness that leaders exist, to interaction with leadership concepts and practices, to mastering leadership knowledge and skills through practice.[87] Ricketts and Rudd (2002) extend Van Linden and Fertman's conceptualization by suggesting that comprehension, analysis, application, synthesis/evaluation are linked to each level of leadership development. Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella and Osteen (2006) modify these conceptualizations further by adding a relational dimension. The final stage of youth leadership development according to Komives et al is relational leadership competence – the knowledge and skills to engage in differentiated leadership processes rooted in interdependence and advancing collective, rather than individual, aims and impact. Development through these stages is supported by experience, reflection, and relationships.

## 2.7 YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND MARGINALIZED YOUTH

**"Young people want to be engaged as change-makers in their lives, their families and their communities. They are disproportionately involved in and affected by the problems that beset their communities — and they must be part of the solution."[88]**

Leadership opportunities that contribute to redressing systemic inequalities affecting marginalized youths' lives help them to "gain a sense of agency, efficacy, hope and strategies for change."[89] Evidence increasingly discounts the validity of negative stereotypes that youth living in marginalized communities "feel less connected to their home and social environment."[90] Feelings of connection increase the more that youth are involved "in the social and governing fabrics of their communities."[91] Research demonstrates, however, that fewer marginalized youth participate in youth development or leadership programs when compared to the participation rates of non-racialized middle and upper-class youth.[92]

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[85] MacNeil, 2006, p. 41.

[86] Apaliyah, Martin, Gasteyer, Keating & Pigg, 2012.

[87] Van Linden & Fertman, 1998.

[88] The Forum for Youth Investment cited by Edelman et al, 2004.

[89] Whitehead, 2009.

[90] Fogel, 2004.

[91] Kelly, 2008.

[92] Perkins, Borden, Villarruel, Carlton-Hug, Stone & Keith, 2007.

## Figure 4 - Leadership Identity Model

| STAGES | 1. AWARENESS | | 2. EXPLORATION/ENGAGEMENT | | 3. LEADER IDENTIFIED | | | 4. LEADERSHIP DIFFERENTIATED | | | 5. GENARATIVITY | | 6. INTEGRATION/SYNTHESIS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| KEY | | TRANSITION | | TRANSITION | EMERGING | IMMERSION | TRANSITION | EMERGING | IMMERSION | TRANSITION | | TRANSITION | |
| Stage Descriptions | -Recognizing that leadership is happening around you<br><br>- Getting exposure to involvements | | - Intentional involvements [sports, religious, institutions, service, scouts, dance, SGA]<br>- Experiencing groups for first time<br>-Taking on responsibilities | | -Trying on new roles<br>- Identifying skills needed<br>- Taking on individual accomplishments important | - Getting things done<br>- Managing others<br>- Practicing different approaches/styles<br>- Leadership seen largely as positional roles held by self or others; Leaders do leadership | - Shifting order of consciousness<br>- Take on more complex leadership challenges | - Joining with others in shared tasks/goals from positional or non-positional group role<br>- Commitment to community of the group Awareness that leadership is a group process | - Seeks to facilitate a good group process whether in positional or non positional leadership role<br>- Commitment to community of the group<br>- Awareness that leadership is a group process | | - Active commitment to a personal passion<br>- Accepting responsibility for the development of others<br>- Promotes team learning<br>- Responsible for sustaining organizations | | - Continued self-development and life-long learning<br>-Striving for congruence and internal confidence |
| Broadening View of Leadership | "Other people are leaders; leaders are out there somewhere" | "I am not a leader" | "I want to be involved" | "I want to do more" | "A leader gets things done" | "I am a leader and others follow me" or "I am a follower looking to the leader for direction" | "Holding a position does not mean I am a leader" | "I need to lead in a participatory way and I can contribute to leadership from anywhere in the organization"; "I am a leader even if I am not the leader" | "Leadership is happening everywhere; leadership is a process; we are doing leadership together; we are all responsible" | "Who's coming after me?" | "I am responsible as a member of my communities to facilitate the development of others as leaders and enrich the life of our groups" | "I need to be true to myself in all situations and open to grow" | "I know I am able to work effectively with others to accomplish change from any place in the organization"; "I am a leader" |
| Developing Self | - Becomes aware of national leaders and authority figures (e.g. the principal) | - Want to make friends | - Develop personal skills<br>- Identify personal strengths/ weaknesses<br>- Prepare for leadership<br>- Build self-confidence | - Recognize personal leadership potential<br>- Motivation to change something | - Positional leadership roles or group member roles<br>- Narrow down to meaningful experiences (e.g. sports, clubs, yearbook, scouts, class projects) | - Models others<br>- Leader struggles with delegation<br>- Moves in and out of leadership roles and member roles but still believes that leader is in charge<br>- Appreciates individual recognition | - Recognition that I cannot do it all myself<br>- Learn to value the importance/talent of others | - Learn to trust and value others & their involvement<br>- Openness to other perspectives<br>- Develop comfort leading as an active member<br>- Let go control | - Learns about personal influence<br>- Effective in both positional and non-positional roles<br>- Practices being engaged member<br>- Values servant leadership | - Focus on passion, vision & commitments<br>- Want to serve society | - Sponsor and develop others<br>- Transforming leadership<br>- Concerned with sustainability of ideas | - Openness to ideas<br>- Learning from others | - Sees leadership as a life long developmental process<br>- Want to leave things better<br>- Am trustworthy and value that I have credibility<br>- Recognition of role modeling to others |
| Group Influences | - Uninvolved or 'inactive' follower | - Want to get involved | - "Active" follower or member<br>- Engagement in diverse contexts (e.g., sports, clubs, class projects) | - Narrow interests | - Leader has to get things done<br>- Group has a job to do; organize to get tasks done | - Involve members to get the job done<br>- Stick with a primary group as an identity base; explore other groups | - Meaningfully Engage with Others<br>- Look to group resources | - Seeing that collective whole; the big picture<br>- Learn group and team skills | - Value teams<br>- Value connectedness to others<br>- Learns how system works | - Value process<br>- Seek fit with org. vision | - Sustaining the organization<br>- Insuring continuity in areas of passion/ focus | - Anticipating transition to new roles | - Sees organizational complexity across contexts<br>- Can imagine how to engage with different organizations |
| | - Affirmation by adults (parents, teachers, coaches, scout leaders, religious elders) | - Observation/ watching<br>- Recognition<br>- Adult Sponsors | - Affirmation of adults<br>- Attributions (others see me as a leader) | - Role models<br>- Older peers as sponsors<br>- Adult sponsors<br>- Assume positional roles | - Take on responsibilities | - Model older peers and adults<br>- Observe older peers<br>- Adults as mentors, guides, coaches | - Older peers as sponsors & mentors<br>- Adults as mentors & meaning makers<br>- Learning about leadership | - Practicing leadership in ongoing peer relationships | - Responds to meaning makers (student affairs staff, key faculty, same-age peer mentors) | - Begins coaching others | Responds to meaning makers (student affairs staff, same-age peer mentors) | - Shared learning<br>-Reflection/retreat | - Re-cycle when context changes or is uncertain (contextual uncertainty)<br>- Enables continual recycling through leadership stages |
| Changing View of Self With Others | *DEPENDENT* | | | | *INDEPENDENT*<br>*DEPENDENT* | | | *INTERDEPENDENT* | | | | | |

