

COMMUNITY & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
*Series*

# Youth Action



**Youth  
Contributing  
to Communities**

**Communities  
Supporting  
Youth**

**Merita Irby  
Thaddeus Ferber  
Karen Pittman**

*with*

**Joel Tolman  
Nicole Yohalem**

THE FORUM FOR YOUTH INVESTMENT

WITH THE SUPPORT OF  
THE FORD FOUNDATION





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DEVELOPED WITH THE SUPPORT OF  
THE FORD FOUNDATION,  
THE SURDNA FOUNDATION

AND

THE EVELYN AND WALTER HAAS, JR. FUND



THE COMMUNITY & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT SERIES, VOLUME 6  
PUBLISHED WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE FORD FOUNDATION



The Forum for Youth Investment was created to increase the quality and quantity of youth investments and youth involvement by promoting a “big picture” approach to planning, research, advocacy and policy development among the broad range of national organizations that help constituents and communities invest in children, youth and families. To do this, the Forum commits itself to building connections, increasing capacity and tackling persistent challenges across the allied youth fields.

The Forum offers its members tools, intelligence, training, international perspectives and individual supports. It creates opportunities for youth investors to come together in neutral forums to tackle persistent challenges such as shaping public perceptions of young people and strengthening the links between preventing youth problems and promoting youth preparation and development. It helps identify, facilitate and broker relationships among members, offering them new lenses for looking at old issues, supports to turn the ideas into action and vehicles to reflect on lessons learned. It works to ensure that the information, tools and insights generated by the Forum and its members are shaped by and useful to local communities and practitioners. It asks members to contribute commentary, products and time toward the creation of a shared information base. All this work is done in full partnership with Forum members, with the aim of increasing collective learning and action on “big picture” issues — issues that cross traditional sectors and lines, and which are beyond the capacity of any organization to tackle alone.

The Forum for Youth Investment is a U.S. initiative of the International Youth Foundation™

## ABOUT THE FORD FOUNDATION'S COMMUNITY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Using the positive youth development framework and guiding principles, the Human Development and Reproductive Health unit of the Ford Foundation launched the Community Youth Development Initiative. The term “community youth development” is used to define the process of young people and adults working in partnership to create the necessary conditions that will result in the successful development of young people, their peers, families and communities — the integration of youth development and community development. The Forum's work on youth action is one of several projects funded by the Ford Foundation as part of its Community Youth Development Initiative.

The initiative's goal is to enhance the ability of young people from economically disadvantaged communities to successfully transition from adolescence into responsible adulthood, economic self-sufficiency and engaged citizenship by building the capacity of low-income communities to create supportive environments.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>PREFACE</b> .....	v
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
Opportunity and Challenge .....	2
<b>SECTION I: THE CALL FOR YOUTH ACTION</b> .....	3
Excluding Young People from Meaningful Roles .....	3
A Confluence of Trends .....	4
<b>SECTION II: FINDING THE BALANCE: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE, COMMUNITY CHANGE FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT</b> .....	9
Youth Development Requires Meaningful Participation .....	9
The Importance of Relevance .....	10
Responding to the Call? Youth-serving Organizations .....	11
Beyond the Clubhouse Doors .....	12
Balancing Individual and Community Outcomes .....	12
Youth Action: A Hybrid Approach .....	14
<b>SECTION III: THE REALITY: CHARTING THE YOUTH ACTION LANDSCAPE</b> .....	17
A Diversity of Approaches .....	18
Differing Strategies .....	24
Defining and Promoting the Common Core .....	27
<b>SECTION IV: CREATING PATHWAYS FOR YOUTH</b> .....	29
Wanted: Higher Expectations of Youth as Change Makers .....	29
Needed: Multiple Paths for Youth to See and Be Change Agents .....	30
Action Programs, Action Pathways, Action Mentors .....	31
How, Where and by Whom are Pathways Created? .....	32
Strong, Effective Action Pathways .....	33
Non-negotiables for Communities .....	34
<b>SECTION V: DIRECTIONS FOR PLANNING AND POLICY</b> .....	37
The Vision .....	37
Changing Focus, Shifting Strategies .....	38
Conclusion .....	41
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	43
<b>APPENDICES</b>	
Appendix A: Youth Action: Initial Summary of Five Surveys .....	47
Appendix B: Contact Information for Profiled Organizations .....	55
Appendix C: Focus Group and Interview Participants .....	57



## PREFACE

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**Y***outh Action: Youth Contributing to Communities, Communities Supporting Youth* is a product of the Forum for Youth Investment's long-term commitment to work in the areas of youth action, engagement and participation. Youth action is at the center of the Forum's work to increase the quality and quantity of youth investment and youth involvement. Youth action is also one of the most promising and powerful themes in youth-focused work today, cutting across and joining together the range of youth investors around the United States.

In short, we see youth action as the next, most powerful iteration of the youth development approach. This belief has led the Forum team to engage in the projects, conversations and efforts that are reflected in this publication.

- In 1997, the Ford Foundation and the International Youth Foundation commissioned a series of papers and sponsored a conference to document and discuss the convergence of the goals and strategies of the youth and community development fields.
- In 1998, the Forum (then IYF-US), through a partnership with the Ford Foundation, formed and facilitated the International Leadership Group on Youth and Community Development (ILG). The ILG was created to explore the roles of youth in community building and community development, with a critical focus on young people and adults working together to create community change. The ILG included more than 20 practitioners, researchers and advocates — half from the U.S., half from other regions of the world — individuals actively involved in promoting youth involvement throughout the world.

- In March 1999, the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund invited the Forum to initiate a systematic look at youth leadership development in the San Francisco Bay area. Forum staff brought together the findings from several focus groups, interviews and an ongoing literature review to further advance our framework for youth action work.
- In June 1999, the Surdna Foundation invited the Forum to contribute to the Foundation's understanding of the intersection between youth development, youth participation and community change and offer recommendations of possible directions for its youth-focused work. The resulting paper, presented to the Foundation's board, featured many of the ideas included here.
- Also in June 1999, the Forum partnered with the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development to conduct telephone interviews with national and local organizations that focus on youth governance, organizing, advocacy, leadership or service ("GOALS"). Ten of these groups joined Forum and Innovation Center staff in a conversation about language, goals and philosophies that greatly informed our thinking.
- Throughout this time, the Forum staff has authored articles and papers focused on youth action, including regular contributions to *Youth Today*, a regular insert in *CYD Journal* featuring international insights on youth and community development, a discussion paper for the Nike Foundation and an article in United Way's *Community* journal.

Together, this work sets the stage for *Youth Action: Youth Contributing to Communities, Communities Supporting Youth*. What follows is the combined reflections of many Forum staff members — Karen Pittman,

Merita Irby, Thaddeus Ferber, Joel Tolman and Nicole Yohalem. The input of Aisha Cooper and former staff members Steve Mokwena, Jules Dunham and Melissa Mullins, as well as of Meredith Honig and Steve Clark, independent consultants, was invaluable in the work leading up to this paper.

None of this work would have been possible without the consistent support and guidance of Inca Mohamed of the Ford Foundation, Robert Sherman of the Surdna Foundation and Sylvia Yee and her former colleague, Connie Dubin, of the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund. We are grateful for their support.

This publication is designed as a companion to *Youth Acts, Community Impacts: Youth Engagement with Real Results*. While this publication focuses on framing the issues, *Youth Acts, Community Impacts* documents reality — telling the stories of a number of efforts through which young people are changing their communities. Importantly, while this publication focuses on opportunities, *Youth Acts, Community Impacts* begins with a discussion of challenges. We hope that the two publications add up to a balanced view of the forces affecting young change makers and their adult allies.

These two reports are among the final volumes of the Community & Youth Development Series, published

with the support of the Ford Foundation. The first four volumes in the Community & Youth Development Series — focusing on the potential for convergence between community and youth development in the United States — emerged from early collaborations between the International Youth Foundation and the Ford Foundation. The three final volumes of the Community & Youth Development Series — including this one — reflect lessons learned from the Ford-funded International Learning Group on Youth and Community Development. Members of the ILG helped to define and redefine the frames and ideas presented in this volume. But *Youth Action* also reaches beyond the experience of the ILG to document the current reality taking shape around the country. In the end, this volume reflects the work of many individuals, both within and without the Forum staff and the ILG process.

As a whole, the products resulting from the Forum's Ford Foundation-supported work are catalogued in *Youth Development and Community Change*, a guide that accompanies this publication. Their many pages raise more questions than they answer. Our hope is that they encourage additional grappling, reflection and refinement — for much is needed if we are to engage young people as full citizens and as change makers in their communities.



## INTRODUCTION

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**A**cross the country 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 frequency. The new call goes far beyond appeals for youth to be given narrowly crafted roles inside youth organizations and schools and far beyond calls for more volunteering opportunities. Young people are stepping outside the clubhouses into their communities and they are engaging in more significant types of action — organizing, advocacy, sustained service — that yield more visible, more powerful results for their communities.

But more is needed. Conversations with youth and adults confirm that the knowledge, skills, supports and opportunities needed to prepare and promote youth as constructive civic activists and community leaders must go beyond the current offerings of most schools and youth organizations.<sup>1</sup> This is true for all young people — poor, affluent, college bound or job bound. But it is especially true for older youth — those 17 to 24 — who will not go to college. Today's programs fail to keep their interest and attention, and they too often strike out for adulthood with little community support, few community connections and even fewer civic and political skills.

A case in point: Consider one young man's response when asked why he liked the program he attended after school in Oakland, California:

*... I meet new people and I learn how to communicate with them. It's like I just started my life when I joined. It was cool. All I did was work before. I made*

*money, but it wasn't like helping people with their problems. The program empowers us politically. It exposes us to things we wouldn't learn in school and we can't learn at home because of the generation gap. It [taught me] about Prop 227 and Prop 207 [two propositions on the California Ballot that affect youth — Ed.] and how to take action. It opens up careers I wouldn't even have considered, like politics. There's a very small group of Asians in politics. I may want to go into that.*

### WHAT POLLS AND EXPERTS SAY

*Youth want to make a difference . . .*

*Contrary to the popular portrayal of today's young Americans as self-absorbed and socially inert, the findings from this survey reveal a portrait of a generation not searching to distance itself from the community, but instead actively looking for new and distinctive ways to connect to the people and issues surrounding them.*

— Peter H. Hart Research Associates (1998)

*Young people do not want to play games. They respond to community programs that encourage them to take on responsibilities and to develop skills.*

— Princeton Survey Research Associates (1998b)

*. . . but they want to do it differently.*

*A new style of leadership is emerging among our nation's youth, one that is characterized by collaboration, inclusion, cross-sectoral partnership, vision, and a commitment to change neighborhoods, communities and, even, nations.*

— McLeod & Moseley (1997)

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<sup>1</sup> Interviews conducted at the June 1999 GOALS (Governance, Organizing, Advocacy, Leadership, Service) meeting sponsored by IYF-US (now the Forum for Youth Investment) and the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development; Bay Area focus groups with practitioners and young people; private conversations with youth advocates nationwide; and feedback from youth organizations overseas.

In describing his enthusiasm for his program, this young man identified the nexus of work, learning and contribution that the program brought together. In doing so, he identified the synergy that exists between changing one's self and changing one's environment. He is not alone in this discovery.

Over the past few years, a convergence of interest in youth engagement emerged among those who have youth development, civic engagement or community development as their primary focus. At the same time, there appears to have been an overall increase in visible, meaningful youth involvement. Combined with other emerging realities, these trends may serve to raise expectations *and* increase opportunities for our youth.

The key is the discovery and promotion of more and, especially, more meaningful pathways to adulthood for young people. The challenge is to advance and reshape communities' understanding of meaningful youth roles so that more relevant supports and opportunities are forthcoming. In general, we need to encourage young people, especially those whose families and communities currently lack power and resources, to become change agents in their own organizations and neighborhoods.

Fortunately, the interests of youth, the needs of communities and the lessons of past efforts are converging to illuminate the nature and source of pathways toward this goal. The vision, simple but powerful, is *youth action*: young people making a difference in their communities — often in partnership with adults — to effect changes in things that are important to them and the community at large.<sup>2</sup>

## OPPORTUNITY AND CHALLENGE

Advancing youth action nationally will require protracted effort, but we are buoyed by the confluence of three important trends. First, over the past decade, we have seen significant advances in our understanding of

how best to address the problems and needs of youth. Second, a convergence of interest within several arenas independent of youth work itself, but reshaping the environment in which such work is pursued, provides fresh impetus for youth as change agents. Third, youth themselves are increasingly stepping forward to take on challenges in their communities. These trends and their implications are explored in Section I of this paper.

While youth action is crucial to community development, individual youth development goals remain critical. Efforts in the context of youth action to achieve balance between youth development and community change — balance between impact on individual youth and the impact on the larger good — need persistent and ongoing evaluation. Section II explores this tension and proposes the benefits of hybrid approaches originating from the civic participation, community change and leadership development arenas that share a common focus on the importance of youth involvement.

Despite an emerging awareness of the importance of youth involvement — indeed, because of it — work needs to be done to clarify, promote and implement programs that effectively support youth action. Section III of the paper explores the commonalities and differences among the various strands of youth action programming. While several important variations are evident, elaboration of common themes can increase coherence and alignment.

In Section IV, the basic *process* for engaging young people in meaningful youth action — not just programs, but pathways — is clarified. Finally, directions for programming, planning, policy and funding in Section V of the paper flow from our assessment of the new opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. The Forum for Youth Investment seeks to facilitate engagement, feedback and consensus building regarding the concept of youth action, and we urge readers to join this process and visit our Web site: [www.forumforyouthinvestment.org](http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org).

<sup>2</sup> The National Network for Youth has spearheaded the use of the term “community youth development” to refer to this shift in youth to programming that emphasizes young people and adults working together to change their communities. We use the more generic term “youth action” to refer to the range of strategies and approaches for engaging young people in creating community change. Not all of these approaches emphasize youth and adult partnerships, and not all are focused at the community level.

## SECTION I

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# THE CALL FOR YOUTH ACTION

Civic activists, community builders and youth advocates increasingly call for more and better engagement of youth in order to further not only youth development, but especially community development and civic commitment. These calls are exciting. They highlight a segment of the U.S. population that is rapidly growing in number, changing in hue and exploding in talent. Equally important, these calls are important because they counter long-standing views that exclude young people from meaningful societal roles. To understand these calls, it is helpful to review the historical underpinnings of youth exclusion and then to discuss three arenas where youth action is on the public agenda.

## EXCLUDING YOUNG PEOPLE FROM MEANINGFUL ROLES

### *The Conventional Wisdom Behind Deferring Full Participation*

*Fish and children have no voice.*

— an old Polish proverb

While calls for youth action are increasing, it remains the case that they fly in the face of well-entrenched views of youth as needy, irresponsible and unqualified for adult roles. Paternalism plays a large role in restricting youth participation. This view is buttressed by academic theories found in the sociological and psychological literature of the past century. While the “storm and stress” depiction of adolescence — espoused by scientists such as Erickson, Freud and Hall

— has been toned down significantly by modern researchers, it resurfaces regularly in popular culture, reinforcing the idea that youth, by nature, are incapable of adopting adult roles. This notion may survive because there is little imperative to question it; the United States has more adolescents and young adults than are needed to meet the current demand for labor.

