

Youth as Effective Citizens

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YOUTH AS EFFECTIVE CITIZENS

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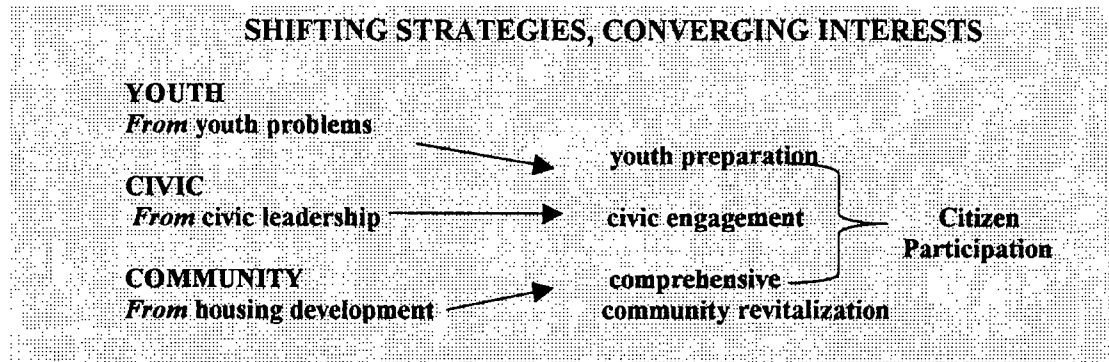
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with 18 focus group participants. A roster of focus group participants and individual interviewees is attached.¹

Between July and September 1999, IYF-US staff brought together the lessons and themes that emerged from the ongoing literature review conducted by IYF-US staff, consultants, and interns, the Bay Area interviews and focus groups, and interviews and focus groups with other national and local leaders in youth leadership and youth action conducted in June and July.

What follows are the syntheses of learnings of the IYF-US team: Karen Pittman, Thaddeus Ferber and Merita Irby. The insights and work of Jules Dunham who initiated and coordinated the "GOALS" meeting of youth action programs that triggered much of our thinking, and of Meredith Honig, an independent consultant and Stanford University graduate student who assisted us in developing a knowledge of Bay Area programs and leaders, are also reflected in this report. We thank them for their efforts.

¹ Detailed notes were taken on both the focus group and individual discussions. These have been analyzed for themes and used to provide contextual quotes for the interim and final reports prepared for the Foundation. They are also being incorporated into reflective papers on the "state of the art" that build on a series of IYF-US led discussions on the topic that have been held over the past two months. These reflective papers will be shared with all Bay Area focus group participants as a part of the IYF-US commitment to support strategic national and local level dialogue.



- The youth development approach has slowly but steadily shifted the public's focus from problem prevention to full preparation. But there is increasing concern, among many in the field, that further refinement is needed.^a It is becoming strikingly apparent that older youth, aged 14-23, are far too often dropping out of pathways toward successful adulthood. While focused attention and action has been applied to the early adolescent years, research and anecdotal evidence suggests that we are not doing well by our older youth. Too often, the opportunities laid out for younger children and youth come to an abrupt stop, leaving older youth with no place to go and nothing to do.^a New data reveals that losing these older youth has dire consequences.^b Young people themselves have been the strongest advocates for change, pushing program planners to go beyond their focus on preparation and activity to give young people more responsibilities within organizations and help them have an impact in their communities.
- The civic participation arena has, in recent years, gathered momentum and a renewed sense of urgency. Buttressed by Robert Putnam's landmark piece "Bowling Alone," experts are warning that the very social fabric that holds our democracy together has thinned to dangerous levels – a renewed sense of community and of civic responsibility is needed, and it is needed fast. People are looking anxiously to the next generation and wondering if they will raise the country up to a new level of social consciousness, or if they will fall through the rapidly developing holes. The passing of the National and Community Service Act in 1990 marked a stepped up public commitment to increasing civic responsibility in the U.S. Young people were selected as the focal point of the overall effort.
- The community development field is coming full circle. It began thirty years ago as a holistic movement incorporating and integrating a full range of human development needs with economic and physical development efforts. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, community development corporations (CDCs) began to focus more exclusively on housing and economic development, squeezing out human development efforts as the housing development field grew more specialized and complex. The 1990s have seen the pendulum swing back toward comprehensive community building – "beyond bricks and mortar" – to once again consider the importance of community organizing and the development of human and social capital. This shift has opened the gate for key actors in the community development/CDC field to begin asking: "Where are the youth, and what roles should they play?"

^a For example, a Public/Private Ventures Community Change for Youth Development study (Sipe and Ma, 1998) shows that, while two-thirds of younger adolescents experience leadership experiences, only half of older youth do. This is the opposite of what one should expect. If communities intentionally laid out pathways for the next generation to follow, older youth would be both better equipped and better positioned to lead than their younger peers.

^b For example, *America's Disconnected Youth*, a new study edited by Douglas Besharov (1999), reveals that young adults who are idle for three or more transitional years between ages 17-23 are significantly more likely to end up poor, on welfare, in prison, or unemployed as adults.

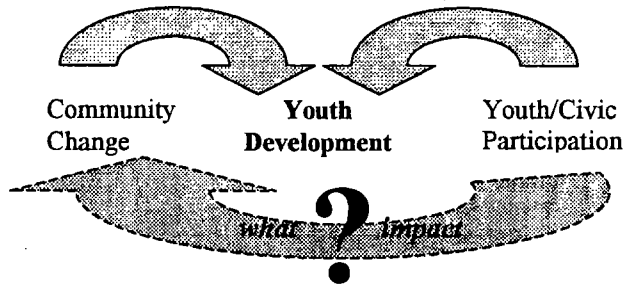
There is strong reason to believe that increasing the supports and opportunities for meaningful engagement of youth as effective problem-solvers maximizes the outcomes desired by both groups. The challenge is to simultaneously encourage youth-focused organizations to push their members toward deeper and sustained action and to encourage civic and community-focused organizations to pull more young people into the core of their work.