Communities effect youth and conversely youth effect communities; it is critical to consider how individuals and communities interact and to develop structures to support positive processes and outcomes on multiple levels.

Whereas participation in youth leadership opportunities has been shown to combat feelings of social exclusion and resulting cynicism about the possibilities for social justice, many marginalized youth cannot access these opportunities because of structural barriers.[93] These youth often have responsibilities, such as employment or tending to younger siblings that take precedence over attending youth development programs.[94]

Moreover, Jeffery (2008), examining youth policies across Canada attests that "older and visible minority youth who are at risk of being failed by traditional approaches [to youth development] especially benefit from youth engagement programs that emphasize access, equity and social justice." Youth who face the most significant barriers to accessing youth leadership development opportunities are those that would benefit the most.[95] Therefore to support their participation organizations should strive to provide stipends or jobs and programs for younger youth. Moreover, it is imperative that organizations seeking to support critical youth leadership actively pursue strategies to diminish the broader barriers youth face to equitable participation in developmental opportunities.[96] Organizations also need to ensure that their program delivery methods and content, staff training, and program space are inclusive.[97] McNae (2010), Mohamed and Wheeler (2001), and many others express concern that approaches to leadership development fail to recognize and support youth perspectives on leadership that often ascribe differential value to leadership approaches. For example, Hoyt and Kennedy (2008) suggest that youth leadership development programs often unreflectively adopt "a traditional or masculinized leadership concept that is marked by a competitive, logical, and even aggressive style; emotional expressiveness, cooperation, and nurturance thus become actively devalued leadership concepts."

As noted earlier, cultural bias affects what, how and who we identify as leaders. This includes youth. Marginalized youth may not have experienced ongoing reinforcement of their leadership potential. For marginalized youth, the dominant socio-cultural conceptualizations of leadership may be associated with Whiteness (as well as socio-normative masculinity) and therefore as members of "groups with lesser power and influence in respect to race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation [they may] experience greater incongruity" between their identity and leadership possibilities.[98]

Organizations must critically reflect on the definition band approach to leadership that they adopt so as not to inadvertently reinforce barriers to participation. Additionally, we must make clear to young people that do not initially identify as "leadership material" that leaders should reflect the diversity or our society.[99]

**2.8 SUMMARY OF WHAT WE KNOW**
Commitment to increasing youth leadership development opportunities has been identified by Ontario's youth-led and youth-serving sector as a priority.[100] Many communities are facing challenges that directly affect the developmental pathways available to those youth who are marginalized by and from social support systems. These youth are

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[93] Kelly 2008; Gordon & Taft, 2010.

[94] Detzler et al, 2007.

[95] Whitehead, 2009; Fisher et al, 2012.

[96] Lewis-Charp, et. al. 2003.

[97] Mohamed & Wheeler, 2001, p. 8.

[98] Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008.

[99] Whitehead, 2009.

[100] Viranai, 2008; City of Toronto, 2013; McMurtry & Curling, 2008.

predominantly racialized, low-income, and concentrated in dense inner suburban communities where community service provision often does not match community needs. Social exclusion is a process that can be reversed as can youth civic disengagement. Youth leadership development is a strategy that can support both positive youth and community development.

Leading scholars in the field of positive youth and leadership development are careful to point out the differences between PYD and youth leadership development, although the processes and outcomes have the potential to be mutually reinforcing. The predominant critique of PYD is that though it recognizes the developmental impacts of external contexts, it rarely is proactive in engaging youth to effect social changes that would ameliorate the toxic effects of various intersecting systemic oppressions that affect their lives.

Similarly, there are differences of opinion and approach between and among youth leadership practitioners and theorists particularly in terms of emphasis given to individual or social level change. Critics point to a proliferation of youth leadership development programs that are poorly conceptualized to the extent that any form of youth activity or involvement is considered leadership. Moreover, leadership can be conceptualized as the ability to motivate others to accomplish technical tasks or (e.g organizing a bus to transport students to an event), or at the other end of the spectrum leadership is conceptualized as relational processes with individuals differentially and collaboratively applying their skills and passions to effect more complex problems existing at the level of society (e.g. racism in schools).

Theorists point out that leadership conceptualizations are context-specific and change over time. They recommend providing youth with multiple pathways to develop social and leadership identity. The end result is appreciating our interdependence and committing to processes which promote equitable social outcomes – not exercise of influence and power for its sake alone. Developmental processes between individual and community are bi-directional. Communities effect youth and conversely youth effect communities; it is critical to consider how individuals and communities interact and to develop structures to support positive processes and outcomes on multiple levels.