Also, today the transition years from adolescence to adulthood are increasingly prolonged. In earlier eras, particularly in agrarian settings, children and youth had significant work roles, but “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” (Nightingale and Wolverton, 1992).

Outright opposition to youth empowerment also limits opportunities for youth to make a difference in society. The search for examples of visible youth involvement with important social issues often returns to the 1960s, when young people were deeply involved in the Civil Rights, antiwar and women’s movements. Youth also became activists in their communities, working in settlement houses and health centers, later starting runaway houses, free clinics and tenant organizing projects.

*Since some (young people) became involved in community action activities that disturbed existing institutions and structures, the experience also reveals the sources of some adult resistance to youth participation. Indeed, it emphasizes the need for*

*power sharing and the creation of genuine youth and adult partnerships where innovation and risk taking as well as judgment based on experience can thrive together* (Cahill, 1997).

These are important points. Fundamental tensions do exist around young people and power. On the other hand, America's youth of the 1960s are now its adult leaders. They may be amenable to the view that altering expectations and assumptions among their peers is an important step in creating "space" for young people to participate in community change.

## A CONFLUENCE OF TRENDS

While important obstacles remain, opportunities for more meaningful engagement of young people are emerging, thanks to the confluence of several trends.

### *Trend 1*

**A growing understanding of what youth need and can do focuses new attention on the vital role of full engagement in supporting youth learning and development.**

The last two decades were witness to a sea 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. Through the 1980s and 1990s, three overlapping shifts took place in efforts to frame the goals and strategies for youth — especially older youth, ages 14 to 23. These shifts moved discussions and, to a lesser extent, policies and practices:

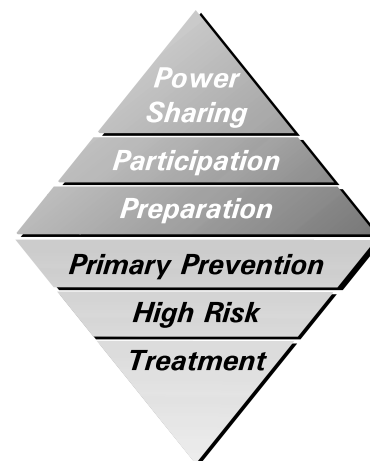
- **from problem prevention to preparation**, building on the realization that addressing youth problems is critical but not sufficient to ensure that young people are fully prepared for adulthood;
- **from preparation to participation**, building on the recognition that young people, especially those in their middle and late teens, learn best when they are actively engaged in their own learning and development; and
- **from participation to power sharing**, underscoring the idea that the kind of participation which provides the most benefit to youth is action in partnership

with adults aimed at making a difference in communities and making decisions inside of organizations.

These shifts are not complete. Indeed, a cursory survey of the philosophies of youth programs in any community will yield the full gamut of responses from problem prevention to youth action. However incomplete and uneven, these shifts lend credence and momentum to efforts to engage young people as active participants in their communities. Based on the growing awareness that youth development and learning are triggered by participation, schools and community organizations have adopted a range of strategies — from service learning, to experiential education, to cooperative learning — through which young people take more active roles in their development. Some of these programs and settings have gone a step further, recognizing that real world problem solving and work in full partnership with adults help to create the most effective learning environments. As new areas of public and foundation funding, new strands of research, and new efforts by national organizations focus attention on the importance of youth action, even the most skeptical of organizations is forced to consider young people as full partners in their learning and growth.

FIGURE 1

WHICH OUTCOMES?  
BEYOND PREVENTION AND PREPARATION



While problem prevention is critical, young people need to be fully prepared. Yet, even preparation and development are not sufficient goals. Young people need to be fully engaged — in their own development, in organizations and in their communities.



*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 civic responsibility is needed, and fast.<sup>3</sup> People are looking anxiously to the next generation, wondering if it will raise the country up to a new level of social consciousness or bring it to new lows. As a result, national movements, such as service learning, aim to rekindle a spirit of volunteerism and a fresh sense of civic responsibility among youth.

Similarly, the **community development arena** is coming full circle. It began 30 years ago as a holistic movement incorporating and integrating a full range of human development needs with efforts at economic and physical development.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, as housing programs grew more specialized and complex, community development corporations (CDCs) focused more exclusively on housing and economic development, squeezing out human development. The 1990s and the early years of the new millennium have seen the pendulum swing back — “beyond bricks and mortar” — to once again consider the importance of community organizing and human capital. This shift has opened the gate for key actors in the community development arena to ask, “Where are youth and what roles should they play?”

Finally, the **leadership development arena** — in the face of shifting demographics and changing societal forces — has broadened and shifted its definitions of leadership. The United States will enter the 21st century a truly racially and ethnically diverse country. The percentage of children under 18 who are non-white (including Hispanic) is projected to increase from 26 percent in 1980 to 36 percent in 2000, and to 45 percent in 2020 (Levy, 1999). Given these ongoing shifts in demographics, it is not surprising that there is growing momentum to develop and deploy leaders who are equally diverse in background and leadership styles.

**Trend 2**  
**Actors from the civic participation, community development and leadership development arenas are all focusing fresh attention on youth as civic and community actors.**

Youth action has been a strong part of youth, civic and community organizations for decades. Organizations like the Scouts, 4-H and Future Farmers of America have long been staples in many young people’s developmental diets. Institutions like Lion’s Clubs have youth components that reinforce civic responsibility and groom young people for civic engagement. Religious institutions reinforce social responsibility and promote servant leadership. But the interest in ensuring that all young people have the capacity, motivation and opportunities to contribute has deepened over the last few years. Just as the youth development field has come to embrace youth action, a convergence of interest in youth involvement has emerged among those interested in civic engagement, community development and youth leadership.

The **civic participation arena** in recent years gathered momentum and a renewed sense of urgency from Robert Putnam’s 1995 landmark critique, *Bowling*

<sup>3</sup> Putnam notes that, although bowling rates are up in the United States, participation in bowling leagues and associations is down. This and other such data are used to build a convincing case that civic participation in America is decreasing alarmingly.

These demographic forces combine with changing workforce conditions and recent research to demand a new style of leadership. As Georgia Sorenson and Barbara Kellerman state, “It is not so much that human nature is changing, but rather it is the rapid and dramatic shifts in the context of the world which will have the greatest relevance for leadership in the next decades” (quoted in Alexander, 1999).

Add to this set of shifts the trend in the youth development arena mentioned earlier, and a unique opportunity comes into view. These four arenas *will not*, and *should not*, merge. Each brings its own goals, perspectives and approaches. But the current window of opportunity to heighten public awareness and secure public support of youth as significant actors in their communities would be far less dramatic if it were an opening in one arena alone. If it were a solitary call from effective citizenry advocates, it would likely be limited to community service programs focused on individual outcomes (e.g., a sense of involvement and efficacy) rather than meaningful, observable community change. If it were a solitary call from community development advocates, it would likely remain uninformed and uninspired by the large body of youth development knowledge, research, theory and action on how to engage youth. If only the leadership field were focusing its attention on young people, again, resources would go to individual skills building rather than community change. And if it were a solitary call from youth development advocates, it would likely remain another voice in the wind trying to influence the efforts of CDCs and other community organizations.

### ***Trend 3***

#### **Young people are responding to the call, demanding more and more meaningful opportunities for engagement in their communities.**

Young people want to be taken seriously as citizens and as change makers. In 1997, Do Something, Inc. commissioned a survey of 1,000 people aged 15–29. It concluded, “Young people do not want to play games. They respond to community programs that encourage

them to take on responsibilities and to develop skills” (Princeton Survey Research Associates, 1998b).

According to data collected by the Independent Sector (Hodgkinson & Weitzman, with Crutchfield & Heffron, 1996), six out of ten teens report volunteering in the past year, compared to 49 percent of adults. Older youth, 19 to 24 years of age, are less likely to volunteer (38 percent). It is possible that they are busier than teens. It is also possible that, once out of school, they are less likely to be asked. Volunteering is strongly correlated with being asked: 93 percent of youth who were asked to volunteer did so; only 24 percent volunteered if not asked.

With a desire to be taken seriously as change agents, many young people agree with sociologists (e.g., Mike Males in his 1996 book, *The Scapegoat Generation*) and others who have come to view the disenfranchisement of youth in much the same way as they view the exclusion of women, blacks or gays from the political process:

*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, age 17, Youth Force, New York City<sup>4</sup>

It is worth noting that opposition to the disenfranchisement of youth is common around the world. The 1989 United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the most widely ratified convention in the world today. Its central tenet is the right of youth to citizenship. The most challenging component of the CRC is the idea that children and young people should have a say in matters that affect their lives and should be involved in all processes that affect their well-being. The United States is the only country

<sup>4</sup> Ages and organizational affiliations of individuals quoted throughout this paper were current as of the time the quoted remarks were made. A number of affiliations changed between the time individuals were interviewed or quoted and when this publication went to press.

that has failed to ratify the convention — in part because of the autonomy and self-determination the CRC grants young people. The 1998 United Nations *Braga Youth Action Plan* reaffirms the guarantees of the CRC specifically stating that “[y]oung people can and should be a part of the solution to the problems of the world.” A number of nations — whether by necessity or because of greater commitment — have gone much further in supporting youth action than has the United States. Countries like the Philippines, South Africa and Australia have created national institutions that guarantee youth voice in government decision making.<sup>5</sup> In many countries, the assumption — for better or for worse — is that young people will be full community members when it comes to economic and civic life.

Nevertheless, American youth are asserting their right to be involved in discussions and decisions that impact them directly, and they are proving their value by joining with adults to address broader issues in their communities. They are getting into the act, often taking the initiative to create new efforts. Numerous projects and organizations have been started by teens and young adults to address critical issues they see among their peers, in their schools, in their neighborhoods and around the world. The bottom line is that today’s young people, even those whom adults consider too young to be change agents, want to make a difference.

As they seek out opportunities to influence their communities in meaningful ways, young people are leading the charge with a leadership style that is respectful of, and buttressed by, diversity. As the guest editors of a National Civic Review volume point out, youth are pushing the boundaries toward new types of leadership. They note “a new style of leadership is

*Almost all young people believe they can contribute to making their community a better place to live — 30 percent think their efforts can have a big impact, 43 percent think they can have a moderate impact, and 20 percent think they can have a small impact. Only 6 percent believe they cannot have any impact at all.*

— Princeton Survey Research Associates, Inc. (1998b)

<sup>5</sup> The Forum has documented these institutions in “Building Nations, Changing Nations: Youth Action Beyond Communities,” which appeared in *CYD Journal*, Summer 2001.

## TOGETHER IN DIVERSITY

*I'm half black, half Filipino. At school clubs they gossiped and I didn't feel comfortable, but generally I like mixed groups. Sometimes it's not so good if you separate yourselves because then you get cliquish. I understand why it's important to have a separate place, but ideally it would be good if we could all be mixed.*

— Rochelle, LYRIC\*

*If I'm in a meeting with just white people, I don't like it even though I'm white. It's just not my life . . . my perception is that the only way to have a real exchange of ideas is that there are a whole bunch of races focused on something together, working toward it.*

— Audra, The HOME Project

\* See Appendix B for contact information of profiled organizations. Young people under age 18 are quoted on a first name basis, unless they made their remarks in print or in a public setting.

emerging among our nation’s youth, one that is characterized by collaboration, inclusion, cross-sectoral partnership, vision and a commitment to change neighborhoods, communities and even nations” (McLeod & Moseley, 1997).

This perception is supported by survey data collected by Peter D. Hart Research Associates (1998), which found that young people not only value diversity and reaching out, but they also embrace a more personal and collective form of engagement.

*In contrast to their 1960s predecessors' focus on changing broad social institutions, young Americans' outlook is distinctly personal, with a heavy emphasis on direct, one-on-one, individual service.*

*Young people embrace a model of leadership that is best characterized as 'bottom up' rather than 'top down' — young adults place a premium on the efficacy of small groups of people working together to effect change in tangible ways.*

*Young Americans distinguish themselves as a generation extremely concerned not only with respecting*

*individual differences, but also with reaching out to connect to and work with people from different backgrounds to address problems and formulate solutions.*

Young people are making it clear that they want and expect the next generation of change makers and leaders to emerge out of the growing diversity within their ranks. The Forum for Youth Investment's conversations with young people reinforce the notion that many urban youth today expect to work together with people of various races, backgrounds, circumstances and ages. Some adults echo the sentiment that, while race or ethnicity once may have divided young people, youth today are much more likely to forge friendships and other alliances across these groups and around common concerns and interests.

That the words and deeds of young people would demonstrate their readiness to be at the vanguard of change is hardly surprising. Their views and actions reflect the real role that young people can and do play in society.

Targeting youth often is an effective means to ensure lifelong engagement. According to researchers at Catholic University and Brown University, "The adolescence-youth era is particularly opportune for shaping the development of identity with its civic component . . . . In contrast to the search for structural causes of 'social capital's strange disappearance' (Putnam, 1995), we focus on what is already known about engendering civic engagement in individuals and generations of youth" (Youniss, McLellan & Yates, 1997). Survey data reinforce the notion that early action by youth is a gateway for lifelong efforts.<sup>6</sup>

Youth's energy and optimism are critical; they are endowed with certain attributes and perspectives beneficial to a community. As Leroy Johnson, Executive Director of the Southern Echo leadership development program states, "Young people are less dependent upon the past, have the least fear of change and the best potential for creating a broad vision for a fair and just society" (E.W. Hazen Foundation, 1998). Youth action not only benefits society when the youth grow up but also can be a valuable resource today.

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, *Volunteering and Giving* and *Young People's Community Involvement Survey*, discussed in Appendix A.



## SECTION II

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# FINDING THE BALANCE

## *Youth Development for Community Change, Community Change for Youth Development*

*Intentionality is critical. The term youth development does not suggest intentionality: youth development for what? We need to be very intentional about the type of young people we want.*

*Youth leadership means having the competencies to solve social problems, the consciousness to understand them and the compassion to do something about them. Youth development needs to have some of that intentionality.*

— Shawn Ginwright,  
Leadership Excellence

The engagement spotlight, indeed, is trained on young people. With that attention comes a great opportunity to have a positive impact on both young people and their communities. But for this potential to be realized it is critical that youth action be seen as the next, more powerful iteration of the youth development approach. Efforts to engage young people in active roles in their communities must be intentionally and strategically supported by a broad range of actors and perspectives, and they must be balanced with knowledge of who young people are and how they develop.