Youth participation is discussed as a critical part of youth development.

Community change is discussed as a critical ingredient in youth development.

But youth participation is not discussed as critical to community change by either those who promote youth

development, or those who promote community development and social change.



This theme -- the rationales and supports for youth participation offered from the youth development and community/civic change sides of the scales -- is the central issue of this report.

- Section 1 steps back to offer a brief overview of youth development, the importance of youth participation to the youth development approach, and the links between youth development and youth leadership development. This is not a digression. There is an enormous opportunity to move forward to support young people's efforts to make a difference on the issues and in the neighborhoods that are important to them -- young people *and* adults are recognizing the power and energy of youth voice and youth action. But it is critically important that the balance not be allowed to tip in the other direction. Youth participation needs to be grounded in youth development.
- Section 2 pushes forward to discuss the expectations and opportunities needed for young people to assume roles as change makers. It offers a brief discussion of the barriers and tensions to adults embracing the idea of power-sharing with young people and introduces the idea that adults have to provide visible *pathways* for young people to participate in ways that build skills and afford real opportunities to make a difference.
- Section 3 reviews lessons learned from a national scan of programs and organizations that are working to find the balance between supporting youth development and promoting youth action.

Again, our read of the trends in youth development, civic engagement, and community development is that there is a growing interest in identifying and expanding strategies to support youth participation. Our fear is that, left unharnessed, this interest will either splinter (generating

Section 1 FROM PREVENTION TO PREPARATION TO PARTICIPATION: A DECADE OF PROMOTING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The last two decades were witness to a sea of change in thinking about how to address pressing youth problems such as substance abuse, pregnancy, and violence as well as in how to involve young people in the decisions and organizations that affect them. Three overlapping shifts in efforts to frame the goals and strategies for youth – especially older youth 13 to 20 – began in the 1980s and 1990s. Shifts that served to move discussions, and to some extent policies and practices:

- *from problem prevention to preparation*, building on the realization that addressing youth problems is critical but not sufficient to ensure that young people are fully prepared for adulthood;
- *from preparation to participation*, building on the recognition that young people, especially those in their middle and late teens, learn best when they are actively engaged in making decisions about things that affect them and the organizations committed to supporting them;
- *from participation to problem-solving*, underscoring the idea that participation yields not only individual benefits to youth involved but tangible benefits to the organizations that support them *and* to the broader community.

These shifts are not completed. A cursory survey of the orienting philosophies of youth programs and opportunities in any community would yield the full gamut of responses from problem prevention to problem-solving. But they are in progress, and they offer both opportunities and challenges to institutionalize the idea of youth as change agents.

Shift One: From Prevention to Preparation

The 1980s and early to mid- 1990s policy makers and program planners were encouraged to broaden their strategies and goals for working with vulnerable, troubled, or “at risk” youth. Convincing arguments were made that real concerns about escalating youth problems should be addressed through sustained and integrated efforts to provide treatment and remediation (e.g., substance abuse counseling, reproductive health services, GED training) while simultaneously supporting preparation and development (e.g., building social skills and civic values, providing opportunities not only for employment but for training and career planning). Two bumper sticker phrases became mantras for the youth development approach: *Problem-free is not fully prepared. Fix through development, not fix then develop.* The first encouraged us to broaden the goals set

Adolescent Development, and the SCANS report on employability skills³, have defined a generic set of competencies that go beyond academic or cognitive competence to include vocational, physical, emotional, civic, social and cultural competencies.

Competence alone, while critical, is not enough.

Defining youth outcomes solely in terms of the competencies -- the skills, behaviors, knowledge -- that we want them to have and not in terms of the broader psycho-social components that make them confident

Desirable Youth Outcomes

Confidence	Competence
Self-worth	Civic & Social
Mastery & Future	Cultural
Character	Physical Health
Responsibility	Emotional Health
Spirituality	Intellectual
	Employability
Connection	Contribution
Safety & Structure	To Community
Membership & Belonging	To Cause

young men and women limits our strategies and undermines our chances of success. It is foolish to continue to ignore the fundamental interconnection between the development of confidence and the development and application of competence. Skills can go unused, or be used in unproductive, anti-social ways if not anchored by confidence, character and connections. Gang members, for example, are often extraordinarily competent, confident, and well-connected. Their character, justifiably, is questioned by adults *and* youth with a strong sense of social responsibility. We have collapsed a complex list of behavioral and psycho-social outcomes into a '5Cs' rubric that defines the broad tasks of adolescence as building competence, confidence, character, connections, contributions.

Asserting that problem free is not fully prepared (and that academic competence, and even competence alone, while critical, is not enough) does not trivialize the importance of problem-prevention or academic preparation. The power of this first paradigm shift, to the extent that it is fully understood, is that it **reaffirms the need to help *all youth* achieve the goals parents set for their children and young people set for themselves**. It reaffirms the need to invest fully in all youth. It urges us not to ignore the need to support those not in obvious trouble, while challenging us not to limit the expectations and supports offered to those who are.

³ The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills. (1991). *What Work Requires of Schools: A SCANS Report for America 2000.*, Washington DC: U.S. Department of Labor.