Communities that invest
in youth development
opportunities go beyond
providing a service *for* youth.
Youth leadership development
is a strategy for renewing and
revitalizing the sector.
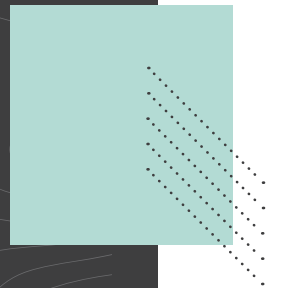
# 3.0 // MOVING THE DIAL – KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

*The following recommendations for a critical youth leadership development model for marginalized urban youth considers the above questions in relation to the preceding literature review in order to put forward key suggestions for facilitating individual, organizational, and community processes.*

**Suggested guidelines (see Figure 6):**

1. Conceptualize youth leadership – purposes, processes, outcomes, impacts, supports

2. Clarify relationship between PYD and youth leadership development

3. Clarify relationship between youth and community development

4. Provide opportunities for observing leadership (peer and adult mentoring)

5. Provide opportunities for formal and informal learning (cognitive, affective, behavioral)

6. Provide opportunities for application and reflection (experiential education)

The first step in developing a youth leadership development model is to clarify how and what we conceive of as constituting "leadership". Who do we recognize as a leader? How do they exercise leadership? Does our conceptualization of leadership support youths' cultural, ethnic, and gendered identities? Is it inclusive of diverse standpoints and ways of being, including but not limited to sexual orientation, class, gender and ethnicity?  Do the developmental processes we conceive of as advancing youth leadership take into account diverse communication, learning, and leadership styles?  Are

we focused primarily on theory and/or skills acquisition? How is our conceptualization of leadership development related to our values and ethics? How will we engage the interface between individual and community?  Who supports youth leadership development and how? Once we have considered these questions and achieved some clarity about how we conceptualize leadership we can move to explicating and operationalizing our purposes and aims for advancing specifically identified leadership development processes, outcomes, and impacts.

The first step in developing a youth leadership development model is to clarify how and what we conceive of as constituting "leadership". Who do we recognize as a leader? How do they exercise leadership? Does our conceptualization of leadership support youths' cultural, ethnic, and gendered identities? Is it inclusive of diverse standpoints and ways of being, including but not limited to sexual orientation, class, gender and ethnicity?  Do the developmental processes we conceive of as advancing youth leadership take into account diverse communication, learning, and leadership styles?  Are we focused primarily on theory and/or skills acquisition? How is our conceptualization of leadership development related to our values and ethics? How will we engage the interface between individual and community?  Who supports youth leadership development and how? Once we have considered these questions and achieved some clarity about how we conceptualize leadership we can move to explicating and operationalizing our purposes and aims for advancing specifically identified leadership development processes, outcomes, and impacts.

### 3.1 WE KNOW IT! - LEARNING LEADERSHIP
A youth leadership development model should consider the formal, non-formal, and informal contexts within which

## Figure 6 - Youth Leadership Model



COLLECTIVE

RELATIONSHIPS, MENTORS & INTERDEPENDENCE

We See It.

OBSERVATION & MODELLING

TRANSFORMATIVE & ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

We Know It.

FORMAL & INFORMAL LEARNING

MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

We Do It.

PRACTICE, EXPERIENCE & APPLICATION

INDIVIDUAL

**POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**
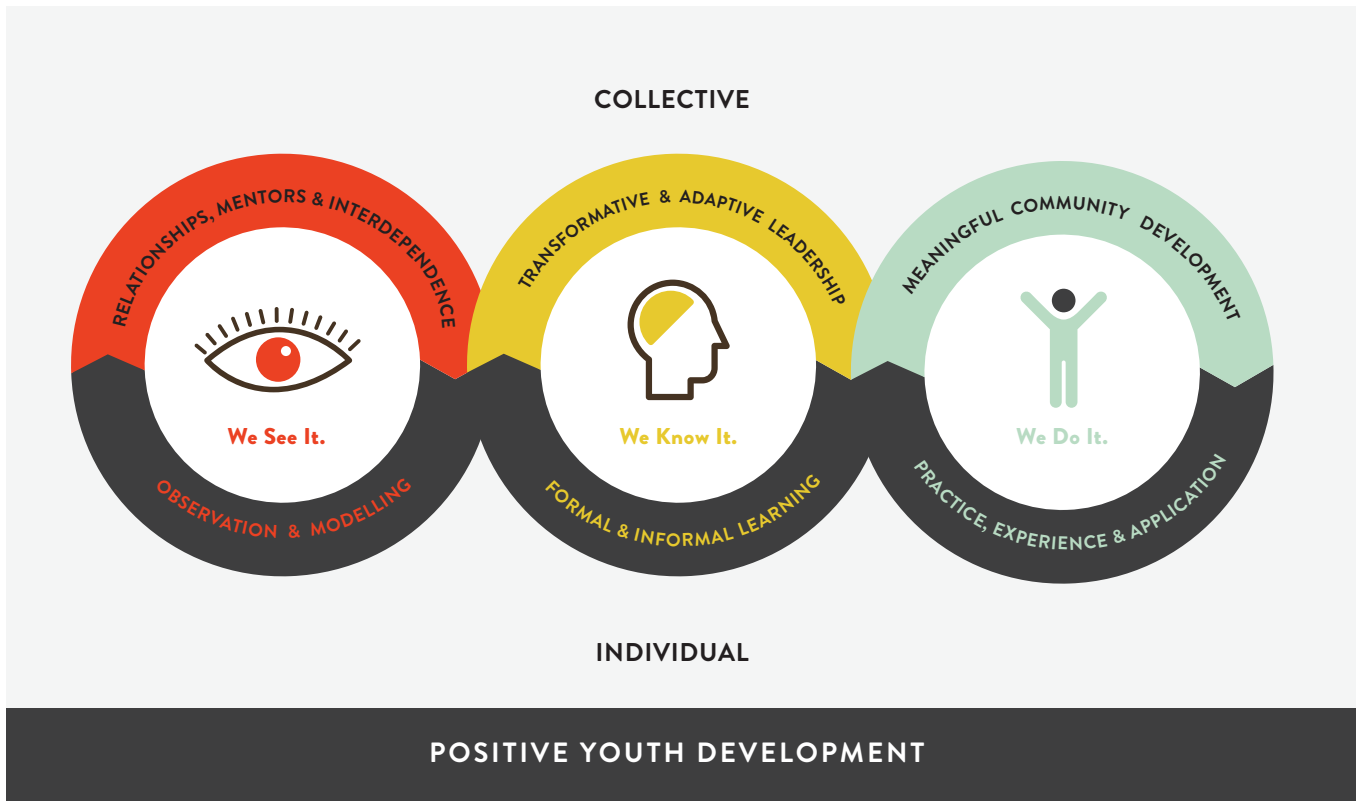
### We See It.

Marginalized youth benefit from observing and interacting with leadership mentors in peer and adult mentoring relationships. In order to develop leadership skills, youth need relationships with people (peers or adults) who apply leadership skills and model how to enact a leadership identity.

Reciprocal relationships contribute to youths' sense of self-worth and self-efficacy. Leadership mentors serve youth leadership development needs best when they provide positive feedback, and model and support leadership development but do not interfere or overwhelm. Youth leadership mentors must be prepared to support youth's leadership development needs for a minimum of one year in order to be truly effective.