Why is youth action so essential to youth development? How have youth development organizations promoted youth leadership both within organizations and beyond their doors, in the broader community? As youth action moves “beyond the clubhouse doors” to include roles in the larger community, what kind of balance should there be between promoting individual

outcomes versus broader change? And what is the best language we can use to build awareness of the kinds of active roles and responsibilities young people should have in their communities and beyond? We now turn to these questions.

## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT REQUIRES MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

Youth advocates have long called for meaningful youth participation, but experience has clarified what “meaningful” really means. We now know we can maximize the development of our youth as civic and community change leaders only if we foster and expect their fullest possible participation in the social problem solving occurring in communities. Everything we know about youth development points to the need for youth to be so involved. Development is triggered by participation; young people learn and grow by exploring, trying and doing. As the City Year slogan points out, youth are, “Young enough to want to change the world; old enough to do it.”

A growing body of research indicates that young people are more likely to avoid problem behaviors, make healthy choices, learn effectively and become lifelong engaged citizens if they have opportunities to contribute and make a difference. Looking across a number of longitudinal data sets, Michelle Gambone and Jim Connell have found that challenging and engaging opportunities are critical (research yet to be published).

## THE IMPORTANCE OF RELEVANCE

A more basic rationale for integrating youth action into youth development work: young people demand that they have the chance to take on real, relevant roles. As noted in *Urban Sanctuaries*, a study of nearly 100 inner-city youth organizations, “The opportunities and activities that attract young people embody real responsibilities and real work. They are concrete, result in learning of value to the broader society and have clear significance to the local community” (McLaughlin, Irby & Langman, 1992). These opportunities are particularly critical — and in particularly short supply — as young people get older.

For good reason, the condition of older youth is attracting increasing attention from youth advocates. In 1992, as published in *A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Nonschool Hours*, the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development found:

*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. . . . 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. . .*

More recent data underscore the fact that older youth still have fewer supports and opportunities than children and younger adolescents. A survey conducted as part of Public/Private Ventures’ (P/PV) Community Change for Youth Development initiative in three American neighborhoods (Austin, Texas; Savannah, Georgia; and St. Petersburg, Florida) revealed these realities.

- There are small, but significant, groups of youth in each neighborhood who are relatively disconnected — with little or no participation in structured activities, no leadership experiences and limited adult support.
- The number of youth who are disconnected increases as youth get older. This drop-off in avail-

able supports and opportunities occurs simultaneously with an increase in negative activities, suggesting that older adolescents are a crucial group for communities to target when developing new activities in these neighborhoods.

- While around two thirds of younger adolescents experience leadership opportunities, only one half of older youth do (Sipe & Ma with Gambone, 1998).

A recent study adds urgency to these findings, by pointing out that young adults who are idle for six months out of a year (not in school, not working and not married to someone who is working or in school) during three or more transitional years between ages 17 and 23, are significantly more likely to end up poor, on welfare, in prison or unemployed as adults (Besharov, 1999).

### A CULTURE FOR YOUTH AS LEADERS

A San Francisco affiliate of a national youth organization has faced a common challenge among youth development organizations in communities nationwide: how to attract and retain the participation of high-school age youth. A program director from the national affiliate found that even when their traditional programs like athletics, camps and crafts used youth development practices, youth were likely to drop out of the program after ages 13 or 14 — in part because the focus was on building youth’s individual skills and not engaging young people in increasingly challenging roles.

To address this, the organization created what the director calls a “culture and mechanisms for moving youth into leadership positions within the organization.” In part, this meant creating designated leadership roles such as “cabin leaders,” “trip leaders” and “counselors.” These roles mean paid employment for youth as well as opportunities for them to develop their identities as leaders. Recently, the organization has begun to extend these roles beyond the organizations and into schools and neighborhoods. This has proven an important strategy for attracting hard-to-reach youth.

These dire consequences of disconnection are cause for great concern. As usual, young people themselves are keenly aware of the problem.

*There is nothing to do in Oakland, absolutely nothing. Young people are killed in car crashes every night because there is nothing to do but drive around.*

— Young adult focus group participant

The youth development opportunities offered younger children and adolescents must be extended and adapted in ways that entice older youth to remain connected — especially older youth in the “forgotten half” who do not go on to college and are most likely to become disconnected (William T. Grant Foundation, 1996). Effective responses to this challenge repeatedly demonstrate the power of relevance — opening doors for meaningful leadership and action appears to be the best approach to working with this critical population.

## RESPONDING TO THE CALL? YOUTH-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS

Youth leadership has always a home within youth-focused organizations. At a minimum, effective youth development organizations operate on the principle that young people should be given more choice and more roles in the organizational activities in which they are involved, shifting from *receiving* knowledge to *creating* knowledge and from being service recipients to being program planners and deliverers.

Increasingly, a commitment to youth participation has been interpreted by youth-serving organizations as a commitment to involve young people in all aspects of organizational decision making — from programming to fund development to personnel to governance. Today it is easy to point to organizations — even youth-focused institutions and systems — that have young people engaged as volunteers and paid staff on boards and other decision making committees.

However, efforts to engage youth within organizations are not always accompanied by efforts to engage them in their communities.

## COMMUNITY IMPACT!

### *Making It Relevant*

Founded in 1990, Community IMPACT! is a national nonprofit organization that unites neighborhoods to invest in youth, working within neighborhoods to generate scholarships for higher education, develop youth-led projects and programs, create leadership training opportunities for youth, and connect youth to growth-oriented jobs. Their work clearly demonstrates that youth — even “hard to reach” youth — can be motivated by opportunities to take on real, meaningful action.

For example, DC IMPACT!’s neighborhood organizers in the Southeast site were handing out flyers describing the leadership group they were trying to put together. As they made their way toward the playing fields, they met Jerome, a 16-year-old dropout who was sitting in the bleachers. Jerome felt school was a waste of time and “boring.” After engaging him in conversation, the IMPACT! organizers asked Jerome how he would design the leadership group for his neighborhood if it were up to him. Despite some initial skepticism from Jerome, the organizers persisted. He became interested and eventually helped them design their program. He realized that they wanted and needed to involve him and that they took his input seriously.

Jerome re-entered school and quietly began to recruit others to join the group. He told his peers that this group was “different,” that it would allow them to pursue real interest and concerns. Although naturally quiet, Jerome soon realized that his peers listened to him when he spoke. He quickly became a strong leader, and the IMPACT! organizers turned to him often to facilitate the leadership group. He organized several service projects in the community and raised money for scholarships for local youth. Other residents in the community recognized him for his work, and in 1997 his neighborhood IMPACT! committee awarded Jerome a scholarship. Instead of hanging out in the bleachers, Jerome has a high school diploma and is trying to decide where to go to college.

— Excerpted from *IMPACT! Success Stories*,  
Community IMPACT! USA

## BEYOND THE CLUBHOUSE DOORS

Two trends are leading those involved in youth work to look “beyond the clubhouse doors” to explore youth roles in the larger community. First is a growing recognition that young people grow up in communities, not in programs. This truism can be seen clearly in the perceptions of young people in a low-income, predominantly Hispanic neighborhood in Austin, Texas. As documented in P/PV’s *Community Change for Youth Development* survey, young people in Austin:

- feel the effects of crime and violence;
- don’t believe adults are willing to act when they see crimes;
- see the results of idleness and lack of supervision;
- note a lack of structured activities for older youth;
- note, also, the lack of service and employment opportunities;
- want to help; and
- want support (Sipe, et al., 1998).

Although the data from Austin tell a bleaker story than those reported by youth in Savannah, Georgia, and St. Petersburg, Florida, their experiences are comparable to those of young people in low-income communities across the country. Three themes generally

emerge. Young people say they (1) are directly affected by the community around them, (2) need more support and (3) want to help improve their communities. It is simply not possible — and not desirable — to isolate young people from the communities in which they live.

The second trend leading those in youth work to look increasingly “beyond the clubhouse doors” is the fact that youth are leading the way. Youth are taking action, demonstrating through words and deeds that they are not content to limit their efforts to what happens within their organizations. Older youth in particular often “vote with their feet,” abandoning inward-focused organizations in favor of those that demonstrate concrete community outcomes. Many organizations are finding that they cannot, if they remain internally focused, ensure sufficient relevance to keep older youth engaged.

## BALANCING INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

In order to effectively leverage the fresh interest in the participation of youth in civic and community development, a balance between individual outcomes for youth and broader outcomes for communities will need to be found. Youth participation is typically considered a critical part of youth development, and com-

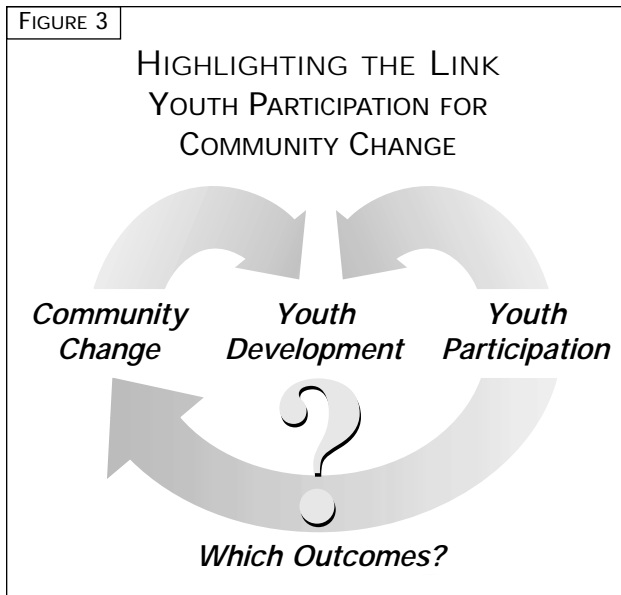
### ST. JOHN’S EDUCATIONAL THRESHOLDS CENTER

#### *Using a Sound Youth Development Approach to Undergird Youth Leadership Efforts*

Adult leaders at St. John’s Educational Thresholds Center believe that youth leadership development programs must build on a base of strong youth development practice if they are to successfully improve youth outcomes. For example, the North Mission Park initiative provided leadership opportunities for youth of high school and middle school age — researching community needs and assets and rallying neighborhood support, and, eventually city-level commitment to the first-ever park in the North Mission.

In developing the park, St. John’s used core youth development practices to make sure youth assumed meaningful leadership roles. Youth were asked to set the direction and run all aspects of the initiative including fund raising, public speaking, editorial writing and community organizing. Adults were continually present to facilitate the process and support individual youth in selecting and assuming active roles. Adults also helped break down challenging tasks such as survey development into discrete tasks (e.g., brainstorming questions, tallying results, delivering presentations) to increase the number of youth who could participate in various aspects of the initiative.

While the designation of a park and other *community outcomes* could have been achieved in a variety of ways, youth development practices helped ensure success in strengthening *youth outcomes* — particularly the capacity of young people to lead and learn.



munity change is often considered a critical ingredient in youth development. But youth participation is rarely discussed as critical to community change (Figure 3).

The view of youth participation primarily as a vehicle for public contribution and community change, rather than primarily for individual development, distinguishes those who define their work as youth leadership, youth advocacy, youth organizing and youth service — in short, as youth action — from the broader field of youth development.

*What makes our programming different from youth development is that youth are required to do something to improve themselves and their community. The leadership piece is moving one group of people from powerlessness to powerfulness.*

— Shawn Ginwright,  
Leadership Excellence

This does not mean that opportunities for engagement created by youth development organizations necessarily lack relevance to youth or to communities. It is possible, however, that they are less relevant than they could be because they are often not held accountable to the kinds of external goals many change-focused organizations use to mark success: Did power shift? Were new resources acquired? Was social justice served? Was lasting change achieved? Were lasting action groups formed, new partnerships forged or more volunteers recruited? More simply, did change occur that was meaningful to a broad group of young people or adults?

At the same time, while the need for young people to have real, meaningful roles in communities is critical, we must not forget the principles of youth development upon which successful efforts are based. As we create pathways leading through and beyond the clubhouse doors, we must ensure that youth are not kicked out and the doors slammed shut behind them. Young people do not have to be left alone — without benefit of adult collaboration and support — for youth involvement and leadership to be authentic. Attention still must be paid to young peoples’ individual development. The underlying issue is the challenge of balancing what is good for the young person with what is good for the community (Figure 4).

Efforts that lean too far toward individual development may run the risk of linking young people with purposeful but unimportant activities that keep them busy, but are not essential to the long-term well-being of their organizations or their communities. One of the criticisms of youth service, for example, is that it can engage young people in band-aid services that fail to address underlying issues or broader solutions. Young people clean the lot but don’t organize the neighbors to stand watch against the return of drug dealers. They



read to third graders but do not address the issues of high teacher turnover or low parent involvement. They paint the stairwells but do not address the issues of tenants' rights and absentee landlords.

Efforts that lean too far toward community development or broad social justice, however, run the risk of exploiting or excluding young people as programs struggle to maintain their pace and focus in the drive to achieve external goals. Among U.S. organizations, the tendency is more often toward tokenism or omission rather than exploitation (although some change-focused organizations lure young people into internships only to use them as gofers, and many young people end up burnt out when not offered the individual supports they need when engaged in change work). But the tension is there.

As more organizations and programs from the civic and community development arenas involve young people in their work, attention must be paid to the individual development of participating youth. A commitment to understanding the impact that participation has on the growth of young people means organizations need to ask the following kinds of questions: 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 the young people engaged able to meet basic physical needs and experience emotional support while they were involved? 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?