Shift Two: From Preparation to Participation

The 1990's also saw a shift in thinking about the importance of youth participation as a defining tenet of the youth development approach. Developmental research was used to support the argument that active engagement in planning and decision-making, and real opportunities to use skills were critical to the development of adolescents. Data on drop-offs in program enrollment were used to bring practical urgency to the arguments.

At a minimum, youth development organizations were encouraged to operate on the principle that young people be given more choice and roles in the activities in which they are involved, shifting from receiving knowledge to creating knowledge (passive to active learning strategies), and from being service recipients to being program planners and deliverers. Again, giving young people more choice and voice in their membership organizations was argued not only as developmentally appropriate, but as necessary for the recruitment and retention of older youth:

"Many strengths characterize the existing array of community-based youth development programs. . . Many youth programs nonetheless are not responding as fully as they might to the needs and wants of young adolescents and are thus failing to attract young people after the age of twelve or thirteen – even to such potentially attractive offerings as sports. In particular, youth programs are failing to reach out to young people in low-income environments; to solicit their views, listen to them, and act on their suggestions . . . [to] address the needs for earned income and initial paid employment experience. In general programs do not adequately acknowledge the role of gangs in addressing young adolescents' needs (for safety, status, meaningful roles, a sense of belonging, a sense of competence) and they do not actively compete with gangs for youth membership."

A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Non-School Hours,
Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992

Taken at its broadest, the commitment to youth participation translated into an organizational commitment to involve young people in all aspects of decision-making – from programming to fund development to personnel to governance. Today it is not at all difficult to point to youth-serving organizations, even institutions and systems, that have young people making decisions about their own activities, and contributing to the larger organization as volunteers and paid staff, on planning committees, grievance committees, and on the board. *But efforts to engage youth within youth-serving organizations are not always accompanied by efforts to engage them in their communities. Nor are they always offered with an eye toward meaningful public results.*

providing vital human services to the young, the old, and the indigent. There is no shortage of anecdotes to support young people's own assessment that they have what it takes to make a difference. Nor is there evidence that, for the most part, the issues that concern them as they look around their communities are the issues that concern all of us.

Where the shift from a focus on active participation to public participation falls short, however, is at the point of arguing that young people's participation in addressing community problems is not only possible and useful, but fruitful – that it pays off against adult standards of success. Efforts to promote and support youth action in community problem-solving all share an assumption that the work done will be meaningful to the participants and meaningful to a larger group of beneficiaries. But this assumption is not translated into success indicators.

For example, when the Commission on National and Community Service was formed in 1992, it defined the elements of successful youth service almost exclusively in terms of individual gains. The description of the ingredients of a strong Youth Corps focus exclusively on individual benefits, even though as a stipend program, it might be assumed that assessments of community impact would come into play.

Elements of Successful Service

Commission on National and Community Service, 1993

- *Youth Leadership.* Young people contribute more and grow more when they have leadership roles in all aspects of program planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- *Diversity of participants and team spirit.* Service that provides a common ground for different types of people to learn, contribute, and grow together is a valuable vehicle for overcoming social barriers.
- *Worthwhile work.* Those in service want to do work that matters. Whether they are building a house or tutoring children, servers must understand why what they are doing is important.
- *Diversity of opportunities.* In choosing among projects, and in assigning tasks within projects, programs need to recognize that people have different interests and talents, needs and desires.
- *Education and reflection.* Programs are most effective when participants reflect on their service experiences in structured ways – such as reading and group discussion – that help them think critically about what they are doing and learning.
- *Training.* Those in service need to be properly prepared for the world of work they are to do. Moreover, development of new knowledge and skills is one of the rewards of serving.
- *Evaluation.* Good programs build in mechanisms for evaluation, and learn from them how to improve their future work.

Internal working document. Not for duplication or dissemination.

Did participation rates among the hardest to engage youth and adult participants increase? Were new skills developed? Were new, lasting habits formed? Did new relationships form? Were new and better jobs found? Or, more simply, did change occur that was meaningful to the individual lives of the young people and adults involved? (See Appendix B on Youth Involvement in Community Development Corporations.)

Excluding Young People From Meaningful Roles: The Conventional Wisdom Behind Deferring Full Participation

The idea that youth are not ready to step into adult roles surfaces regularly in popular culture,⁵ is reinforced by academic theories found in the sociological and psychological literature of the past century. The “sturm und drang” (storm and stress) depiction of adolescence espoused by early scientists such as Erickson, Freud and Hall has been toned down significantly by modern researchers, but it remains a vivid and poignant image – an image that has been further ingrained by the “youth as problems to be fixed” perspective. That these conceptions have not been successfully challenged may be due, in part, to the fact that the United States has a surplus of adolescents and young adults compared to its labor force needs. Societal shifts have worked to prolong the transition years during which children are assumed to still not be ready for adulthood. As Nightingale and Wolverson (1993) document, while in earlier eras children and youth played significant roles at early ages (especially in agrarian settings), modern “social changes have postponed the end of adolescence and dependence until later. In some cases well over 25 years of age. Therefore today it is commonly accepted that young people have no clear roles beyond schooling, sport and other forms of leisure.”

It is unfortunate but true that old psychological theories and new economic realities have combined to create a context in which young people can “justifiably” be denied equal participation rights. Some have come to view this disenfranchisement of young people as similar in its logic and rationale to exclusion of women, blacks or gays from sharing political power (e.g. Mike Males’ recent book, the Scapegoat Generation, 1996). Many young people have also come to this conclusion:

“Today, in the 1990s, if you had a problem in the Black community, and you brought together a group of white people to discuss how to solve it, almost nobody would take that panel seriously. In fact there’d probably be a public outcry. It would be the same thing for women’s issues or gay issues. Can you imagine a bunch of men sitting on the Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Women? But every day, in local arenas all the way to the White House, adults sit around and decide what problems youth have and what youth need, without ever consulting us.”