### We Know It.

In order for youth to develop conceptual and practical leadership attitudes and skills, they need to be offered opportunities that are designed with knowledge of the youths' community, and mindful about how social systems are organized and function. There should also be activities that develop analytical, critical reflection and research skills.

It is important to consider intersections that exist between gender, sexuality, ethnic heritage, religion, socioeconomic status, geography etc. when developing youth leadership programs. It is also important to keep in mind the interests, passions, strengths, weakness, values, and sense of self-worth that youth may have.

The literature demonstrates the potential of youth programs to develop leadership skills, including: intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, oral and written communication skills, decision-making skills and collaborative competencies such as active listening, teamwork and conflict resolution.

### We Do It.

Providing experiential opportunities to apply leadership knowledge and skills are essential to youth leadership development. Youth require public forums within which to contribute their voice and ideas and exercise their power. Civic activism provides opportunities for marginalized youth to directly engage in collective action to challenge inequities that negatively impact their lives.

Through civic engagement, youth apply leadership "knowledge, analytical skills, emotional faculties and capacity for action in political and social systems" (Borden & Serido, 2009). In doing so, youth practice social change and relational leadership skills including, but not limited to: group organizing processes, consensus building, planning, implementation, creating systems of accountability, public speaking, leading meetings, and deciding on agendas and training curricula. Participation in these activities can lead to feelings of self-efficacy and mattering.

Youth contribute to positive social change through exercising leadership in organizations, communities and public and private governance.
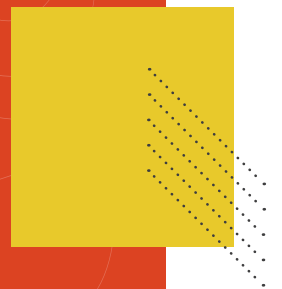
cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions of leadership learning occur.[101] Insofar as we should be intentional in our work, we must also recognize that learning is a dynamic and non-linear process, and people have different learning and leadership styles which require different strategies.[102,103] There is no single template that will facilitate youth leadership development learning for all youth. While the model presented is intentional in its purposes (social change) and processes (relational), the areas discussed (observation, learning, and experience) are understood as interconnected. Moreover, I concur with Libby, Rosen and Sedonaen (2005) that activities can be designed with a mind to work across the development domains. Additionally, it is essential to remember that for youth, it is important to always connect content and experience, internal and external (e.g. "hands, heart, head"). If a youth leadership development curriculum is overly abstract and conceptual, youth are likely to be unmotivated.

## Leadership opportunities that value youths' diverse identities help to recover a critical sense of mattering and self-efficacy.

### Leadership Concepts

Youth leadership development is supported by understanding key leadership concepts.[104] Areas to cover include the historical and cultural adaptability of leadership definitions and approaches, an overview of leadership styles ranging from authoritarian, individualistic, and anti-democratic approaches to cooperative, adaptive, transformative, and relational models. Knowledge of the youths' community as well as how social systems are organized and function support the cognitive dimension of this model as do activities that develop reasoning, analytical and critical reflection and research skills.[105]

### Leadership Identity

A recurrent theme in the literature concerns the relationship between youth identity, "voice", and leadership development.[106] Marginalized youth have often internalized deficit discourses about their potential. Leadership opportunities that value youths' diverse identities help to recover a critical sense of mattering and self-efficacy. Recognizing youth value and redistributing opportunity structures for meaningful participation offer essential contributions to the leadership development process for marginalized youth. Part of the work of undoing the effects of social exclusion is to hold the cultures and experiences of marginalized youth in high regard, not least of which for the critical contribution they can make toward meeting society's leadership needs.[107]

Youth leadership development processes must also create positive and supportive spaces for youth to explore their strengths, weaknesses, and passions and how these contribute to their unique leadership style.[108] By drawing on self-knowledge as a resource, a youth leader can more effectively collaborate, strategize, identify and work toward areas of personal growth. Youth need to be encouraged to bring their leadership goals, processes, and activities into alignment with their personal values and ethics. Finally, our

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[101] McKay, 2005.

[101] McKay, 2005.

[102] Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008.

[103] Huber, 2011.

[104] Ricketts, 2003; Edelman, Gill, Comerford, Larson & Hare, 2004.

[105] Conner & Strobel, 2007.

[106] Murphy & Johnson, 2011; Mitra, 2006; Wheeler & Edelbeck, 2006; Ferguson, Kim & McCoy, 2010; ; Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008; Lewis-Charp, Cao Yu, Soukamneuth & Lacoe, 2003; Luluquisen, Trinidad & Ghosh, 2006; Ricketts, 2003; Edelman, Gill, Comerford, Larson & Hare, 2004; Dugan, Kodama & Gebhardt, 2012.

[107] Lewis-Charp, Cao Yu, Soukamneuth & Lacoe, 2003; Dugan, Kodama & Gebhardt, 2012.

[108] Conner & Strobel, 2007; Edelman, Gill, Comerford, Larson & Hare, 2004.

conceptualization of leadership should actively welcome and cultivate youths' personal passion.[109] In so doing, the youths' whole and emerging self is welcomed as a leader.

**Leadership Skills**

Youth leaders integrate behavioural and cognitive competencies that are grounded by affective self-knowledge. Scholars have observed that oral and written communication skills, intra and interpersonal skills, decision-making and planning support leadership development. [110,111] Relational and social change leadership approaches are enhanced by developing collaborative competence (group processes).[112] Both approaches require "working with others in a common effort, sharing responsibility, and authority, multiplying group effectiveness by capitalizing on various perspectives and talents, and on the power of diversity to generate creative solutions and actions."[113]  Others have identified sharing power, teamwork, supporting others, conflict resolution, and active listening skills as contributors to relational and social change leadership approaches.[114,115,116]

**3.2 WE SEE IT! LEADERSHIP MENTORS**

Peer and adult mentoring relationships focused on leadership practice are highly recommended in the research literature. [117,118] Marginalized youth benefit from observing and interacting with leadership mentors.  Mentoring alone is not fully sufficient to support positive youth development for example. Rather, in order to develop leadership skills, youth need relationships with people (peers or adults) who apply their leadership skills.  Leadership mentors do not necessarily provide direct instruction, but model how to enact a leadership identity for the youth.  Leadership mentors are non-dominating and provide youth with positive feedback and encouragement without being overly deterministic.[119]

Reciprocal relationships contribute to youths' sense of self-worth and self-efficacy.[120] Mentors support youth leadership development when they "step-up to step-back" and create opportunities and offer support for meaningful involvement of youth in community and organizational governance, decision-making, planning, and execution, youth leadership development.[121] Lewis-Charp, Cao Yu, Soukamneuth and Lacoe (2003) suggest "youth are best able to demonstrate decision- making in settings where they have discrete roles and responsibilities that do not directly overlap with adult roles." Leadership mentors serve youth leadership development needs best when they provide positive feedback, model and support leadership development but do not interfere or overwhelm.