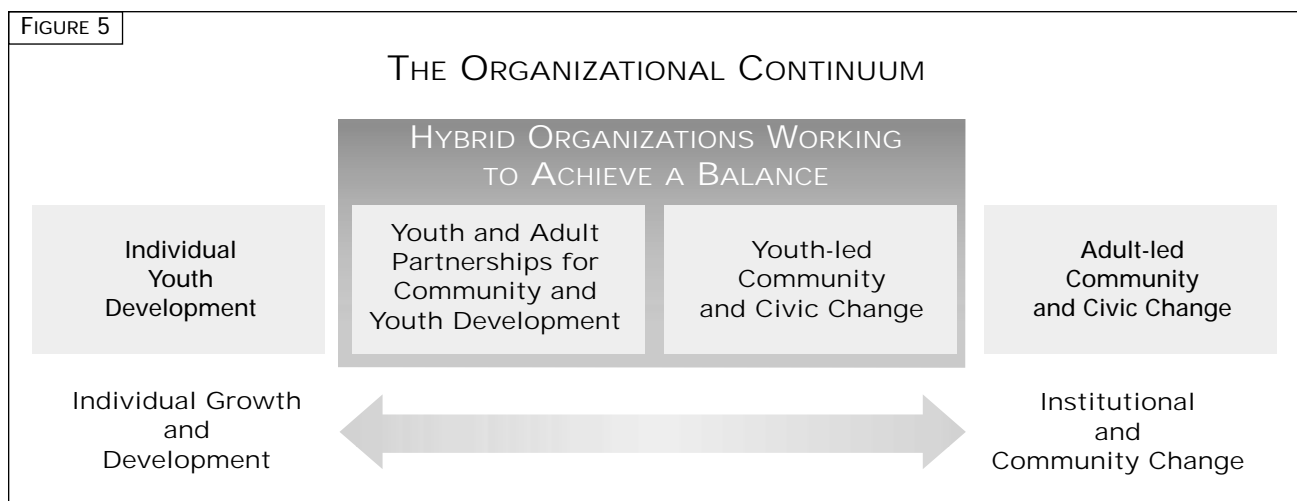
## YOUTH ACTION: A HYBRID APPROACH

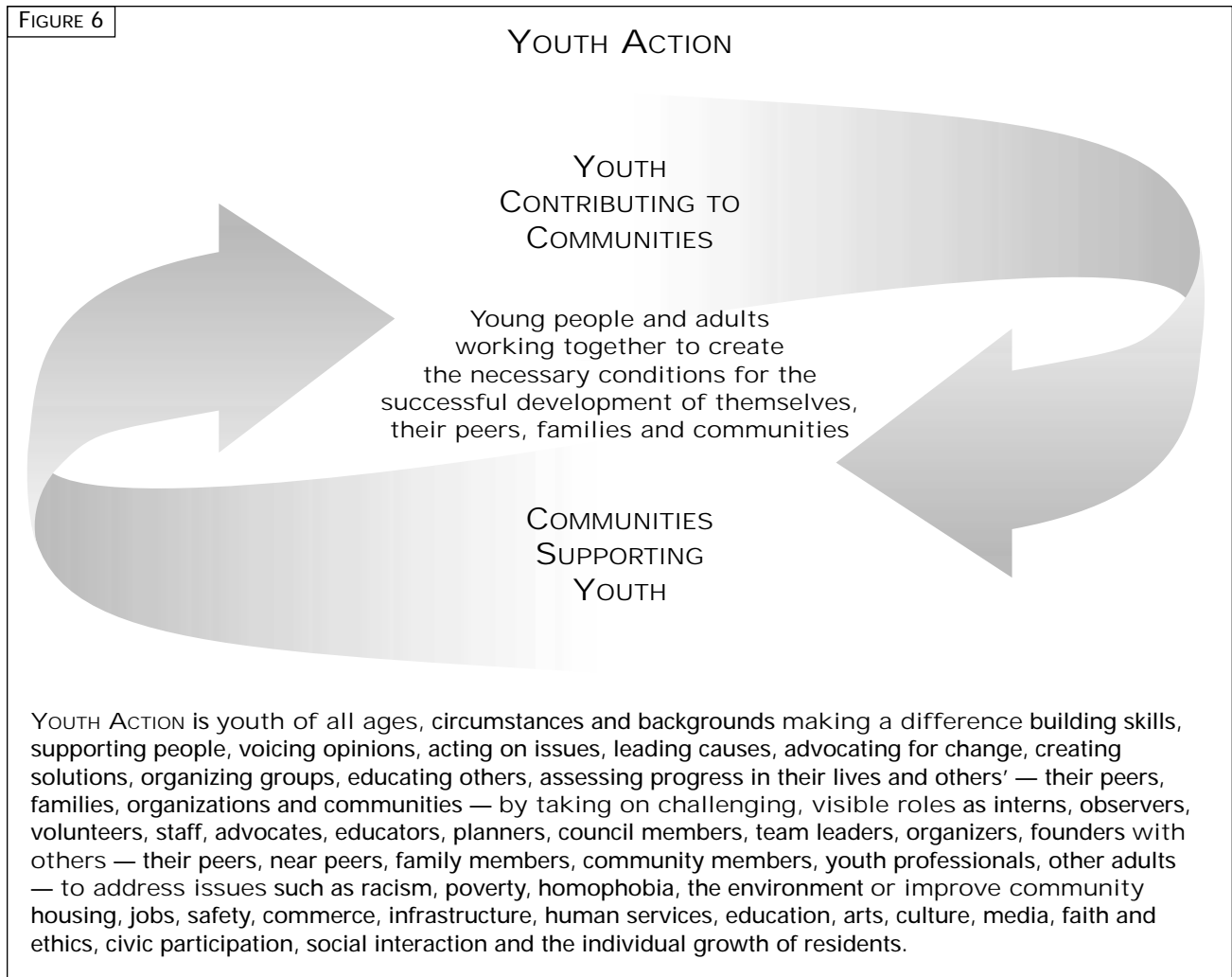
While it is easy to see the volume and growing momentum behind the current youth action landscape, we need to better understand what it represents. The lines between different types of efforts are unclear. Those working in the field often struggle to explain and define what they do or the similarities and differences between their work and other efforts. “Hybrid” organizations — those which seamlessly blend individual youth development efforts with community change efforts (Figure 5) — 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

As noted in Section I, major arenas — civic participation, community development, leadership development and youth development — are all recognizing the importance of youth involvement. Effective youth work lies at the root of all these arenas, suggesting that at their best, programs that meaningfully engage young people are those that help youth simultaneously build skills, foster civic motivation and address real community issues. The convergence of





interests suggests an opportunity to craft a “hybrid” approach to all these arenas, balancing the strengths and weaknesses of all three:

- **Increased focus** on traditional youth development approaches by balancing the long-term goal of preparing for adulthood with the short-term goal of preparing for immediate youth action.
- **Increased purpose** to traditional youth leadership development approaches by balancing general leadership skill building and knowledge development with specific opportunities to take meaningful, public action on “real-time” issues.
- **Increased relevance** to traditional community development and civic participation approaches by

balancing adults’ concerns and solutions with those of young people.

The description of youth action highlighted in bold in Figure 6 reinforces the need to create visible, varied opportunities for young people to build skills, deepen awareness and effect change concerning issues that are important to them, their families and their communities. Rather than setting up a dichotomy between benefits to individuals and benefits to a collective, youth action seeks to capture the dynamic of young people working alongside others in order to make their lives and communities better. This dynamic concept captures the range of strategies that strengthen youth by encouraging the active engagement of young people in their communities.





## SECTION III

# THE REALITY

## *Charting the Youth Action Landscape*

Systematic efforts to engage youth in action are occurring at all levels under many auspices. At the national level, organizations like Youth as Resources, the National Youth Leadership Council, Youth on Board, City Year, Listen, Inc., Youth Service America, Youth Build and Do Something, Inc., are working to bring youth action approaches to scale. At the local level, organizations like Peer Resources and the Youth Development Institute in San Francisco, the East Bay Conservation Corps in Oakland, El Puente in Brooklyn and ROCA in Chelsea, Massachusetts, are challenging young leaders to make a real difference in the communities in which they live, play, learn and work.<sup>7</sup>

Local and national scans reveal significant and increasing programmatic efforts to respond to youth's interest in securing the skills, motivation and opportunities they need to make a difference now. Our scans identified hundreds of programs that address the broad issue of supporting youth in action.

In the midst of all this new activity and burgeoning diversity, three things can be said with certainty. First, there is indeed a huge range of activities that fall under the umbrella of youth action, involving a range of actors, settings, aims and actions. Second, there are fundamental distinctions among the strategies employed — and different strategies appeal to different young people. Finally, a common core does underpin

all the strands of youth action; this needs to be understood and promoted, not to obscure programmatic differences within the field, but to overcome fragmentation and clarify purposes for the public, policy makers and funders.

### YOUTH AS RESOURCES

#### *Combining Service and Philanthropy*

*Youth as Resources (YAR) is a 15-year-old program that now involves thousands of young people as decision makers and agents of community change, creating settings in which youth serve on boards as equal partners with adults, making grants to fund youth-led community service projects.*

*YAR provides opportunities for young people — both those making grants and those receiving them — to develop leadership and decision making skills. Just as important, YAR provides youth with an opportunity for reflection and definition (or redefinition in the case of adjudicated youth) of self as a valued member of the community who can improve the well-being of others and help solve community problems.*

— Maria Nagorski, former Director,  
Center for Youth as Resources,  
*New Designs for Youth Development*,  
Summer, 1999

<sup>7</sup> Case studies and profiles of grassroots efforts around the world can be found in *Youth Acts, Community Impacts* (Tolman & Pittman, 2001), the companion to this publication. For brief profiles of national organizations, see *Youth Action: Annotated Bibliography and Key Resources* (The Forum for Youth Investment, 2001).

Below, we explore these three themes. First we attempt to answer some basic questions about the opportunities that exist: Who is offering youth action opportunities? In what aspects of community life? Behind the clubhouse doors or beyond? And what types of opportunities are being offered? Next, we identify the strategies that support these diverse approaches and discuss the tensions and differences among them. Finally, we explore the commonalities across the various strands of youth action, offering some frames of reference to help clarify the work that lies ahead.

## A DIVERSITY OF APPROACHES

### *By Whom?*

Many of the programs and organizations that support youth action have their roots in youth development. Others are rooted firmly in the traditions of civic activism, neighborhood development or community organizing. Other efforts stake out their work squarely in the youth action arena, and have always been the sort of “hybrid” organization discussed in Section II.

For example, St. John’s Educational Thresholds Center in the North Mission district of San Francisco operated for over 20 years as a small community organization for youth development before it launched broader scale systems and community reform efforts through Healthy Start, Beacon Schools and the Urban Institute, engaging youth as leaders for local and city-

#### PROMOTING YOUTH-LED EFFORTS

Facilitating this trend in San Francisco and Oakland are emerging initiatives to encourage youth-to-youth grant making. For example, for several years, a mandatory annual set-aside of the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth provided grants to Oakland youth organizations on a competitive basis to train and support youth in making grants to other youth. While the mandatory set-aside is not in the plans for future years, youth grantmaking continues to be one of the Fund’s central strategies.

level change. LYRIC began as a meeting space — a social and recreational center for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth — and, later adopted youth leadership as one of its main goals.

From the community development side, the Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association in the South Bronx is a clear example of an organization that is focused on community building yet, from the beginning, has woven youth engagement and leadership throughout all of its efforts (see “A Bronx Tale” on page 19). In Oakland, the nascent Asian Pacific Islander Youth Promoting Activism and Leadership (AYPAL) program of Asian Community Mental Health Services is modeled after a collaborative venture to promote adult community organizing and the development of community activists.

While youth action organizations and programs are often initiated by adults, youth-led organizations are emerging. Efforts like Coleman Advocates’ Youth Making A Change have long received attention as successful youth-led initiatives sponsored and incubated by adult-run organizations. Increasingly, youth-led organizations and programs like Youth Force in New York City are receiving equal visibility as they demonstrate their power to inspire and engage young people as change agents in their schools, housing projects and communities. Additionally, young people are meeting and acting “below the radar screen” in groups, clubs and places unaffiliated with — and, often, unnoticed by — formal organizations. Little data exists, but Lisa Sullivan, founder of LISTEN, Inc., and others provide evidence that “informal associational life” and action is alive and well, especially among the poor and young.

These efforts are started and led by young people like Eric Braxton, now in his early twenties, who put off going to college to build Urban Retrievers (now the Philadelphia Student Union), a Philadelphia organization committed to helping young people find voice and take action on issues that affect them, with a particular emphasis on access, quality and equity in the Philadelphia public schools. The Philadelphia Student Union’s approach, like that of many youth-led organizations, reflects the blending of community change, civic engagement and youth development discussed in the previous section.

*There are mainly two components of our work: youth organizing around education reform and youth leadership development. These two things have to go together — it is pointless to give young people skills without giving them a chance to use those skills. Yet, we can't expect young people to be effective organizers without teaching them strategies and skills that help them organize.*

— Eric Braxton  
Philadelphia Student Union, Philadelphia

Among the organizations that we surveyed, this drive to connect skills development to change efforts was particularly strong when young leaders were at the helm. These young leaders strongly articulated the need to ensure that skills taught and knowledge gained were immediately relevant to effecting change.

## **Where?**

While youth action opportunities can be concentrated in some sectors, they are located in institutions throughout the community.

Opportunities for action are found in, and focused on, the full range of organizations and associations that make up a community's assets. Young people can find opportunities to make a difference — building skills and experience along the way — through performing arts, education, human services, technology, construction, civic activism and spiritual outreach. They can find homes and champions for their actions in museums, faith-based institutions, summer camps, hospitals, housing construction, schools and civic

## A BRONX TALE

### *Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association Youth at the Center of Community Development*

Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association is a nonprofit community development corporation that was founded in the 1970s by South Bronx families who responded to urban renewal efforts that had decimated their community. Rather than taking flight, tenants on the crescent-shaped Kelly Street decided to stay and fight the demolition of their building. As many of these families were first-generation Americans, they depended upon their bicultural children to translate documents, speak on their behalf at meetings, and navigate a foreign, and often hostile, city bureaucracy. From its very beginnings Banana Kelly has depended upon the distinct skills and capacities that teens and young adults have to offer.

Banana Kelly (BK) began its work as a community development association by acquiring and rehabilitating tenement buildings that had been abandoned by owners. Residents learned a variety of skills as they negotiated a range of legal and financial obstacles. Gradually, BK's capacity for developing affordable housing increased; the organization now owns and manages approximately 1,000 units in the community.

In the 1980s Banana Kelly founders and staff realized that the issues facing residents and families couldn't be addressed by affordable housing alone. They saw "community" itself as something that needed rehabilitation and development. Because the organization recognized and valued the talents of local residents, regardless of levels of formal education, BK negotiated with city officials and was able to waive traditional credential requirements and hire residents to provide services as part of their "neighbor to neighbor" philosophy. Over time, BK has consistently found ways to engage new residents in their community.

By 1998, BK employed 125 people, 85 percent of whom live in the South Bronx. The organization's commitment to nurturing from within extends to its hiring policies concerning young people: 30 percent of the workforce is under the age of 23. BK employs young people in its offices, on construction and maintenance crews at the high school and in the dozen or so family service programs it operates in its buildings. Although many of these young people have not received formal, school-based training for these positions, they receive extensive on-the-job support from supervisors and mentors throughout Banana Kelly. In addition, the organization seeks out and provides professional development opportunities for staff of all levels.

Banana Kelly's mission is to strengthen and nurture its South Bronx community. The organization believes that training and employing young people in positions of responsibility enables it to accomplish this mission.