Jason Warwin, 17

Youth Force, New York City

⁵ When asked what first comes to their minds when they think about today’s teenagers, two-thirds of Americans (67 percent) immediately reach for negative adjectives such as “rude,” “irresponsible” and “wild” . . . Only a handful describe teens positively using terms such as “smart” or “helpful” according to a 1997 survey commissioned by Public Agenda., (*Kids These Days: What Americans Really Think About The Next Generation*, Farkas, S. and Johnson, J. with Duffett, A. and Bers, A., Washington D.C: Public Agenda.)

- Clear expectations that all young people can and should make a difference – expectations conveyed and reinforced by parents, peers, teachers, faith leaders, public officials, business owners – and
- Visible pathways for them to do so – opportunities for young people to link learning to contribution (paid or unpaid) in areas and on issues that have meaning to them. Both components are critical.

Without clear, broadly held expectations that young people can and should contribute to their communities, there will never be enough pathways for young people. However, without clear, flexible pathways that meet young people where they are – in terms of capacities, motivation, and action experience – and help stretch them to where they might go, we should not expect to have the diverse cadre of new leaders needed for the coming years.

Needed: Multiple Paths for Youth to See and Be Change Makers

To be effective, strategies to engage youth as visible actors in their communities should not be hit or miss or be isolated opportunities offered in a vacuum. A decade ago, the Youth Committee of the Lilly Endowment issued a report in which it stated that “youth development is not a happenstance matter.” Supporting young people throughout the adolescent and young adult years requires more than casual checks to see if there are things for them to do. It requires careful monitoring against clear goals.

The same is true for efforts to promote and support youth action. It is not enough to offer a service opportunity in 5th grade, a summer job in 8th grade, and an internship in 10th grade. Young people have to have ongoing options to participate meaningfully in organizations and activities that they believe will make a difference to someone. Equally important, young people need to know – or, to state it more forcefully, need to be able to envision – how they might build the skills that allow them to act on their

interests and beliefs. Youth development called for more intentionality in youth programming. Developing and deploying a cadre of young leaders calls for more directionality and long-term vision on the part of adults. Adults need to create expectations, create opportunities, and create

YOUTH NEED TO SEE THE PATHS OTHERS HAVE TAKEN

Young people need to see the rungs of the ladder clearly. Many ladders are missing the bottom rungs- so kids can't even get started. Organizations with young people of color on the board and professionals from different backgrounds, allow them to see the possibilities. They begin to see the impact of the work, thus structure their future so that they can continue down this path. They begin to realize that their own voice is important- the organization puts them at an equal level with decision makers- youth know what is best for youth. This allows them to value their own voices, and discover importance of making their voice heard.

**Taj James, Youth Making a Change,
San Francisco**

- *Youth action programs* stand out from the broader terrain of youth development programs because of their commitment to youth action – to engaging or supporting young people in work that makes a difference to others. There appears to be overwhelming agreement that good youth action programs support youth development by ensuring that youth action is linked to skill-building and awareness building.

Young people should not be used as pawns in games they do not understand. As survey after survey revealed, young people value volunteer opportunities more when they feel they build skills and understand the larger mission – even if they were able to contribute only a small piece.

The primary lesson: *to support youth development and maximize community or civic impact, opportunities for youth action have to be coupled with opportunities to build capacity and deepen motivation and awareness. The timing and*

pacing of these three components can and should vary from opportunity to opportunity and from young person to young person. We introduce the concept of action pathways to underscore the

CREATING ACTION PATHWAYS IN SALT LAKE CITY AND SEATTLE

In *Salt Lake City*, a local citizens' group, entitled Project 2000 initiated a dialogue on the future of the state, they quickly realized the importance of giving a voice to young people, who were future community leaders and decision makers. Accordingly, they launched Kidspeak, a curriculum that gives young people a voice by involving them in projects that make their communities better places to live. The curriculum is implemented through Salt Lake City's public schools, and places emphasis on students solving local problems and seeing the impact of local problems on the nation and the world. The outcome is to help students make a positive contribution in their community, neighborhood, or school, and thereby develop a sense of ownership and pride in the future of their community. Students build specific capacities (e.g. letter writing, campaigning) and take action on specific projects connected to the community planning process. The implied formula: CAPACITY-BUILDING + ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION → LONG- TERM MOTIVATION. The assumption is that capacity-building and action opportunities are continuous (at least throughout the class) and in a close time loop (i.e., they build off of each other).

Seattle is a different story. In 1991, students were invited to one-shot youth summit (discrete opportunities to be vocal) organized by Seattle KidsPlace ("a kids' lobby for an effective Seattle.") and sponsored by the Boeing Corporation. The more than 500 young people were frustrated that they were not offered ongoing opportunities to express opinions and to build capacities and connections needed to act on their ideas. Motivated, they pushed to find a way to get the access and information they wanted. Seattle Youth Involvement Day led to Seattle Youth Involvement Network. SYIN provides training and technical assistance to young people and young professionals, maintains a clearinghouse of information on current youth programs and volunteer opportunities, builds coalitions, conducts youth surveys, and raises public consciousness about the positive contributions made by young people. The formula here: IMMEDIATE MOTIVATION → CAPACITY-BUILDING + ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION.

These efforts and others were documented by Ramona Mullahey, Yve Susskind, and Barry Checkoway in a recent report, *Youth Participation in Community Planning*, prepared for the American Planning Association.

capacity to offer opportunities to engage with adults in real “work” (paid or unpaid). *The traditional pathways offered by many organizations that have a focus other than youth development (e.g. professional internships, training, etc.), can be made doubly powerful if those organizations are encouraged to think about how the young people and adults can create opportunities not only for individual learning but for community change.*

What are the Components of Strong, Effective Pathways for Action?