Mentors support youth leadership development when they "step-up to step-back" and create opportunities and offer support for meaningful involvement of youth in community and organizational governance, decision-making, planning, and execution, youth leadership development.

[109] Haber, 2011; Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008; Komives et al, 2006; Whitehead, 2009.

[110] Conner & Strobel, 2007; Luluquisen, Trinidad, & Ghosh, 2006; Ricketts, 2003; Edelman, Gill, Comerford, Larson & Hare, 2004.

[111] Conner & Strobel, 2007; Luluquisen, Trinidad, & Ghosh, 2006; Ricketts, 2003.

[112] Haber, 2011.

[113] Haber, 2011; see also Lewis-Charp, Cao Yu, Soukamneuth & Lacoe, 2003.

[114] Haber 2011; Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008; Komives et al, 2006; Edelman, Gill, Comerford, Larson & Hare, 2004.

[115] Haber 2011; Lewis-Charp, Cao Yu, Soukamneuth & Lacoe, 2003.

[116] Lewis-Charp, Cao Yu, Soukamneuth & Lacoe, 2003.

[117] Luluquisen, Trinidad, & Ghosh, 2006.

[118] Murphy & Johnson, 2011; Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008; Komives et al, 2006; Edelman, Gill, Comerford, Larson & Hare, 2004.

[119] Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008.

[120] Conner & Strobel, 2007; Lerner, Alberts, Jelicic & Smith, 2006; Komives, et al, 2006.

[121] Lerner, Alberts, Jelicic & Smith, 2006.

Furthermore, adults in a mentor role should be prepared to allow youth time to develop leadership skills. As noted by McNae (2010), youth who have not been socialized to understand themselves as leaders may initially feel uncomfortable sharing ideas that contrast with an elder's. Adult mentors need to resist enacting an expert role that risks reproducing "the power relations that keep youth in the role of consumer."[122]

Lastly, mentors should be prepared to commit to supporting youth in their leadership development process for no less than one year. Rhodes and Roffman found that "when young people are in relationships that last a year or longer, they are most likely to experience improvements in academic, psychological, social, and behavioral characteristics. On the other hand, when youth are in relationships that last only between 6 and 12 months, fewer positive outcomes of mentoring are evident. When young people are in mentoring relationships that end relatively quickly, it appears that mentoring may actually be detrimental."[123] Researchers are in agreement that opportunities to observe and build relationships with more practiced leaders are highly effective for developing youth leadership; in order for them to provide maximum benefit rather than further entrench social exclusion due to a rupture of the relationship, youth leadership mentors must honor their commitment to the youth and be prepared to support youth's leadership development needs for a minimum of one year.

**3.3 WE DO IT! LEADERSHIP IN ACTION**
Experiential opportunities to apply leadership knowledge and skills are essential to youth leadership development.[124]

Youth require public forums within which to contribute their voice and ideas and exercise agential power.[125] Community participation on issues that matter to youth is critical to the model we are proposing. [126,127]  The importance of opportunities to apply and practice leadership skills cannot be overstated.  MacNeil (2006) summarizes:

> **"If youth programs are seeking to support youth in developing leadership, the leadership literature suggests that we must frame our programs so that youth have opportunities not only to develop skills and knowledge but also to apply them in meaningful and authentic ways. By "meaningful" I refer to decisions that have true impact and consequences; by "authentic" I refer to real decisions that need to be made for the organization or community, rather than simulations or "mock" situations—in short, the kinds of decisions that adult leaders must make every day."**

Irby, Ferber and Pittman (2001) further contend that "generic leadership-development programming — summer leadership academies, leadership retreats — may appear too removed, especially if offered independently from action opportunities." Youth leadership development programs and organizations need to involve youth in addressing "the cultural, social, and political contexts that mediate potentially negative societal influences (e.g., poverty, discrimination, unemployment) on young people's healthy identity development."[128] Marginalized youth are particularly motivated to develop and apply leadership competence with the purpose of effecting social change. Organizational research by Gambone, Yu, Lewis-Charp, Sipe, and Lacoe (2006) found that community-organizing "was more effective at promoting developmental

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[122] McNae, 2010.

[123] 2003, cited in Lerner, Alberts, Jelicic & Smith, 2006.

[124] Murphy & Johnson, 2011; Lizzio, Andrews, & Skinner, 2011; Luluquisen, Trinidad, & Ghosh, 2006; Edelman, Gill, Comerford, Larson & Hare, 2004; Davidson, Schwartz, & Noam, 2008.

[125] Ferguson, Kim & McCoy, 2010.

[126] Conner & Strobel, 2007.

[127] Wheeler & Edelbeck, 2006; Edelman, Gill, Comerford, Larson & Hare, 2004.

[128] Lewis-Charp et al, 2003.

outcomes such as leadership, community involvement, and decision-making"[129] than general PYD or identity-focused programs. Civic activism provides opportunities for marginalized youth to directly engage in collective action to challenge the inequities that are negatively impacting their lives.[130] By taking a systems-level approach to social change, marginalized youth engage in the healthy activity of de-pathologizing their experience. Civic activism and community organizing mobilize youth leadership skills to address structural barriers facing certain communities.[131] Youth who have experienced social exclusion are often keen to analyze, strategize, hold to account, and engage in direct action to change unjust systems.[132] Christens and Dolan (2011) contend that youth organizing "can be understood as a multilevel intervention that affects both its participants (positive youth development, leadership development) and the broader community (community development). In doing so, it equips some of society's most marginal members (youth of colour) to exercise political power (social change)". Human development and community development processes interact synergistically. Studies suggest that youth organizing "(at its best) is a highly effective vehicle for youth development precisely because it is not solely focused on youth development."[133]

Through civic engagement, youth apply their leadership "knowledge, analytical skills, emotional faculties and capacity for action in political and social systems."[134] In so doing, youth are able to practice social change and relational leadership skills including, but not limited to, group organizing processes, consensus building, planning, implementation, creating systems of accountability,[135] as well as public speaking, leading meetings, and deciding on agendas and training curricula.[136] Concurrently, youth develop socio-political skills that enable them to critically analyse, challenge, and endeavour to change the cultural, economic, and political context of their experience. Borden and Serido (2009) opine that youth organizing strategies do more than resist oppressive conditions; they also have the productive potential to create a more equitable social imaginary. Envisioning, working toward, and enacting a just society in our leadership processes is an act of hope that pushes back against acceptance, cynicism and despair.