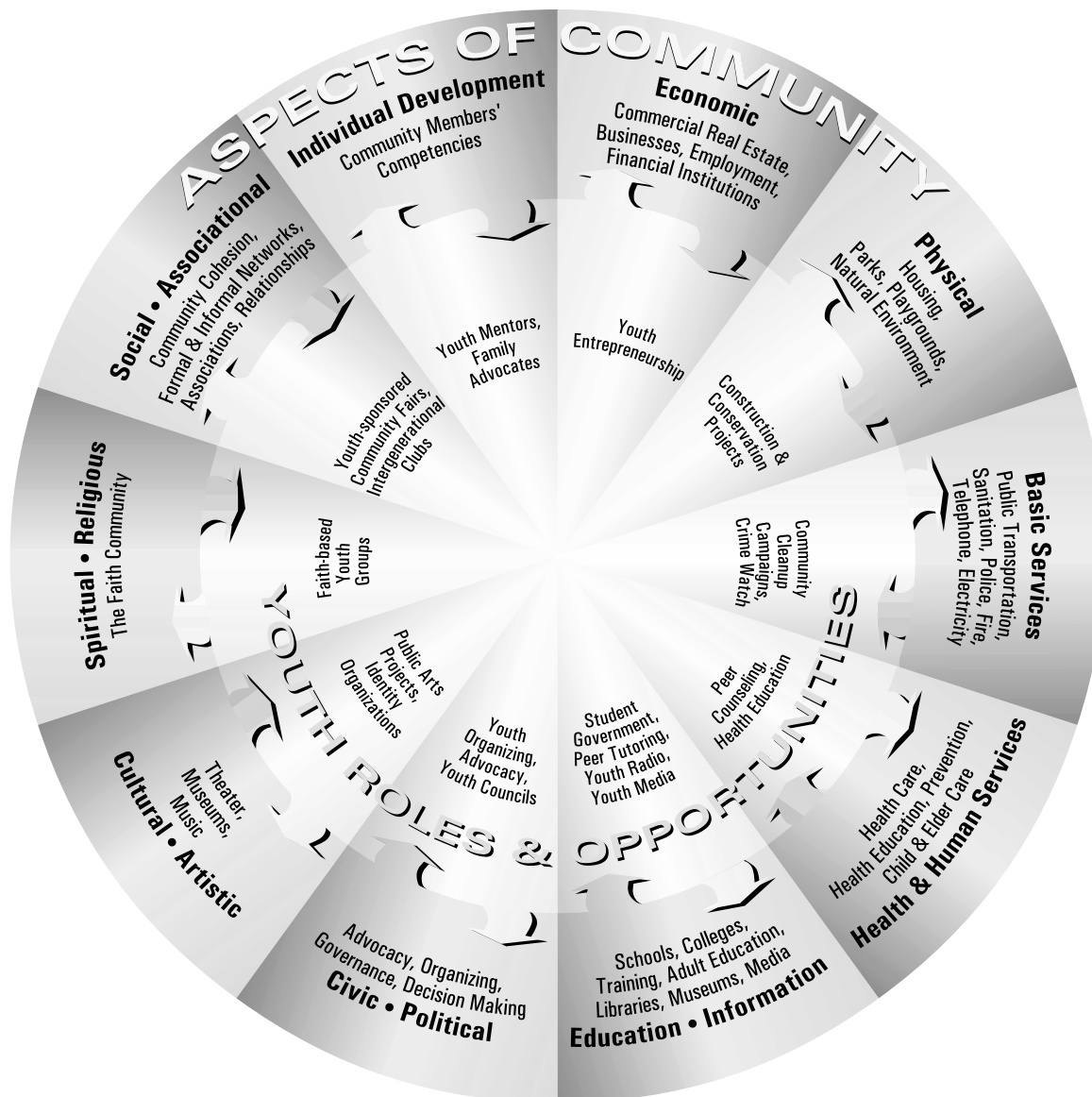
— Vanessa McKendall & Becky Swanson Kroll,  
Rainbow Research, Inc. (1999)

associations. The spheres in which young people can make a difference are the spheres of community life (Figure 7).

Broad-scale data on the incidence of youth leadership and action within these spheres are not readily available. However, using volunteering rates as proxy, survey data

FIGURE 7

### COMMUNITIES SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE, YOUNG PEOPLE CONTRIBUTING TO COMMUNITIES



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](http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org)

## SPHERES OF INFLUENCE: YOUTH ACTION IN COMMUNITIES

### *Peer Resources — Improving Schools and the Broader Community*

The San Francisco Peer Resources program builds on the philosophy of City Year, a national service corps: “A leader is a thinker and a doer in the community interest.” Activities traditionally considered “community service” serve in part as a ladder for immediately engaging youth in community work while deepening their commitment and ability to take on broader roles in their communities. According to Lorne Needle, Director, “A kid who steps up to be a tutor is stepping up to make the community better. Another level up, you are not just being a tutor but helping to run the tutoring program. That builds the skills of planning and organizing. On a third level, youth are really decision makers and the ‘doers’ of an idea. We have young people who we call ‘change makers’ to whom we say, ‘Your job is to make the community a better place.’” Although based in schools, the young people haven’t been afraid to take on the schools when they thought it necessary. Recently, they brought attention to sexual harassment issues in the schools, leading to increased media attention to the issue and a change in policies.

### *St. John's Quick Calls — Creating Safe Havens with Local Businesses*

In the summer of 1993, school-age youth participating in St. John's Educational Thresholds Center decided that they wanted to feel safer in their neighborhood — the North Mission in San Francisco, California. First they surveyed 12 street corners and found that ten of the 12 were “dangerous.” Then they mapped their neighborhood, indicating the dangerous and safe places for youth, and presented their maps to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. They enlisted the help of local shop and restaurant owners and launched Quick Calls. These signs signal to youth that they can use the phone in any participating business to call home if they feel unsafe. Today, if you walk down 16th Street in the North Mission, you will see signs for Quick Calls in many storefront windows. St. John's works with elementary school-age youth to maintain the signs and otherwise continue and expand their relationship with business owners in their school neighborhoods (adapted from Honig, Kahne & McLaughlin, 2001).

### *SPARC — Youth Artists with a Message*

For 20 years, SPARC (Social and Public Art Resource Center) has stood at the forefront of a dynamic public art movement, creating large-scale murals that reflect Los Angeles’ diverse ethnic communities. The Neighborhood Pride program employs inner-city youth to create murals in troubled neighborhoods across L.A. Working with schools, churches and community-service organizations, SPARC meets with local residents to discuss themes and mural placement and to identify youth participants. Artists are chosen by a committee of neighborhood representatives, artists and others through a competitive process, and receive training in art, communications and teamwork. SPARC murals are recognized locally and nationally as powerful communication vehicles. In 1995, SPARC cosponsored a team of young artists whose “Make a You Turn” design/message against self-destructive behavior appeared on 85 billboards throughout the greater Los Angeles region (Excerpted from Weitz, 1996).

### *Youth 'N Action — Influencing Local Government*

Youth 'N Action, established by Washington State's King County Council in 1994, is a pilot effort designed to bring young people's issues and concerns into the local legislative process. A congress of youth council representatives from across the county, YNA's core members present youth issues and concerns to public agencies and nonprofits. YNA coordinates a countywide Youth Summit which helps clarify the issues that concern teens, and drives YNA's agenda for the following year as the group recruits and supports youth-run projects. YNA members have become an important voice for young people in King County. They have influenced policies and programs at the local, county and state levels. They provide technical assistance to youth groups, have helped youth gain approval for a skate park, and are now working on a plan for a community center. In King County, they have built relationships with officials who now recognize the need to consult with young people before making legislative decisions that affect them. And at the state level, they have lobbied policy makers to support legislation beneficial to children and teenagers (Excerpted from Checkoway and Susskind, 1999).

show that young people aged 12 to 17 volunteer through the organizations in which they participate most heavily. Almost half (44 percent) of teens report that they volunteer through or in religious organizations. One third (36 percent) report that they volunteer in or through youth development organizations while another one third (34 percent) volunteer in educational organizations. Less than 3 percent report that they volunteer through foundations, international organizations or political organizations (Hodgkinson & Weitzman with Crutchfield & Heffron, 1996).

It is not surprising that the organizations that work most closely with youth become the base for their volunteering. These organizations are the logical hubs for efforts to increase the quantity, quality and diversity of youth action opportunities.

While youth change efforts are sometimes directed outward toward the community, they can be directed within the organization as well. When organizational

change is combined with the challenge of balancing individual outcomes and community outcomes, we are left with a troika of goals to consider. In our scan, we found that programs could be categorized, in part, by whether they focused on individual outcomes, created leadership roles for youth within their organization or created leadership roles within their community (Figure 8).

Schools, for example, are institutions with a clear mandate for *individual* development. With the burgeoning of service-learning opportunities, many schools are also key bases of support for broader *community change* initiatives. Students can participate in internships or community service projects identified or coordinated by the school or use the school as the base of operation for identifying and coordinating work with other organizations in the community, addressing issues such as the environment, homelessness or youth recreation services. Young people also can work to promote *organizational change* within the school itself, for example, by tutoring other students,

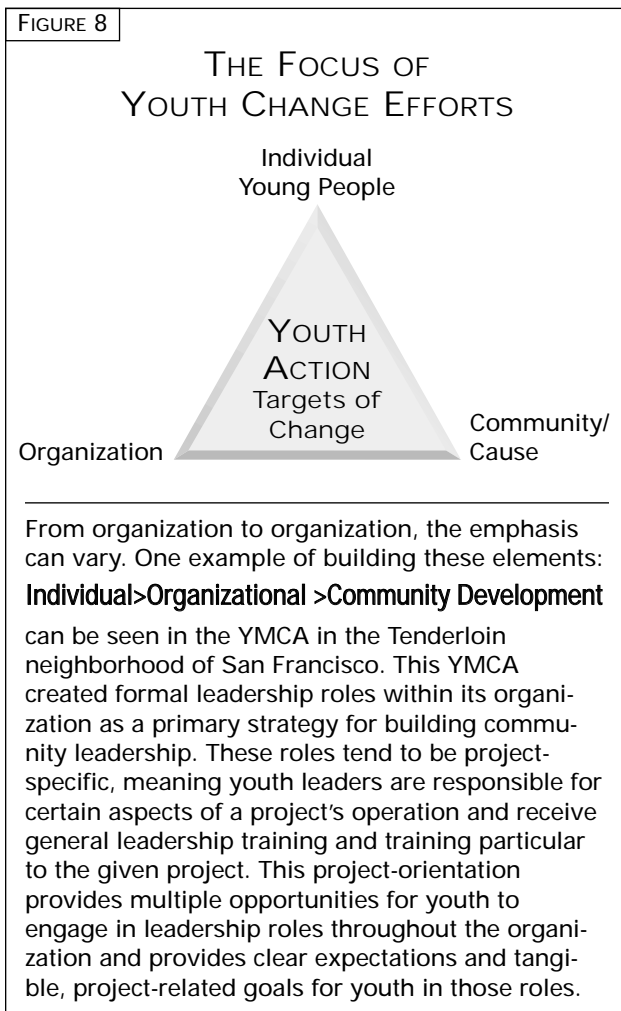


TABLE 1

PRIMARY/SECONDARY  
PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES  
USED BY A SAMPLING OF  
NYC YOUTH PROGRAMS

	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	TOTAL
Youth Service Total	53	34	87
Youth Service, general: Service learning, volunteering	31	26	57
Youth Service, focused: Peer education, tutoring, helping	22	8	30
Leadership Development	12	17	29
Youth Activities Youth Social/recreation	15	13	28
Governance Advisory/policy	12	6	18
Advocacy/Political Involvement/Organizing	5	10	15
Voice Media/theatre	6	7	13

Data clustered under common program categories.  
Source: Adapted from Krieger, Bowers & Rivera, 1992.

## 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 effecting 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 and advisory councils.

**Social Entrepreneurship** — Creating, financing and implementing innovative ideas in the nonprofit 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 cosponsored by the Forum for Youth Investment and the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, June 1999.

heading up school fundraising efforts, participating in student government or joining formal education governance boards. Systematic change efforts are more rare, but, as exemplified by the Philadelphia Student Union and Peer Resources in San Francisco, students can use the school as a base for organizing to challenge school policies and practices.<sup>8</sup>

### ***What?***

The strategies through which youth are engaged in purposeful action also vary and constitute another difference among youth action programs.

In 1992, the New York State Youth Council categorized a sampling of youth leadership programs in the state according to the strategies employed to engage youth in purposeful action (Table 1). Our national scan suggests that the variation in prevalence rates found by the New York State Youth Council reflects the variation found across the country (Krieger, et al., 1992).

**Youth service programs** — programs in which young people are recruited to use their general skills to contribute to a range of projects that need to be done in organizations and in the community — are by far the most prevalent. This is not surprising given the public and private infrastructure behind the youth service movement.

Also common are focused service programs — such as peer tutoring, peer counseling, youth coaching or youth theater — that engage young people in helping their peers or adults by providing services that usually require specific skills, training and time commitments.

**Youth governance opportunities** — opportunities for young people to participate in the decision making structures of youth programs, community groups, philanthropic organizations and the government — also are growing, in large part because of increased public awareness of the need to involve youth and the increased availability of training and technical

<sup>8</sup> For an extended discussion of schools and other institutions as the base and target of youth action, see *Youth Acts, Community Impacts* (Tolman & Pittman, 2001), the companion to this publication.

assistance to organizations interested in involving young people in this capacity.

Youth advocacy and organizing — opportunities for young people to organize or advocate on specific issues or become involved in political debate — are less prevalent, at least among some populations.

## DIFFERING STRATEGIES

Governance, organizing, advocacy, service, leadership, voice, entrepreneurship are just some of the broad words used to describe the varying strands of youth action. These strands are clearly linked. But they also feature differences that can facilitate our thinking about strategies to promote youth action. The language we use to define the 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 nonprofit and for-profit organizations interested in supporting youth leadership and youth action.

Discussions with both national and local actors underscored how important it is to allow those involved in youth action to surface and discuss differences and commonalities. Participants were keenly aware that they lacked a common language to describe their work. Soccer coaches, basketball coaches, swimming coaches and wrestling coaches all recognize that they fit under the umbrella of “youth sports.” Most can explain the differences and similarities in their approaches and many can debate the differences in their underlying philosophies of youth and sports. The youth action domain in comparison is conceptually murky to those in it and those outside of it. There is definitional work to be done.

This definitional work is not simply a theoretical endeavor. Individual young people do not respond with equal enthusiasm to the different strategies — and it appears that these differing responses vary based on the background and experiences of those young people. And the semantic differences between governance, organizing, service, and other strategies are indicative of significant ideological differences.

### DO YOUTH *REALLY* MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

#### *Concerns Raised About the Efficacy of Different Strands of Youth Action*

**Governance** — The focus is on power but not necessarily on justice. Those with power are not often linked to constituency and not always linked to action. Youth are not always given real decision making power — tokenism. Young people may be placed in roles they do not want and for which they are unprepared. Adults are not always prepared to work with youth.

**Organizing** — The power and justice focus is too visible. It may be too radical to spell out explicitly as a goal. Funders will not fund. Adults resist it and will not let youth do it.

**Advocacy** — There is a range of issues taken on by youth. Some are not obviously relevant to the broader community (e.g., a skateboard park). There is an issue of how/when adults should direct or provide focus to youth advocacy efforts. Social justice is preferred. Public versus institutional relevance is preferred.

**Leadership Development** — Too vague and not connected to action. Too future oriented — training for future positions of power. Linked to governance, as in leadership training to sit on boards. Elitist — supporting the status quo rather than transformational change. Candidates are selected by people in power, rather than elected by a grassroots constituency.