- *Effective pathways allow youth to visibly link learning, work and contribution (civic action) in the minds of youth.* The stronger and clearer young people’s statements of the links between the *skills* they are building, *work* they are doing, *contributions* they are making now and those they might make or do in the future, the clearer and more compelling is the pathway. The skills being built now may link in a young person’s mind to a contribution they want to make in the near future (or are working to make now). The service they are contributing now may link to career opportunities they see in the future. There is a need to respect young people’s desire to see learning, work, and service (or civic engagement) as intertwined parts of their development and their commitment to others.

“A kid from Hunter’s Point once told me that he felt he was just another kid standing on the corner thinking he was nobody. Then he got to introduce the mayor at one of our events. Soon afterwards, he began doing better in school. Why? Because he had the feeling that he was going to be something. People often say that you develop skills and then get involved. But it can be very much the other way around—you get involved and that helps you to develop the skills.”

Margaret Brodtkin, Coleman Advocates.

- *Effective pathways increase motivation, capacity and opportunities by linking them together in the minds of youth.* As discussed in the following section, these are the common elements

“One goal I had when I came in was to find out what motivates people to action and what kinds of things have to be in place—space, adults—so that young people and adults who are involved with the process believe they can do it...Making sure that a young person has the requisite skills, or knows how to access people who do, in order to do something that really motivates them.”

Leslie Medine, HOME Project

of efforts to support youth action.

The key is to find ways to weave these elements together. To have maximum impact, programs and organizations should not offer skill building without linking it to opportunities to use those skills.

They should not offer the opportunities without offering ways to build the skills needed to do the job well. They should not raise awareness without offering either opportunities or skill-building.

Section 3 FINDING THE BALANCE: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE, COMMUNITY CHANGE FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

"I hate it when adults say, 'You are the future.' They expect us to get prepared, not get involved. They tell us to study for careers, but don't teach us what we need to know to make a difference."

Samantha Neves, Young Brazilian Activist

There does indeed appear to be a convergence of interest in deepening opportunities for youth engagement among those interested in civic engagement, community development, and youth development. The shifts in each area have broadened the definition of issues and actors considered, increasing the overlap across the areas and heightening awareness of young people – both as a critical population to be served and as a resource to be tapped.

The convergence of interest in youth participation creates a window of opportunity to promote quality and quantity of supports and opportunities for young people and adults to work together as effective citizens committed to social and community change. This opportunity could be wasted, however, if the expectations of those who can potentially fund, plan, implement, participate in, and evaluate these efforts are not raised significantly. To maximize impact, youth participation must be seen as:

- 1) *Critical to the immediate well-being of communities and institutions, not just to the individual growth and development of the youth involved.*
- 2) *Occurring everywhere, not just in separate youth-specific projects as an integral part of community planning and problem-solving rather than as a series of discrete, compartmentalized youth projects.*
- 3) *Involving learning and work (career exploration and paid employment) not just about uncompensated volunteering detached from career interests.*
- 4) *The right and responsibility of all young people, not just those well-positioned to "give back" because of income, education, or family background.*

Balancing the Goals

Whether the initial focus is on youth development or community change, both youth and community change organizations are increasingly recognizing the need to involve young people more deeply as problem-solvers and change agents in their communities. There are three broad types of organizations and approaches to consider – those with a strong youth development focus, adult-led groups that have community action, community change as their agenda, and "hybrid" organizations -- those with a joint youth and community development focus that are either adult-

which seamlessly blend individual youth development efforts with community development efforts – are particularly vocal about the difficulties they face articulating and defining their role.

“On the one hand – Youth Venture is in a unique place to bridge a lot of different issues. On the other hand, there isn't really a category for what they do. They compete against other organizations that more directly relate to particular funders' goals. As a hybrid, Youth Venture has to make a strong case in order to receive funding.”

Katie Hultquist, Youth Venture

Defining the Commonalties and Variations

Our scan revealed a broad range of activity, activity which is run by different types of groups, in different places, in different ways, focused on different groups of people. Accordingly, the language we use to define the overall topic we are promoting is critically important, especially since the value of promoting a range of “youth action” strategies and approaches is not immediately obvious to many funders, policy makers, program planners, or non-profit and for-profit organizations interested in supporting youth leadership and youth action.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME:

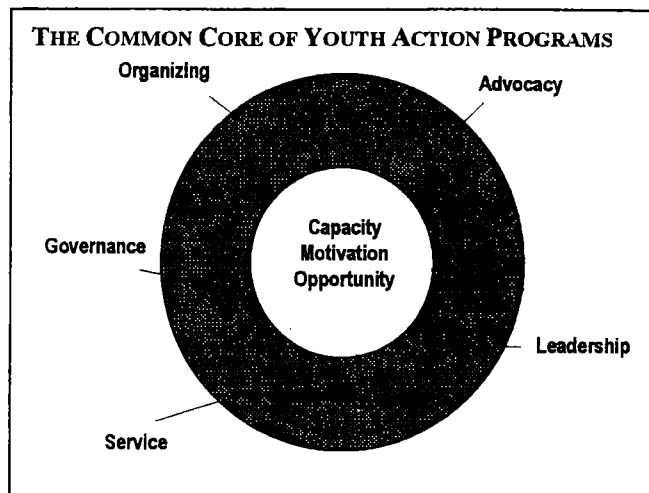
Preliminary Definitions of Youth Action Strategies