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[129] cited in Christens & Dolan, 2011.

[130] Lewis-Charp, Cao Yu, Soukamneuth & Lacoe, 2003.

[131] Christens & Dolan, 2011.

[132] Gambone et al, 2004.

[133] Christens & Dolan, 2011.

[134] Borden & Serido, 2009.

# 4.0 // EVALUATING YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

*There is a dearth of evaluation evidence that reflects the full-extent of outcomes and impacts of positive youth and leadership development initiatives.*

Due to insufficient capacity and, perhaps, inadequately conceptualized theories of change, PYD and youth leadership development evaluation often focus on short-term skill-based individual level change. However, as identified in this report, the intention of PYD and ecological social change approaches to youth leadership development is to produce longer-term effects across multiple domains of change. Longitudinal research on the lasting impacts of PYD and youth involvement in leadership is virtually non-existent and poses a sector- level challenge.

## 4.1 INDIVIDUAL LEVEL OUTCOMES

Youth leadership development processes result in individual outcomes that combat social exclusion, restore trust in social institutions and community,[137] and build social identity.[138] Studies report that in addition to instrumental leadership skills, youth develop foundational feelings of connection, self-efficacy, and mattering.[139] Lewis-Charp, Cao Yu, Soukamneuth and Lacoe (2003) found that leadership opportunities supported general positive development outcomes that they categorized as learning to navigate, learning to be connected, and learning to be productive. Specific social change and relational leadership outcomes include the development of "knowledge, analytic skills, and emotional faculties necessary for participation in democratic and social change processes"[140] as well as "increased political knowledge and skills, increased efficacy and agency, strong personal and civic identity, and increased democratic values."[141]

## 4.2 COMMUNITY LEVEL LEADERSHIP AND OUTCOMES

One of the persistent critiques of positive youth development programs and the ways they are evaluated concerns an apparent overemphasis on short-term individual processes and outcomes to the near exclusion of engagement with broader social conditions. Evans and Prilleltensky (2007) note "the stark contrast between multiple personal outcomes and scant community outcomes in youth programs…most youth programs designed to improve positive and civic development concentrate on personal, cognitive, and social skills to the detriment of political understanding of the conditions that lead to youth exclusion, discrimination, and poverty. Most programs reviewed by Lerner and Catalano et al. look remarkably didactic, person-centered, and wedded to charity models of well-being. Few programs strive to challenge the status quo or address injustice."[142] Therefore, it is imperative that we consider how youth leadership development remedies the disproportionate focus on internal and individual changes at the expense of understanding their ability to produce external community level changes.

Communities that invest in youth development opportunities go beyond providing a service for youth. Youth leadership development is a strategy for renewing and revitalizing the sector. The fundamental character of the youth-led and youth-serving sector is the frequent turnover of leadership, staff, and program participants simply due to the fact that youth move on to the next stage of development and pursue life opportunities outside of the sector. Youth leadership

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[135] Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008; Komives et al, 2006; Luluquisen, Trinidad, & Ghosh, 2006.

[136] Lewis-Charp, Cao Yu, Soukamneuth & Lacoe, 2003.

[137] Evans & Prelleltensky, 2007.

[138] Anyon, Ghosh, Mikelson, 2007.

[139] Jones, 2009.

[140] Lewis-Charp et al, 2003; Lerner et al, 2006.

development has positive implications for the sector and society in addition to individual participants. Youth leaders increase the relevance of community programs and services for youth. They also contribute to changing the conditions that the social and community programs and services are designed to address. Finally, including youth in community leadership roles can validate youth identity and culture and thus demonstrate youth value and inclusive principles.[143]

## 4.3 EVALUATION APPROACH

Organizations with youth leadership development initiatives should strive to evaluate both individual and organizational level processes, outcomes, and impacts. YouthREX provides free online tools and resources that can support your youth leadership development program evaluation. Additionally, eligible organizations can take advantage of YouthREX's free customized evaluation supports.[144] Your evaluation plan will will depend on your program's conceptualization, operationalization, and theory of change for youth leadership. This report recommends looking at three areas of change related to learning, mentoring (observation), and experience. Seevers and Dormody's (1995) 30-indicator validated Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Survey (YLLSDS) (see Appendix 1) aligns with key individual-level dimensions of the proposed model (subscales include: learning skills, group management skills, communication skills, decision-making skills, skills in getting along with others, skills in understanding self, skills in working with groups). The YLLSDS was adapted from Mueller (1989) who developed a survey instrument to assess levels of youth participation.[145] Barnett and Brennan (2006) developed a validated survey instrument (Appendix 2) that assesses youth inclusion in community development. At the organizational level, the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) tool combines structured

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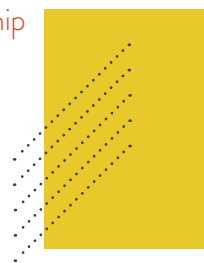
program observation with interviews with administration, staff and youth (see Appendix 3 for the YPQA structure). The YPQA is available free of charge from the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, founded by the Forum for Youth Investment and the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. The advantage of the YPQA is that youth can be trained to conduct an evaluation of their organization.  A leadership development strategy that this report did not explore involves youth participatory action research and empowerment evaluation. In addition to utilizing existing validated research and evaluation tools, organizations can partner with universities (see the New Opportunities for Innovative Student Engagement (NOISE) for Social Change initiative at York University) in order to support youth leadership development through youth participatory action research.[146] Through training, group work with university students and alumni, and community-based collaborative inquiry, youth develop their research capacity, gain knowledge, mentoring relationships, and opportunities to apply their research findings in the service of community change. Youth involvement as agents rather than passive recipients of evaluation research has the potential to generate unexpected questions and analysis which can be used to make youth leadership development programs more relevant to youth participants. Finally, actor-network analysis is a promising addition to sector level research and evaluation toolkits.[147]

[141] Lewis-Charp, Cao Yu, Soukamneuth & Lacoe, 2003.