**Service** — Perceived as often not linked to root cause analysis or solid skill preparation. Has potential in its definition, but often does not live up to that potential in implementation. Popularized/watered-down experiences for youth. Seen by some as more appropriate and relevant for suburban youth than urban youth. Viewed by some as paternalistic, especially when affluent or well-educated youth are placed “in service” in marginalized communities.



## *Certain Approaches May Be More Relevant and Attractive to Certain Groups Than to Others*

There is a danger that, in an effort to define meaningful participation, forms of youth action that have special relevance for certain populations may be devalued or discredited. We only know enough about youth action practices to disavow those practices at the very bottom rung of the continuum: those practices that allow for no influence, are seen as relevant and meaningful to no one, and/or are not linked to sustained action in anyone's mind. What we know about youth development suggests that we have to find ways to help young people maximize the influence and relevance of their actions in their communities without minimizing their choices. This is especially true if the goal is to increase the diversity of young people engaged in action.

Survey data underscore differences in participation between different populations. For example, the Independent Sector survey found that while 63.3 percent of white teenagers reported volunteering in the past year, only 42 percent of black teens and 44.1 percent of Hispanic teens reported such activity (Hodgkinson, et al., 1996). This is a lower rate of volunteering than was reported for blacks in 1992 (down from 52.8 percent). (Data for Hispanic teenagers in 1992 are not available.) "Volunteering and giving," the authors of the study conclude, "could be measurably increased if volunteering increased among young children, blacks, persons of Hispanic origin and all persons of color." Such data deserve a closer look for several reasons:

- First, there are semantics involved — it is possible that some populations simply don't label their efforts to change communities as "volunteering" or "community service."
- Second, it is possible that different populations give back to their communities in different ways. If it is true that whites perform more community service than other populations, it is possible that other ethnic groups give back in other ways — for instance organizing, activism, leadership, and employment within community-serving groups and organizations. For some young adults with options, a deci-

sion to remain in the community rather than escape to the suburbs is a form of action.

- Third, there may be less effort being made to engage certain populations. The Independent Sector survey (1996) found, for example, that "the largest decline among the number being asked [to volunteer] was among blacks, persons of Hispanic origin, and teens 16 years of age. In the case of blacks and persons 16 years of age, when compared to 1992, it is clear that some of the decline in volunteering can be attributed to a decreased number from these groups who were asked" (Hodgkinson, et al., 1996).

### ACTION, INFLUENCE, RELEVANCE

*It is important to be specific when talking about power, the kind you want young people to develop. In Youth Making A Change, young people interview and hire other members of the group. Young people establish guidelines, monitor performance, determine issues, decide how work is done. This is real power, real governance. In truly youth-run organizations the oldest members are 21 and under from director on down.*

— Taj James, Youth Making A Change

*Youth lead advocacy around city and state budget and policy decisions. They put together a youth agenda delivered to decision makers. Every year youth meet with legislators to push their policy agendas, attend meetings and sometimes they have drafted policy and tried to push it through.*

— Kim McGillicuddy, Youth Force

*Social entrepreneurship [requires] thinking of an innovative idea to improve your community, building a team of resources to build that idea. Youth Venture wants to teach venturers to run their venture with business principles in mind so that they can make sure their venture is viable and sustainable.*

— Katie Hultquist, Youth Venture

*Youth-led organizations are not taken as seriously, especially by other organizing groups that are adult led. Young people are marginalized and need to learn how to overcome this. Training focuses on ageism and how that affects organizing. Young people have to push their way into governing boards where they haven't been welcomed.*

— Kim McGillicuddy, Youth Force

Not surprisingly, every program and project we observed served different youth populations. We were not able to find data that correlated the characteristics of youth action programming with the characteristics of youth. Our observation, however, is that regardless of the program, low-income and minority young people were more likely to be involved in and engaged by programming that uses organizing, advocacy and/or entrepreneurship as its primary approach to action.

This is not to say that low-income youth or young people of color cannot benefit from leadership-development training programs, governance opportunities or community service. Obviously they can and do. But, there appears to be a match between the change orientation, specificity and relevance of issue-driven organizing, advocacy and entrepreneurship projects and the needs of many marginalized young people, especially among older youth. Whatever their personal assessments of their skills, these are young people who are not necessarily confident they have secure spots as future civic, corporate, or community leaders or as leaders among their peers. Generic leadership-development programming — summer leadership academies, leadership retreats — may appear too removed, especially if offered independently from action opportunities. On the other hand, the urgency and depth of visible community problems may make short-term service projects seem too futile.

### ***There Is a Need to Understand the Distinctions and Tensions Among the Strategies***

There are significant and important distinctions regarding the best way to engage young people in action — distinctions that reflect real differences in philosophy and approach rather than differences in implementation. It is critical to find ways to reveal these differences in non-confrontational ways, to stimulate useful dialogue. Discussions with practitioners and key actors at the national level, as well as discussions in the Bay Area, confirmed that there are non-trivial differences among the broad strands of action — differences that are perhaps exacerbated by tensions and misperceptions among the different groups that operate under the different labels.

In many cases, these differences stem from fundamental differences in premises, principles and philosophies. They may, in some cases, derive from the fact that these organizations and programs come out of different fields — youth development, citizenship, community organizing/development. In general, the differences can be characterized as variations in the *timing*, *specificity of action* and levels of *influence* and *relevance*.

- **Timing.** Differences in the order and the time lags that exist between building the skills (capacity), identifying the issues (awareness and motivation), implementing the plan and seeing the impact (opportunity).
- **Specificity.** Differences in the specificity of the target and the anticipated results. For example, is the outcome a policy change, an event, a new structure that addresses a specific issue such as youth recreational activities or incremental improvements in a broad area such as education, health or neighborhood crime?
- **Influence.** Differences in the levels of influence young people have in planning the action. All subjects interviewed agreed that young people should have influence over the decisions made about the internal functioning of the organization and the external development of its work. The questions are “How much influence” and “Influence over what?” Not everyone interviewed was comfortable with discussions of power. But there was agreement that youth action programs push the concept of youth participation beyond involvement, to influence over programming, planning, implementation and budget.
- **Relevance.** Differences in the levels of relevance of the action for young people and others. All agreed that the issue or project tackled should be relevant to the young people engaged. The question was whether it needed to have greater relevance for the well-being of the organization, the community, the culture, society. And some would argue that even issues relevant for the community range in relevance (e.g., some would put housing above recreation, some would put addressing “wrongs” above increasing “rights”).

## DEFINING AND PROMOTING THE COMMON CORE

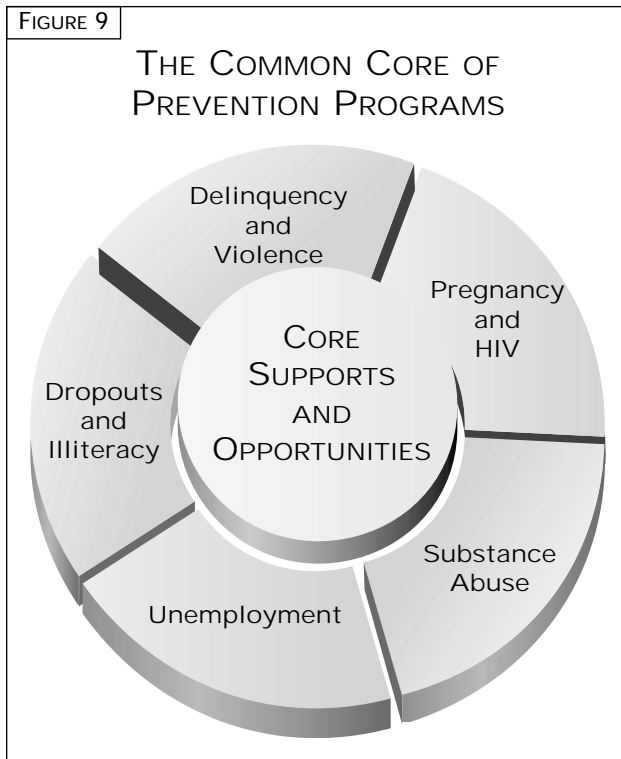
The differences between youth action strategies are real, significant and often the cause of friction. They deserve attention and further investigation — particularly given that different strategies may be most appropriate when working with particular young people or in trying to effect particular sorts of change. Yet the distinctions among youth action strategies can obscure the common work that all of the organizations employing these strategies take on.

An important lesson can be learned from the original paradigm shift discussed in Section I — a shift in focus from youth deficits to youth development. A driving argument in promoting the youth development approach is that a common core of supports and opportunities undergirds efforts to prevent violence, pregnancy and other youth problems. Think of a donut: in prevention, violence, drugs and pregnancy are the “bites” in the donut that get funded and developed separately. But these issues are really bites from the same

donut. And while specific services and information differ, at the center they all emphasize the same supports and opportunities that are the basic building blocks of development — relationships, membership, norms and expectations, skill building and meaningful participation. Treating them as independent programmatic areas has led to great inefficiencies and fragmented services.

Similarly, youth service, philanthropy, advocacy, entrepreneurship, governance, organizing and leadership all have important distinctions, but where is the terminology, the framework, the network that link these? Are we creating new arenas for competition? Another call for fragmented funding? It would be wise to take a key lesson from the youth development approach: *define and fill the center first.*

The interviews and discussion groups reinforced the notion that these strategies are linked together — and that the unifying theme is action.<sup>9</sup> The idea of youth action was seemingly neutral, not belonging in one camp or the other (i.e., not a “service learning term” or a “youth organizing term”). It is also broad enough to



<sup>9</sup> We recommend that the term be further tested with youth, practitioners, public and private leaders and resource partners. Our initial field tests suggest that the phrase “youth making a difference” is the most clear, but too long.

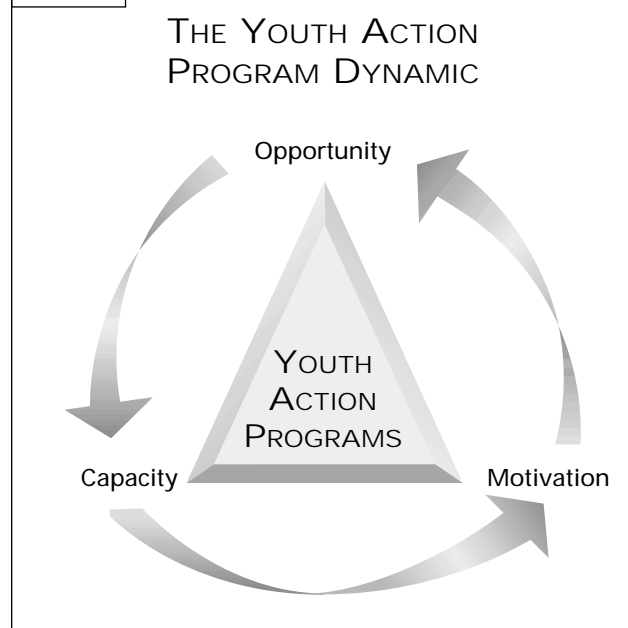
be adopted by those in the community development and civic engagement fields as well as those with a background in youth development.

Under the over-arching term youth action, it became clear that youth action programs share some common efforts. Terminology differed, but, in one fashion or another, all of the organizations and programs interviewed and reviewed undertook three common tasks:

- **fostering motivation** — building awareness of issues and root causes, deepening commitment and sense of responsibility;
- **increasing capacity** — using and building youth's leadership and action skills, deepening knowledge related to systems, strategies; and
- **creating opportunity** — providing a range of opportunities to act on passions and use skills in ways that generate demonstrable outcomes or to build passion and identify the need for skills by becoming involved in real change efforts.

These are the common core components of the youth action agenda. Before we go overboard in

FIGURE 11



the proliferation of specialized programs that promote one strand over another, we need to strengthen investment in and promotion of these core qualities while asking young people what they need to make a difference in the specific conditions of their lives and communities.

## SECTION IV

# CREATING PATHWAYS FOR YOUTH

What is needed? Two things: *Clear expectations* that all young people can and should make a difference — expectations conveyed and reinforced by parents, peers, teachers, faith leaders, public officials and business owners — and *visible pathways* for young people to do so — opportunities for them to link learning to work and contribution in areas and on issues that have meaning to them. Below, we explore the importance of expectations as well as the character and sources of pathways for youth.

## WANTED: HIGHER EXPECTATIONS OF YOUTH AS CHANGE MAKERS

Expectations and pathways both are critical. Without clear, broadly held expectations that young people can and should contribute to their communities, enough pathways for young people never will be created. However, without clear, flexible pathways that meet young people where they are — in terms of capacities, motivation and action experience — and push them to achieve more, we should not expect to develop the diverse cadre of new leaders needed for the coming years.

Not every community harbors the low expectations that Ron Register laments. Most assume that their young people will complete school; secure steady, if uninteresting jobs; start families; and, eventually, find ways to engage in the civic life of their communities. Most adults believe it is important to ensure that young people see pathways for education and pathways for careers. Most expect that young people

will change paths several times, but will be able to describe the education and career paths they are traversing at any given time.

It is doubtful, however, whether most adults have an image of young people as contributors and change makers. The public (including young people) rarely sees the ways young people can contribute — at nine, at 13, at 17, at 22. Nor do they envision the impact youth can have on people, places, institutions, policies and ideas. The challenge is to create the public belief that young people are able and willing — and should be expected — to find ways to make sustained differ-

### SETTING SIGHTS HIGHER

*Too often in inner-city communities, we set our sights low. We are happy that 60 percent of youth graduated from high school, that 50 percent have jobs or that some youth are trying to help the community. We talk about the fact that at least all of our young people are not on the streets. How did it happen that we stopped expecting that all young people would be educated, employed and contributing?*

— Ron Register  
Cleveland Community Building Initiative  
National Community Building Network

### HIGHER SIGHTS, MORE THAN CARING

*Being a leader starts with having a sense of caring about what's wrong in the world. But we tend to stop there — at the caring part — and reward kids for just that. We have to expect more.*

— Lorne Needle, Peer Resources

## EXPECTATIONS + SUPPORT = CAPACITY + MOTIVATION TO ACT

*First we work with the African American young people as individuals, building their consciousness around social issues. Then we move them to the community/society level to build their capacity. Then we integrate them into the organization where they build competence — tangible sets of skills. When they leave, they have a sense that there is something wrong with society and they need to do something about it.*

— Shawn Ginwright, Leadership Excellence

ences in the communities, organizations and groups with which they are involved, while acting on the issues they care about. Most important, this expectation must be reinforced in practice.

Young people do not drift in and out of school casually. They should not drift in and out of service to their communities and causes. Young people have the right and the responsibility to become educated and financially independent. It should be equally clear to them that they also have the right and the responsibility to try to make a difference in the lives of others.