Organizing:	Motivating others to take action on a specific, common agenda that emerges from or resonates with their needs and concerns. Building alliances across diverse populations.
Advocacy:	Developing effective methods of articulating and presenting positions on issues that reflect the opinions of specific individuals, organizations or groups. Advocacy is issue focused. It can be but does not have to be constituent-based.
Leadership:	Taking the initiative to act and inspiring and influencing others to act on beliefs.
Leadership Development:	Developing basic and specialized skills (e.g. communications, planning, listening, lobbying) needed to be an effective leader.
Service:	Meeting others needs through direct intervention, improving situations and affecting change.
Service Learning:	Building a sense of civic responsibility and personal efficacy through service.
Governance:	Assuming decision making and power-sharing positions that not only influence but determine an organization's strategic direction and resource allocation.
Voice:	Articulating ideas and opinions through organized, public vehicles such as speak-outs, polls, newspapers, advisory councils.
Social Entrepreneurship:	Creating, financing, and implementing innovative ideas in the non-profit or for-profit world that improve communities and add social value.

* These definitions were culled from the comments of the representatives of youth action organizations that participated in the GOALS meeting and interviews co-sponsored by IYF-US and the National 4-H Innovation Center, June 1999.

Based on our scan, we have begun this task, both defining the common center, and distinguishing the differences between the different “bites” of the donut.

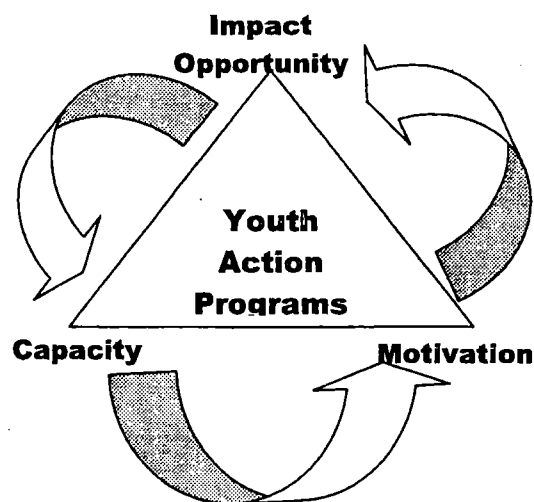
Discussions reinforced the notion that the strategies discussed throughout this section are linked together. Interviews and focus groups reinforced the idea that



the unifying theme is *action*. “Action” was a word that all of the interviewees could rally around and call their own. The term was seemingly neutral, not belonging to one camp or the other (i.e. not being seen as a “service learning term” or a “youth organizing term.”) It is also a term broad enough to be adopted by those in the community development and civic engagement fields, as well as those with a background in youth development.

Under the over-arching term “youth action,” it became clear that there are further commonalities in the efforts that youth action programs undertake. Terminology differed, but all of the organizations and programs interviewed and reviewed, in one fashion or the other, undertook three common tasks:

- **Increasing capacity** – using and building youths’ leadership and action skills, deepening knowledge related to systems, strategies;
- **Fostering motivation** – building awareness of issues and root causes, deepening commitment and sense of responsibility;
- **Creating opportunity** – providing a range of opportunities to act on passions and use skills *in ways that generate demonstrable outcomes*, and/or to build passion and identify the need for skills through becoming involved in real change efforts.



. . . [the plans] included participation of young people as an essential element in Bed-Stuy's overall strategy for community revitalization. . . . The Restoration Corporation would train young people to pour cement, patch stonework, recast iron grill fences and repair doorways. . . . The work could engage local teenagers in the neighborhood, while training them in crafts traditionally leading to good paying jobs. With this approach . . . uniting the youth with the homeowners could be the partnership needed to begin a community-wide movement for better homes, jobs and quality of life.

This vignette serves to illustrate an important point: the first community development corporation began with youth development as part of a broader strategy for involving young people, homeowners and community institutions in the rebuilding of community. Although community development is known for its focus on affordable housing and, more recently, economic development, it has always centered upon neighborhoods and what is happening to the people in those communities. We need today to remember how closely linked community development and youth development were at the beginning, because the two have diverged significantly over the intervening years. There is no doubt that community and youth development belong together as partners; they can achieve a far great and more enduring change than either one alone.

Why did these intertwined strategies diverge? Armistead and Wexler point to several factors, including the pressures of success that brought the commitment to youth involvement into conflict with the commitment to delivering increasingly large housing contracts at budget on time:

Housing development is also fraught with risk. Completing the project on time and on budget carries with it rewards: earning one's developer fee instead of having to put it into the project; avoiding penalties; maintaining the reputation for competence which will allow the organization to obtain land financing for the next project. Failing to complete the project on time and on budget can mean reputational and financial disaster. Facing these rewards and sanctions, it is not surprising that CDC development directors often choose to focus on a narrow set of project goals, and to not complicate the project and increase their risk by including in their plans, for example, projects to train teams of young people and utilize them in construction.

There are no right or wrong answers here. The challenge, as noted earlier, is to help youth, civic, and community revitalization organizations find the balance between meeting individual needs and achieving larger community goals. Indirectly, the challenge requires clarifying the roles that young people can and should play and estimating the present and future value of those roles to the community and society.