[142] p. 690; see also, Cohen & McDonough, 2012.

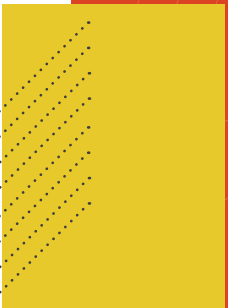[143] Wheeler & Edelbeck, 2006.

[144] Gambone et al, 2004.

[145] Ferguson, Kim & McCoy, 2010.

[146] Wheeler & Edelbeck, 2006.

[147] Gambone et al, 2004.

Envisioning, working toward, and enacting a just society in our leadership processes is an act of hope that pushes back against acceptance, cynicism and despair.

# 5.0 // CONCLUSION

*"We can tear down artificial barriers between helping young people and helping the community. The two can synergize very well. Community development can be both a sign of collective well-being and a source and strategy for youth well-being."* [148]

Youth-led and youth-serving organizations play a critical role in supporting youth leadership development. Whitehead (2009) argues that opportunities for youth leadership development are "not well integrated into the formal high school curriculum and those programs that are available do not adequately reflect the integrated needs of the adolescent agenda." Moreover, traditionally identified youth leadership opportunities in student sports, club, or school council activities rarely provide an intentional framework for leadership development. Furthermore, relatively few youth – and usually not marginalized youth – access these leadership opportunities. Therefore, youth-led and youth-serving organizations play an essential role in strategizing and creating youth leadership development pathways. The pivotal role youth-led and youth-serving community organizations play in advancing the youth leadership development agenda is clear. However, outcomes achieved beyond individual youth experience and change are infrequently assessed and reported.

Organizations that support the development of youth leadership take the time required to respect inclusive processes, are responsive to youth and are open to changes that occur as a result of youth involvement in planning and decision-making.[149] Youth leadership promoting organizations ensure that leadership opportunities and pathways are accessible within their system. They intentionally scaffold leadership opportunities within their organization as well as work to connect youth to external "visible" leadership roles.

Youth leadership development requires whole system support that extends from front-line staff to administration.[150] Gambone et al (2004) observe that the promotion of

**"quality youth leadership and community involvement experiences takes well-trained staff, time, and resources. First, staff of the youth organizing and identity support agencies approach their work with older adolescents with much deliberation. They have thought through key issues such as power imbalances between adults and youth, what roles youth can and should play in their organizations and community, the skills and knowledge that staff need, and the skills and supports that youth need to be effective leaders".**

Haber (2011) recommends that organizations provide youth leadership development participants with tangible take-aways such as certificates, benefits, credentials, and/or compensation. Moreover, the creation of youth leadership development opportunities requires a long-term systems rather than program level commitment.[151] Stable and reliable resource inputs, one of the ongoing challenges in the youth-led and youth-serving sector, are required.[152] Funding institutions need to recognize that "youth-led organizational processes tend to occur much more slowly in order to accommodate and respond to the learning curve that youth [bring] to the process."[153] They also need the flexibility to adequately respond to youth inputs rather than remaining tied to mandates and timeframes that are determined externally from the community.

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[148] Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007, p. 685.

[149] Gambone et al, 2004.

[150] Ferguson, Kim & McCoy, 2010.

[151] Wheeler & Edelbeck, 2006.

[152] Gambone et al, 2004.

[153] Lewis-Charp, et. al., 2003.

A recent review of the systems supporting youth developmental pathways in Toronto found that "many stakeholders also raised concerns about the sustainability of these youth-led initiatives because of the short term funding structures, and lack of supports to assist youth through various leadership transitions that are inevitable as youth move on to other phases in their lives."[154] The United Way of Toronto's Youth Challenge Fund provided significant investments in cultivating the youth leadership capacity of marginalized youth (www.youthchallengefund.org/#what_we_did). However, evaluation of the YCF initiatives determined that more, ongoing, and systemic supports are required to build the capacity of both youth and adult allies to maximize their collaborative leadership potential. Several pillars of the Enhanced Ontario Youth Action Plan take up this work.

The vast majority of research reviewed in this report originates in the United States where youth leadership development and its relationship with both positive youth development and community organizing has been institutionally supported and evaluated for the past decade. Very little research has been done in Canada generally or Toronto specifically that responds to the leadership development needs of marginalized youth. The United Way of Toronto's Creative Institute for Toronto's Young (CITY) Leaders models many of the best practices identified in this review. In partnership with the University of Toronto's Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work the CITY institute offers "theoretical education, applied learning, mentoring, online engagement and peer networking" to diverse youth in order to cultivate their leadership capacity (http://www.unitedwaytoronto.com/). The CITY Institute is available to a small number of youth who self-select to apply each year. Ideally, we would see similar practices and opportunities extending to greater numbers of youth throughout the city, particularly those who are experiencing social marginalization. The vision of this report is to see learning, mentoring, and experiential opportunities that cultivate youth [and adult ally] leadership capacity-building for individual and community change embedded within Ontario's youth-led and youth-serving sector so that more youth and society could benefit from these opportunities.

Youth leadership development (and associated adult-ally leadership development) is a strategic response to demographic, social, political, and economic needs facing Ontario as a whole. Calls for increasing youth leadership come from the grassroots to the provincial level of government. Youth want opportunities to be part of their communities and to be involved in social change. Marginalized youth are often unable to access opportunities for this kind of development. Youth leadership development programs must take into account and address critiques leveled at non-critical PYD by developing programs that support collaborative agency and participatory actions that are directed toward changing the broader social issues affecting the youths' lives. Relational and social change models of leadership development provide opportunities for integrating personal and social development needs.

Research indicates that marginalized youth are particularly compelled to participate in purpose-driven leadership that aims to effect positive change. Leadership development programs should provide opportunities for cognitive, affective, and behavioural learning opportunities to observe peer or adult leaders who serve as mentors, and opportunities to practice their leadership competencies. Youth leadership needs are distinct from adult leadership needs. Therefore, youth leadership development programs are cautioned not to uncritically adopt adult (and outdated) approaches to leadership. Relational and social change orientations to youth leadership development cultivate 21st century skills – collaborative, responsive, and differentiated leadership practices. Youth leadership draws upon but also contributes to positive youth development. By changing our conceptualization of "leaders" and who has access to leadership opportunities, we lead change for a more equitable present and future.