## NEEDED: MULTIPLE PATHS FOR YOUTH TO SEE AND BE CHANGE AGENTS

To engage youth as visible actors in their communities, organizations must do more than offer hit or miss strategies and isolated opportunities. A decade ago, the Youth Committee of the Lilly Endowment issued a report stating, “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 they have things to do. It requires clear goals and careful monitoring.

The same is true for efforts to promote and support youth action. It is not enough to offer a service opportunity in fifth grade, a summer job in eighth grade and an internship in tenth grade. Young people need ongoing options for meaningful participation in organiza-

tions 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 action calls for more intentionality in youth programming. To develop and deploy a cadre of young leaders, adults must provide more direction and long-term vision. Adults need to help to create expectations, opportunities and the space and the climate to support young people even when their decisions about making a difference run counter to the status quo.

We recommend using the terminology “pathways for action” or “action pathways” because it connotes movement, direction and relevance. The concept has power, but it needs refinement. To the extent that young people choose careers initially because, at some level, they want not only to earn a paycheck but also to make a difference, action pathways could be a new, broader idea that overlaps, if not encompasses, the idea of career pathways. Whether or not this is the case, we use the term action pathways for the same reason that those concerned about helping young people link school to work have adopted the term career pathways — it links learning with passion and action.

## 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 the importance of making their voice heard.*

— Taj James, Youth Making A Change

## ACTION PROGRAMS, ACTION PATHWAYS, ACTION MENTORS

On the career side, young people can participate in specific career path programs — training programs, apprenticeships, work-study programs. They may be on a career track (e.g., college, vocational) that offers them a wide range of courses and experiences that may be useful given their broad goals. They can also work with career mentors — adults in school, in the workforce or in a specific field of interest who will help them understand the pathway requirements and explore their options. Career mentors help young people understand their career motivations, identify and access needed training courses and find placements in internships, apprenticeships or jobs.

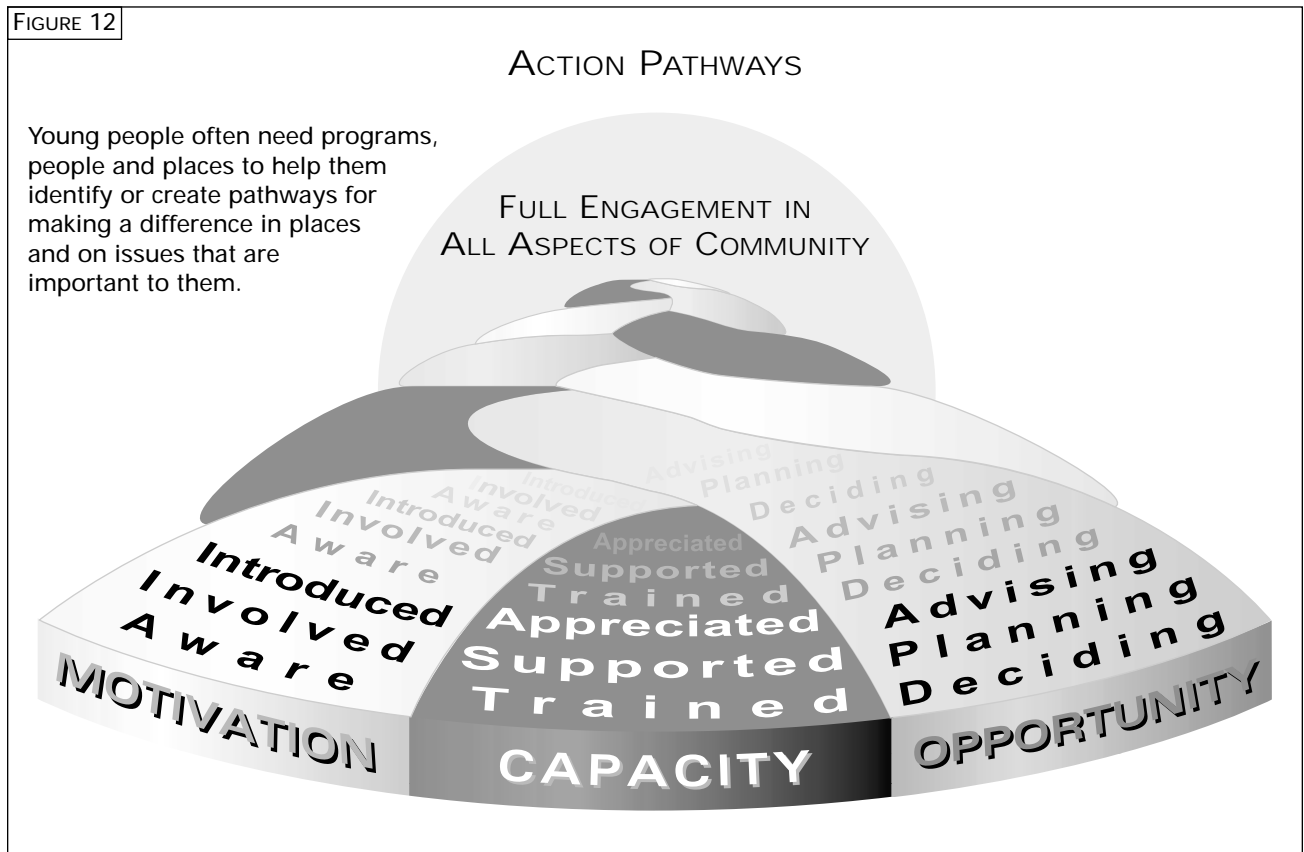
Young people should have the same options when looking for ways to make a difference. They might join a specific action project or program that packages capacity building, issue awareness and action. They might join a broader, ongoing program or organization that offers young people a range of semistructured

learning and action opportunities. They might identify and work with action mentors who help them think through and select the most appropriate ways to make a difference.

Action pathways are visions into the future, providing direction, hope, achievable dreams and inspiring action. Action pathways can be like sidewalks — paths that a young person steps onto at various intersections that lead them through options and opportunities to learn, work and contribute in ways that are relevant to themselves and to others. But pathways also can be like well-placed stepping stones that allow young people to leap from one issue, role or organization to another. Young people can find and explore action pathways within a single organization. But it is neither essential nor necessarily preferable that young people remain in one organization, program or issue area to find developmentally appropriate but challenging opportunities to make a difference.

Youth action programs stand out from the broader terrain of youth development programs because of their commitment to engaging or supporting young

FIGURE 12



*Sometimes we learn about or see things that we just feel are wrong — like the way some classes are taught or the way police treat us. But most kids don't think they make a difference. When we talk among ourselves, we get mad. But you have to encourage people to believe. When we talk to adults who know how to make change, we can learn other ways to channel our anger. . .*

— Danielle, Oakland youth focus group

people in work that makes a difference to others. Of course, good youth action programs support youth development by ensuring that action to help others is linked to skill building and awareness building for the youth involved. Young people should not be used as pawns in games they do not understand. As survey after survey reveals, young people value volunteer opportunities more when they feel they build skills and understand the larger mission — even if they are able to contribute only a small piece.

The primary lesson: To support youth development and maximize community or civic impact, opportunities for youth action must be coupled with opportunities for young people to build skills capacity and understanding while deepening motivation and awareness. These are the common core components of youth action identified in section four. The timing and pacing of these common core components can and should vary from situation to situation and from young person to young person. We introduce the concept of action pathways to underscore the fact that within programs, but ideally within sectors and communities, the components have to be visible enough and plentiful enough for young people to connect with them.

## HOW, WHERE AND BY WHOM ARE PATHWAYS CREATED?

Well-marked action pathways can be created by youth themselves and by those who work with youth. Parents, teachers, youth workers and others can create pathways. They should ensure that young people (1) see the value of what they are learning as it links to

work and civic/community action; (2) build awareness of community issues and deepen their analysis of issues they identify; and (3) find opportunities to put their skills and passions to work (consider, for example, the well established “stepping stones” laid out in Boys and Girls Scout programs and in some civic and faith-based institutions).

Pathways also can be created by young people themselves. Given some reason to believe that they can and should make a difference, youth often will create their own pathways or call upon adults to help them get what they need. Profiles of two efforts to involve young people in the formal community-planning process illustrate this point.<sup>10</sup>

- In **Salt Lake City**, a local citizens' group, Project 2000, initiated a dialogue on the future of the state. It quickly realized the importance of giving a voice to young people, the future community leaders and decision makers. It launched Kidspeak, a curriculum that gives young people a chance to get involved in projects that make their communities better places to live. The curriculum is implemented through Salt Lake City's public schools and aims to help students solve local problems and see the impact of those problems on the nation and the world. The hope is that students might 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 implicit formula: CAPACITY BUILDING + ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION = LONG-TERM MOTIVATION. The assumption is that capacity building and action opportunities are continuous and closely linked together.
- **Seattle** is a different story. In 1991, students were invited to a one-shot youth summit (a discreet opportunity to be vocal) organized by Seattle KidsPlace (“a kids' lobby for an effective Seattle”) and sponsored by the The Boeing Company. The

<sup>10</sup> Ramona Mullahey, Yve Susskind and Barry Checkoway documented these efforts and others in a recent report, *Youth Participation in Community Planning*, prepared for the American Planning Association, 1998.



more than 500 young people were frustrated that they were not offered ongoing opportunities to express opinions and to build the capacities and connections needed to act on their ideas. Newly 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, which provides trainings, youth forums, leadership programs and internships, 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.

Many other stories offer permutations on the formula: young people need opportunities to forge and act on their passion and to build the specific skills and connections needed to do so effectively. This need for connections leads to a second point.

A diverse range of pathways can be created by adults and organizations whose primary focus is not youth (e.g., CDCs, faith organizations, museums and theaters, civic associations, businesses, human services and training institutions and government planning bodies). Youth organizations play a key role in ensuring that young people get the mix of supports and opportunities they need to create the belief that they can make a difference. But their job is made much easier when other organizations open doors and invite young people into real-time, real-impact activities, projects and decision making processes. These organizations may not have the capacity to prepare young people to make contributions or to help them meet their more general needs, but they can offer opportunities to engage with adults in real “work” (paid or unpaid).

Additionally, many organizations offer traditional pathways that focus on issues other than youth development (e.g., professional internships, training), but these programs can be made doubly powerful if those organizations consider how the young people and adults can create opportunities not only for individual learning but also for community change.

## STRONG, EFFECTIVE ACTION PATHWAYS

Effective action pathways allow youth to link learning, work and contribution in their own minds. The traditional model — in which youth are expected to first learn for many years in school, then give back to their community and country through a couple of years of service after graduation and, finally, start work to pay the bills — does not reflect accurately the way young people understand the world. The stronger and clearer young people’s understanding of the links between the skills they are building, work they are doing and the contributions they are making now — as contrasted with those they might make or do in the future — the clearer and more compelling the pathway. The skills being built may help young people make a connection 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. Young people’s desire to see learning, work and contribution as intertwined parts of their development and their commitment to others must be respected.

### WHICH COMES FIRST — THE MOTIVATION OR THE SKILLS?

*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, The HOME Project

*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 action pathways increase capacity, motivation and opportunities by linking them together in the minds of youth. These are the common core components of 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 provide opportunities without offering ways to build the skills needed to do the job well. They should not raise awareness without offering action opportunities and skill building.

## NON-NEGOTIABLES FOR COMMUNITIES

**All young people should have and see multiple action pathways.** Young people have multiple pathways when they can explain the link between their present actions and future goals (most middle-class youth can do this easily). Alternatively, clear pathways for preparation and participation exist when young people easily can answer these questions. “How might you learn about an issue that you care about?” “What could you do now to make a difference?” “How would you do it?” “Do you know what careers you could explore if you really wanted to work in this field?”

**All young people should be expected to choose or create one or more action pathways.** Clear expectations should arise from multiple fronts (family, school, peers, community) that enable all young people to answer these questions and be engaged in something that they believe is helping them build and use their skills while pursuing their interests.

**Some action pathways should lead to opportunities to take immediate, public (visible) action to address important issues** (e.g., addressing housing needs, improving the environment, dealing with crime,

bringing music and art to children, creating summer jobs, getting more parks and playgrounds, improving school cafeterias).

**All of these pathways should be open.** Young people, especially in the early adolescent years, should have the opportunity to explore multiple pathways without being locked into one. The idea of early “civic” tracking — encouraging a young person to lock into one strategy for civic and community action — is inappropriate, as is early vocational tracking.

**All pathways should encourage youth to link learning, work and contribution in their minds.** The stronger and clearer young people’s statements of the links between the skills they are building, work they are doing and contributions they are making (current contributions as well as ones they hope to make in the future), the clearer and more compelling is the pathway.

**The stepping stones that make up pathways should be linked only loosely.** The options and the ordering of the opportunities to build skills, articulate passions, voice concerns and take action must be varied (by level of sophistication, by type) and only loosely linked. The young person who can articulate the problem and organize his peers may not be able to write. The young person who has clear leadership skills may be reluctant to differentiate herself from the group because that is not culturally sanctioned.

The bottom line is that young people — especially those who are confronted by problems in their neighborhoods, families, schools, jobs and peer groups — must see ways to make a difference. They must believe that adults expect them to try and will support their efforts in whatever arena they choose to act. And they must have sufficient options to make meaningful choices and vital connections between action and other aspects of their lives.

## LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE

### *Cultural Identity As a Critical Component of a Pathway*

Development of young leaders depends in part on youth's identification with groups, adult mentors, projects and themselves as leaders. Several youth organizations in Oakland and San Francisco intentionally build youth identities in these ways that help them plan for and engage in purposeful action.

For example, Oakland's Leadership Excellence sees identification with African-American culture and experience in urban settings as essential raw materials of leadership preparation. According to founder and past Executive Director Shawn Ginwright, leaders — youth and adults — are people who have developed or who are developing competence (to take action), compassion (to know that action must be taken) and confidence (to take action). They develop competence, compassion and confidence in part by engaging in critical dialogue and analysis about what they view as their heritage; how other young people with whom they identify are portrayed in the media, public policy and other mainstream forums; the underlying causes of the social construction of their group; and what specific action they could organize to address these root causes. Leadership Excellence does not see leadership development as a by-product of this engagement; rather, it infuses leadership goals — the development of competence, compassion and confidence — into all aspects of the organization. It names these attitudes, behaviors and skills “leadership.” Through this intentional process of critical dialogue and analysis, youth come to see themselves as leaders for social change. As leaders they not only take action in their community but within themselves — modeling the kind of behavior, attitudes and skills they believe should be associated with young African-American men and women in urban settings.

Identification with African-American culture and experience also provides a singular pathway into the organization and its various activities. For example, while Leadership Excellence works with any interested youth, they have deliberately identified their organization as one that focuses on African-American culture and critical analysis of underlying social challenges for African-American youth. They use identification with this culture to help youth engage in the activities of the organization. Ginwright explains that, in some organizations, hip-hop music, video and dance are used as recreation or a break from regular activities; in contrast, Leadership Excellence embraces the sights and sounds from youth's daily cultural experience, infusing them into their dialogues and other work in the group.