Conclusion

It is clear that across the country and around the world, civic activists, community builders and youth advocates are sounding the call to realign and re-envision the roles of youth in society. The call appears to be resonating now more than ever, not just at a louder volume, but at a distinct

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KAREN JOHNSON PITTMAN

Senior Vice President, International Youth Foundation Executive Director, IYF-US

In July 1997, Karen Pittman was named Senior Vice President at International Youth Foundation (IYF), responsible for overall direction of IYF's work to promote youth development, raise awareness of youth conditions and articulate what works for children and youth worldwide and the U.S. In September 1999, Karen established IYF-US, a quasi-autonomous arm of IYF dedicated to bringing international lessons and perspectives into U.S. conversations about youth development and youth policy. A sociologist and recognized leader in the youth development field in the U.S., Karen started her career at the Urban Institute, conducting numerous studies on social services for children and families in the U.S. She spent six years at the Children's Defense Fund, promoting adolescent policy agenda through the development of a bi-monthly report series that linked pregnancy prevention to broader youth development strategies. In 1990, she left CDF to found the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research which she directed until January 1995, when she stepped down to accept a position within the Clinton Administration as Director of the President's Crime Prevention Council. A widely published author, Karen has written three books and dozens of articles on youth issues and is a regular columnist and public speaker. During her career, she has sat on numerous boards and panels including the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, Search Institute, and the Family Resource Coalition. Currently, she sits on the boards of the E.M. Kauffman Foundation, Educational Testing Service, American Youth Work Center, and is a member of the National Research Council's Forum on Adolescence.

About the International Youth Foundation

Founded in 1990, the International Youth Foundation (IYF) "is dedicated to improving conditions and prospects for children and youth worldwide, by enabling them to care more responsibly for themselves, their families, communities and the world." IYF seeks to increase the quality and quantity of philanthropy for children and youth through collaboration with major business, government, foundation, and non-profit organizations. Activities are conducted in partnership with indigenous foundations in selected countries. In conjunction with partner foundations, IYF identifies effective programs for inclusion in YouthNet International, a global forum and exchange among successful programs; makes grants to strengthen and expand the impact of programs aimed at holistic development of children and youth ages 5-20; strengthens the institutional capacity of organizations serving children and youth; and supports learning and dissemination through its grantmaking, databases, workshops, and published reports. Currently, 80 percent of funds are channelled through partner foundations, with 20 percent devoted to programs worldwide.

THE ALGEBRA OF DEVELOPMENT

BY KAREN PITTMAN

"Youth development is what you'd do for your own kid on a good day. We don't need a fancy definition to know what to do." This practical advice was offered recently by Hugh Price, president of the National Urban League. He's right. We don't need a fancy definition. We need a functional equation.

There is an algebra to youth development that parents and young people intuitively use, one that we have yet to translate into powerful, policy-adaptable equations. We talk lists, but we need to talk equations. Why? Because youth development requires multiple inputs from multiple sources over a sustained period of time. It requires formulas to show concrete interrelationships between multiple variables. Lists inform, but they do not instruct. They also give funders, practitioners, and policymakers a false sense that they can support their favorite outputs, inputs, or settings at whatever levels they feel comfortable.

For example: A CBO with a "good fuel" output of three units a day can complement the mix offered by an adequately functioning school or family. But it cannot compensate for the toxic fuel mix dosed out by a poor functioning school, family or neighborhood pumping out 25 units. Equally important, that CBO may not have the capacity (even with increased funding) to provide the right mix of volume to make a difference.

Geographic communities are combinations of settings – families, neighbors, faith and civic organizations, businesses, public and private services which include basic places like parks and ballfields. What we need are concrete ways to gauge how key settings interconnect to improve or contaminate the overall fuel mix for youthful travelers. Once assessed, each setting should be 1) held accountable for providing inputs needed to produce the outcomes it claims are its primary goal; 2) pushed to vider other inputs that could be added without averting resources from that goal; and 3) monitored to ensure that they are doing no harm.

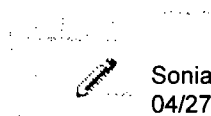
Growing fully prepared youth isn't as simple as $A+B=C$. But it isn't quantum physics, either. There are six steps most parents or

guardians take to support their children and that most young people take to protect, prepare and promote themselves.

1. Reality Check. Where are they developmentally – cognitively, emotionally, physically, spiritual?
2. Goals Check. What knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors do parents and children want to achieve? Avoid?
3. Progress check. How well are they doing? What progress has been made toward these goals? Are they still realistic targets?
4. Inputs Check. Are they getting what they need? Is the fuel supply adequate? Is the fuel mix correct?
5. Settings Check. What are the possible sources of needed fuels? Are they adequate? Marginal? Dangerous?
6. Overall Community Check. Is the overall settings mix right? Is it easy to piece together a steady diet of needed inputs or is it necessary to compensate for major settings (like schools, deteriorating neighborhood blocks) that are not functioning well?

One of the primary reasons that families move is to improve the natural fuel mix available to their children. We have to find ways to help families that can't move by assessing the fuel mix supplied by all of the community fuel sources (families, schools, CBO, peer groups, faith organizations, gangs, etc.) and advocating for positive adjustments. Youth development is a function of the quality quantity and congruence of inputs offered by formal and informal settings in which young people spend their time. We need to think more broadly than youth organizations – which even on a good day can offer only some young people some of what they need – as well as think more specifically than "community." We do not have the measurement precision needed to define and solve equations. But we can pose some basic relational formulas that would give us the traction needed to get out of the mud in which we are currently spinning.

Youth Today. Volume 7, #5, July/August 1998



Sonia G. Chessen
04/27/2000 01:50:16 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Shirley S. Sagawa/WHO/EOP@EOP

cc:

Subject: RE: morning panel speakers

It appears that Karen Pittman's assistant had sent me the wrong document yesterday. Thinking I was reading something different, Karen thought I was insisting that she use America's Promise language instead of her own. I have emailed her back that she did not need to include America's Promise language and that she needs to make sure it is only 4 minutes long. In the interim here is her piece so far.