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154 Virani, 2008, p. 27.

155 See http://www.youthchallengefund.org/#what_we_did

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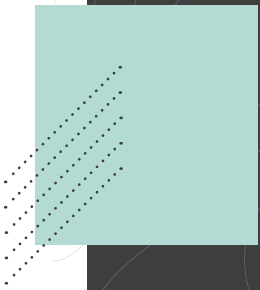
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# 7.0 // APPENDICES

**7.1 APPENDIX 1 – YOUTH LEADERSHIP LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT SCALE (YLLSDS)**

Please answer each item by circling the number that you feel represents your gain. Please answer every question.

| URBANIZATION | No Gain | Slight Gain | Moderate Gain | A Lot of Gain |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Can determine community needs | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Am able to rely on my strengths. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Respect what I am good at. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Can set realistic goals. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Can be honest with others. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Can use information to solve problems. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Understand stress from being a leader. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Can set priorities. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Am sensitive to others. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Am open-minded. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Consider the needs of others. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Show a responsible attitude. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Willing to speak up for my ideas. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Consider input from all group members. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Can listen effectively | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Can make alternative plans, | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Recognize the worth of others. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Create an atmosphere of acceptance. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Can think about alternatives. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Respect others' feelings. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Can solve problems as a team. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Can handle mistakes. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Can be tactful. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Flexible when making team decisions. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Get along with others. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Can clarify my values. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Use rational thinking. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Understand what it takes to be a leader. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Have good manners. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Trust other people. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

**Adapted by the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Ricochet Program.**

**7.2 APPENDIX 2 – BARNETT AND BRENNAN (2006)
RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS FOR "INTEGRATING YOUTH
INTO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT"**

**1.** Socio-demographic variables include age (in years), gender, number of residents in the household, length of residences (years and months), rural/urban location (1 – farm to 6 – large city), and household income level (1-lower income to 3 – higher income).

**2.** Local connections and networks include: "How often do you see or meet with at least one of the following types of people? Immediate family, Extended family, Close friends, Acquaintances, Neighbors, and with others through community clubs/groups." For each, the respondents were given response options of: (1) never, (2) a few times a year, (3) once a month, (4) a few times a month, (5) once a week, and (6) more than once a week.

**3.** Capacity building for youth leadership index was composed: Consider the group/organization that you are most involved in. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? I'm actively involved in decision making, I'm actively involved in policy making, My community values youth in working toward solutions, I have a large say in how the organization grows, My input has value, and I influence the community by being in this organization. Response options ranged from 1 – Strongly Disagree to 5 – Strongly Agree influence. As with the dependent variable, a series of factor analysis were conducted using established selection criteria. In all analyses, a one factors model was identified. Cronbach's Alpha for this index was .87.

**4.** Methods for fostering youth enthusiasm and investment in community activities were measured by: People become involved in community activities for many reasons. I participate in community activities because: I believe that the community needs new ideas, I believe that the community needs better services, I am dissatisfied with the way things are, and I enjoy local politics, and I feel it is my public duty as a citizen. Response options ranged from 1 – Strongly Disagree to 5 – Strongly Agree. Effective youth/adult partnerships can run into problems. How do the following affect your decision to become actively involved in your community? No identified role for youth in organizations,

Not being assigned to committees, and Organizations not allowing youth to vote. Response options ranged from 1 – not a problem to 5 – major problem.

**5.** Opportunities for personal/professional growth were measured by: How does each of the following influence your decision to become involved in community activities? Receiving recognition and local prestige, Having the opportunity to use my skills, Getting acquainted with people, Having the opportunity to develop new skills, Influencing the behavior of others, Having the opportunity to set an example for others. Response options ranged from 1= no influence to 5=strong influence. Also included was: How do the following affect your decision to become actively involved in your community? Not having skills to offer. Response options ranged from 1= not a problem to 5=major problem. This item was reverse coded for analytical proposes. In all analyses, a one factors model was identified. Cronbach's Alpha for this index was .75.

**6.** Youth linkages to program and policy planning were measured by: People have different opinions regarding the importance and impact of youth volunteers on the community. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Youth volunteers improve the local quality of life, The local economy is improved by youth volunteers, Youth volunteers help focus attention on local conditions, Youth as volunteers provide important local services, Youth volunteers don't actually do much in my community (reverse coded), and Local groups rely heavily on youth volunteers. Response options ranged from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree. In all analyses, a one factors model was identified. Cronbach's Alpha for this index was .73.

** Leadership capacity and youth investment were the greatest predictor of community involvement (R2=.23 and .18 respectively). Individual investment items and the leadership capacity index were all positively related to youth community involvement.

**7.3 APPENDIX 3 – YOUTH PROGRAM
QUALITY ASSESSMENT STRUCTURE**

**Form A: Offering-Level Items**

**I. Safe Environment**

A. Psychological and emotional safety are promoted

B. The physical environment is safe and healthy for youth

C. Appropriate emergency procedures and supplies are present.

D. Rooms and furniture acommodate activities.

E. Healthy food and drinks are provided.

**II. Safe Environment**

F. Staff provides a welcoming atmosphere.

G. Session flow is planned, presented and paced for youth.

H. Activities support active engagement.

I. Staff support youth to build new skills.

J. Staff support youth with encouragement.

K. Staff use youth-centered approaches to reframe conflict.

**III. Interaction**

L. Youth have opportunities to develop a sense of belonging.

M. Youth have opportunities to participate in small groups.

N. Youth have opportunities to act as group facilitators
    and mentors.

O. Youth have opportunities for adult-youth partnership.

**IV. Engagement**

P. Youth have opportunities to set goals and make plans

Q. Youth have opportunities to make choices based on interests.

R. Youth have opportunities to reflect.

**Form B: Organization-Level Items**

**V. Youth Centered Policies & Practices**

A. Staff qualifications support a positive youth development focus.

B. Offerings tap youth content interests to build multiple skills.

C. Youth have influence on setting and activities in the
organization.

D. Youth have influence on structure and policy in the
organization.

**VI. High Expectations for Youth and Staff**

E. Organization promotes staff development.

F. Organization promotes supportive social norms.

G. Organization promotes high expectations for youth.

H. Organization is committed to ongoing program improvement.

**V11. Access**

I. Staff availability and longevity support youth-staff relationships.

J. Schedules are in effect.

K. Barriers to participation are addressed.

L. Organization communicates with families, schools,
    and organizations.