----- Forwarded by Sonia G. Chessen/OPD/EOP on 04/27/2000 01:48 PM -----



Karen Pittman <Karen@iyfus.org>
04/27/2000 01:18:43 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Sonia G. Chessen/OPD/EOP

cc: Georgette Offer <Georgette@iyfus.org>, Thaddeus Ferber <Thad@iyfus.org>

Subject: RE: morning panel speakers

Sonia -

I've added in a bit of transition language to the document sent you yesterday in my absence. I've put the references to America's Promise and other definitions of the essential input in italics. Our list is a bit broader than AP's but very similar. Please call or e-mail as soon as possible if you want something else. I understand that you didn't want the 5C's but I guess I'm confused if the language sent yesterday with the inputs didn't work for you either. Please advise.

Karen

<<inputs 101 kp edits.doc>>

-----Original Message-----

From: Sonia_G._Chessen@opd.eop.gov [mailto:Sonia_G._Chessen@opd.eop.gov]

Sent: Wednesday, April 26, 2000 12:02 PM

To: susanb@frameworksinstitute.org; jeccles@isr.umich.edu;

Karen@iyfus.org; jgiedd@helix.nih.gov
Subject: morning panel speakers

<< File: Lotus Manuscript 1.0 >> << File: Lotus Manuscript 1.0 >> (See attached file: INFORMATION FOR SPEAKERS.doc)(See attached file: conference agenda.doc)

Here is some information that should be helpful to you in your planning for the conference. Remember you have The agenda is still fluid and doesn't include the afternoon breakout sections. Please call me if you have any questions 202- 456-5796.

Finally, I need to get your remarks ASAP - preferably today if possible. These should be about 1 1/2 page long. They can also be in bullet format if you would like.



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Increasing The Options. Supports, Supports and Opportunities: The Ingredients for Youth Development

Community Support Inputs that Promote Youth Development

- ❖ Stable Places
- ❖ Basic Care and Services
- ❖ Healthy Relationships with Peers and Adults
- ❖ High Expectations and Standards
- ❖ Role Model, Resources, and Networks
- ❖ Challenging Experiences and Opportunities to Participate and Contribute
- ❖ High Quality Instruction and Training

What do we want from young people? Too

often, our messages about what we want young people to achieve are negative – don't get pregnant, don't use drugs, don't join gangs. Parents and policy makers alike share these concerns about risky behaviors that teens can become involved in that threaten their futures if not their lives. But few parents, and we believe few policy makers, stop their list of hopes there. Beyond wanting children and youth to not get into trouble, all of us want to see them succeed. What outcomes – the international youth Foundation talks about 5 C's – competence (not just academic skills, but social, vocational, civic and emotional ones), confidence, character, connections and contribution. We want our young people to be fully prepared and to be fully engaged in their communities.

What do young people need to achieve these outcomes? If these are the outcomes we want to achieve, what are the basic inputs or raw resources that young people need? What must communities provide in order to expect fully prepared youth? America's Promise broke through the public awareness barrier with its pronouncement of five "fundamental resources" for youth: safe places, caring adults, healthy starts, education for marketable skills, and opportunities to serve. The list largely reflects the literature on factors influencing youth development, which suggests seven key inputs. Places are important. Young people need a stable place which is

theirs and where they feel safe. That place can -- and should -- be home. It can also be a religious organization, a school, a community center. Young people need access to basic care and services that are appropriate, affordable, and, if necessary, confidential. Essential also, are high quality instruction and training. Places, services and instruction, frame the resources that families and communities offer youth. But it is the supports and opportunities offered in these settings that are critical. Young people have to have opportunities to develop sustained, caring relationships and social and strategic networks. They need challenging experiences that are appropriate, diverse, and sufficiently intense. They need opportunities for real participation and involvement in the full range of community life — not just picking up trash on Saturdays. *All young people, affluent or low-income, above grade or out-of school, need a mix of services, supports and opportunities in order to stay engaged. Services alone will not draw youth in from the streets.*

This list of seven key inputs may seem very simple and sensible. *Indeed, America's Promise has sparked a chord in many communities by offering this basic list. The Search Institute's list of 40 assets reflects the same range of inputs – ensuring that young people have people, places, possibilities, and key services in their lives. Public/Private Ventures talks about the essential vitamins every young person needs to succeed.*

The number of items in the list is not what is important. 5, 7, 40. What is important is the recognition that young people need people to talk to – including but not limited to parents, safe and stimulating places to go – including but not limited to home, programming – structured activities and classes that help them build knowledge and skills, and possibilities – opportunities to use what they have learned in work, service, or advanced learning.

The list of inputs offered is intentionally place/provider neutral. It is important that researchers and practitioners state *what* is needed, but not specify who supplies it or where it is found. And it is important that all of us underscore the role that parents play in providing and brokering to get their young people the services, supports, and opportunities they need. [This conference sends an important message about parents.]

Could continue...

Parents know their children better than anyone else. They have an intuitive sense of what their children need. They scan their neighborhoods and schools to identify a mix of services, opportunities and supports to meet these needs. They negotiate with schools, health care providers, recreation centers, even relatives and neighbors. Some parents do this better than others – they have more time, more skills, more money, more contacts. Some communities have a much richer mix of inputs than others. There is a cruel irony in the fact that the parents who have the least personal resources often live in the communities with the fewest resources. Too often, the best a parent can do is to keep their young person indoors because the dangerous people, places, and possibilities in their neighborhoods far outweigh the enriching ones, or even the safe ones. The best evidence we have that parents know what their children need and know what their communities do or do not offer is the fact that parents move for their children.