While African-American culture and experience are infused throughout the organization as its core pedagogy and primary identity, Leadership Excellence promotes multiple pathways for youth to take action for social change. For example, in an economic development study, youth from Leadership Excellence studied efforts to revitalize their neighborhoods. Then they went around Oakland taking photos and writing journal entries about conditions they observed. Back at Leadership Excellence, adult facilitators guided them in critical examination of differences they observed among neighborhoods in Oakland, discussion of the root causes of these differences and examination of what specific steps the youth could take now to achieve small victories for their community. As Ginwright explains, “Leadership isn't always about organizing an entire city to deal with a waste dump. Leadership in the civil rights movement wasn't all about Dr. King. It was small mom and pop folks that decided not to take the bus. There were these small examples of young people in SNCC (Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee) — examples of people who found their own path for taking action. These are examples of people who have identified a vision of themselves and of their communities.”



## SECTION V

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# DIRECTIONS FOR PLANNING AND POLICY

*Young people can and should be a part of the solution to the problems of the world.*

United Nations Braga Youth Action Plan (1998)

Around the world and across America, organizations concerned with the well-being of youth and communities are accelerating and building the trend that we call youth action — enriching and training youth through their participation in and leadership of efforts to improve their communities. We can do a much better job, however, at explaining, documenting, supporting, promoting, institutionalizing and marketing our vision and agenda for youth among policy makers and the public at large. Below, we address the question of how to enhance investments in America's youth.

## THE VISION

*Youth need to be in contact with people who are leaders. You can't teach it unless you are it. Adult leaders need to be willing to jump in and do anything; they also need to be willing to know themselves. I see adults stepping up to do things they have never done before. Kids watch adults struggle but they see adults going for it. They hear people talking articulately about what their value system is. . . They really get to know the adults. . . You can't do excellent work unless you know the people you are working with. You can do good work, but not excellent work.*

— Leslie Medine, The HOME Project

The vision, simple but powerful, is of young people working with adults in many fields to effect change in

things that are important to them: young people making a difference. Leslie Medine's comments, however, suggest the enormous challenges involved in making this happen. Adults who work with youth have to change, organizations have to change and public attitudes have to change. Youth action is not just a program. It is a commitment to:

- **build capacity** among youth by honing basic skills, critical thinking and leadership talents;
- **harness motivation** by tapping interests and issues of youth while helping them analyze other causes as well; and
- **link youth to real opportunities** to make a difference in their communities.

When done well, youth action involves many programs — some of which have the development and deployment of young change makers as their primary goal. But power and potential are lost if youth action is conceptualized as a program in itself.

Consider these alternatives. Two communities conduct youth surveys. Both identify multiple youth-related concerns (e.g., neighborhood crime, lack of jobs) as well as a desire among young people to help.

In Community A, adults conducted the survey, and adult committees were established. A year later, all concerns were addressed. In response to their young people's desire to help, they have created several youth service and youth participation programs.

Community B takes a different approach. Adults *and* young people conducted the survey. Here, the interpretation of young people's desire to help was that they wanted to help address the problems that they, themselves, identified. Young people were included in all the planning meetings. A year later, they were staff on some projects and volunteers on others — advocates for things not yet done. Youth service and leadership programs had been established, but these linked back into the broad-based commitment that the community made to address interests and improve conditions.

Our vision is that every community — suburban, urban, rural; rich or poor; majority ethnic or majority white — can be Community B. It is not about resources; it is about changing expectations and creating pathways — opening doors shut to youth out of ignorance or oversight.

Our strong impression, from interviews and program reviews, is that disenfranchised communities must become Community Bs in order to engage youth and make progress. Young people in these communities are much more likely to see the need for change but feel unempowered to make it. They need adult leaders; they need committed organizations; they need to build capacity and deepen awareness in the course of solving problems.

## CHANGING FOCUS, SHIFTING STRATEGIES

To the extent that communities adopt a primary focal point — youth action for community change — for their youth-serving agenda, they will accelerate the dynamic alignment of their civic, community and youth development programs, getting them pulling in the same direction. National organizations and funders who support locally-based organizations and efforts also will help to build alignment by using the concept of youth action to guide their funding, communications and other support activity.

If communities are to commit themselves to a focus on youth action, those who support community-based work — foundations, youth advocates, national networks, capacity-building organizations and other stake-

holders — will need to increase the quality and quantity of their investments in youth action. To adequately support communities focused on youth action, we encourage investments in four overlapping strategies.

### ***Strategy 1*** **Strengthen and codify practice.**

Deepen the capacity and reach of a defined group of local and national organizations that work to engage young people and adults in efforts to make lasting changes in the institutions and conditions that affect their lives. Engage these key groups in joint efforts to define the indicators and outcomes of good practice for themselves and broader fields.

As noted, a range of community-based strategies for promoting youth participation exists. Funders and advocates should continue to support efforts to improve practice — building directly on the lessons learned to date about strengthening the common core of youth action and clarifying the outcomes. Additionally, foundations should enhance the practices of their grantees and others by providing three types of support:

- individual grants to maintain or increase work in support of youth action;
- set-asides to convene key programs, organizations or networks to continue to tease out the common core of youth action strategies just now beginning to emerge; and
- special funds to support the documentation of effective practice with an aim toward developing and disseminating descriptive and analytical case studies.

### ***Strategy 2*** **Scale up and institutionalize good programs.**

Work with institutionally-linked programs (e.g., national youth organizations, district-level school-based service learning groups, conflict resolution groups, community development groups) to broaden and deepen interest in youth participation and to identify and overcome barriers to going to scale.

Outstanding local efforts exist around the country. It is time to take these and other experiments and suc-

cesses to scale. Strategy 1 focuses on helping good programs get better and define good practice; this strategy focuses on finding more and larger systems in which that practice can take hold and grow. Policy makers, funders, national organizations and others should continue to support base-expanding efforts, especially when the work provides potentially replicable adaptations of youth action practice into new settings such as courts and alternative schools. Standard-improving practice models for traditional settings such as schools and adult-led youth organizations also should be supported. Most significantly, “scale-up” opportunities within and outside current programs should be scouted and embraced wherever feasible. Several possible targets are suggested.

- **Schools.** A number of organizations — Do Something, the National Youth Leadership Council and others — have taken schools as a major focus of their youth action-related work. Only a handful of these efforts, however, have attempted to infuse youth action across entire school districts, at all scales from the individual classroom to district leadership. This approach may be a promising one, given a number of efforts currently focused on district-wide school reform.
- **Civic and Community Change Organizations.** The number of adult-led, change-focused organizations’ efforts to involve youth is growing. But a far larger number of community-wide and organization-specific efforts to address issues of community importance still do not fully engage young people. Funders and other supporters should create tools and incentives for current and/or future programs that have community change as a goal (especially those that have resident involvement as a key strategy) to help them assess the value and feasibility of targeting youth as participants. The overlap between support of conflict/dispute resolution as a supportive strategy for community organizing and a supportive strategy for youth development deserves more exploration. Can young people more often take on roles as consensus builders in their communities?
- **Community Development Corporations and Networks.** As noted, opportunity exists to build on the growing interest in youth among community development organizations. The major national networks (e.g., LISC, Enterprise, National Community Building Network) are perhaps the most promising entry point for large-scale youth action within the community development field. As yet, it is not clear how easily this interest in youth can be translated into a commitment to youth action, but cautious optimism and careful investment is warranted.
- **Traditional Youth Serving Organizations.** The work of encouraging traditional youth organizations to engage young people in organizational decision making and community change is far from complete. These organizations represent a growing and changing system that reaches millions of young people. And while many independent youth-serving organizations and some national affiliate structures have embraced youth action, many have hardly begun this work.
- **Faith-based Organizations.** These organizations are taking on more and gaining more respect for work in service to communities; moreover, local churches, mosques and synagogues often are parts of national networks that can be mobilized. Faith-based organizations usually have a high priority on youth development, and they often involve young members in providing their services. However, more effort should be made to involve young people in the planning and administration of such programs both to increase youthful commitments to service and to improve the quality of service offered to youth in need.
- **Workplaces and Businesses.** Employers have a huge stake in the development of youth, their current and future employees. While young people already are demonstrating the new kind of orientation and skills needed in today’s evolving workplaces, they are not always provided the opportunities for training, mentoring and advancement that could accelerate their own growth and contribution. And they are not often offered meaningful decision making and action roles in their initial workplace experiences. Businesses, funders and advocates should seek avenues to more fully align the on-the-job training of youth with the principles of youth action.
- **Government.** Through the ebbs and flows of public concern for youth, government seeks to main-

tain consistency in its programs for youth while addressing whatever hot issues provoke public outcry. It has a strategic interest in promoting youthful civic participation. Yet, public support is not constant, and funding is a constant concern. Government can earn more widespread public and revenue support if it adopts a youth action agenda that allows and encourages more young people to take on strong, visible roles in community change.

### ***Strategy 3*** **Build the knowledge base and the field through documentation, dissemination and dialogue.**

Frame professional and public discussions with supporting research and practice-based work that clarifies, surfaces and analyzes tensions; offers examples of the implementation and impact of meaningful youth participation; and underscores the importance of providing and linking capacity building, awareness building and opportunities for action.

A scan of the knowledge base for youth action reveals trends familiar to those in the youth development community. Research is scattered across a number of fields, seldom cumulative and poorly synthesized. Research is often focused on a narrow subset of youth action strategies (service, governance, etc.), making it difficult to extrapolate secure knowledge about youth action broadly. And efforts to evaluate the outcomes of particular programs and initiatives move out ahead of efforts to document practice and principles inside of programs. For these reasons, efforts to more effectively consolidate and disseminate the existing evidence base are just as critical as new research efforts.

The role of foundation support and national organization sponsorship for public opinion research done by Hart Research Associates and others is a good example of national-scale commitment to making the case for youth action.<sup>11</sup> Many other evaluative and analytical examples could be cited. Funders and advocates must continue to support applied research and documentation that both strengthens the evidence base that youth action makes a difference while expanding best practice

knowledge on effective strategies. In addition, however, foundations and national organizations should go further to engage those immersed in promoting youth action to take the first steps toward field building:

- knowledge development (identify the research/theory base; define the overarching rationale; describe the core approaches and key outcomes);
- standards development (describe the elements of essential practice; define minimal standards; identify evaluation protocols); and
- career development (recruitment, training, certification, organizational homes); and
- legitimacy (public opinion, policy, coordination with other fields).

### ***Strategy 4*** **Shape public perceptions of youth potential and roles.**

Gather data that demonstrate the evolving character of today's younger generation. Promote its desire to be part of the solution to community problems; document its expanding participation in community change; and widely acknowledge the positive outcomes that result.

For more than a decade, parents, families and communities steadily increased their investments in youth. As a result, today's young people demonstrate ample skills for the new economy, strong concern for the well-being of others, a broad appreciation for diverse ethnicities and a desire to make a difference in the betterment of their communities. Nevertheless, the mass media, far too often, portrays today's youth as the neglected, angry, often hostile youngsters of an earlier time. Too much of the general, adult public is confused by these images, and too many of today's institutional leaders — those responsible for social services, education or juvenile justice — accept them without dispute.

It is time to correct and clarify the public perception of youth, time to encourage an appreciation of the vast potential of young people to help develop stronger communities and a better life for everyone. By affirm-

<sup>11</sup> For a summary of this research, see Appendix A.



ing and raising the priority of such efforts, organizations, funders and advocates will sow the seeds of increased and sustained youth and community development funding for decades ahead.

## CONCLUSION

The last decade of work on behalf of America's youth has been a rich training ground for our nation's youth advocates. We have learned that the best way to develop our young people is to encourage — indeed, to expect — their participation in efforts to improve their

communities. However, to accomplish this, we must create and sustain a vast array of action pathways that are readily visible and accessible to all youth. Such pathways must provide adult-supported opportunities for community action while also paying close attention to young people's individual development. Many youth organizations and programs have gone a long way toward embracing this mission, but other organizations and institutions in our communities need to be brought on board. Fortunately, many of these programs are awakening to the potential of youth to join and enhance their efforts. The time is right for a surge forward in America's investment in youth action.



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## APPENDIX A

# YOUTH ACTION

## *An Initial Summary of Five Surveys*

### OVERVIEW

The topic of youth taking action for and with their communities has received increased attention in recent years. The civic engagement field is hailing the involvement of young people as the key to ensuring a strong future for civil society and a socially engaged public. The youth development field is calling for communities to “make space” in their communities for youth to take on significant roles — because exploring, trying and doing are critical parts of growing up. And the community development field is increasingly seeking youth involvement as a key strategy to move above and beyond “brick and mortar” housing development, to include human development as an interconnected strategy.

Because participants hail from multiple fields, however, conversations regarding youth action can become confused, as actors use different language, different concepts and different approaches. Data is a critical element in both “making the case” for youth action, and in providing a common ground for future conversations.

In the late 1990s, this lack of good “making the case” data prompted a flurry of surveys, commissioned by national organizations committed to youth action.

- *Young People’s Community Involvement Survey: Report on the Findings* (1998). Prepared for Do Something, Inc. by Princeton Survey Research Associates: Princeton, NJ.

Survey measured young people’s levels of community involvement, the personal benefits of community involvement for young people, involvement in high school activities, and the classroom connection. Survey results are based on telephone interviews with a nationally representative sample of young people ages 10 to 29, living in continental United States households (1,002 young people surveyed).

- *Community Organizations’ Use of Young People as Volunteers: Report of a National Survey of Community Organizations That Use Volunteers* (1998). Conducted for Do Something, Inc. by Princeton Survey Research Associates: Princeton, NJ.

Survey based on telephone interviews with volunteer coordinators in a nationally representative sample of 250 community organizations that utilize volunteers. Survey examined: The place of young people in community settings; What benefits young people derive from volunteering; Perceptions about young volunteers; and Recruiting and retaining young volunteers.

- *Leadership for a New Century: Key Findings from a Study on Youth, Leadership, and Community Service* (1998). Conducted for Public Allies by Peter D. Hart Research Associates.

Based on a 1998 national survey of 728 young Americans, ages 18 to 30. Survey examines the goals, values and vision of today's young Americans.

- *Volunteering and Giving Among Teenagers 12 to 17 Years of Age: Findings from a National Survey* (1996). Analyzed by Hodgkinson, V. & Weitzman, M., with Crutchfield, E., and Heffron, A. Survey conducted by The Gallup Organization for Independent Sector: Washington, D.C.

Second in a series of national studies, information was gathered through in-home personal interviews with a representative sample of 1,007 teenagers ages 12–17. The error rate for the total sample is +/- 4 percent.

- *Support for Youth: A Profile of Three Communities* (1998). Sipe, C. & Ma, P., with Gambone, M. Public/Private Ventures (P/PV): Philadelphia, PA.

Based on research undertaken in 1996, this report provides a detailed picture of how youth ages 12 to 20 in three American neighborhoods — Austin, TX; St. Petersburg, FL; and Savannah, GA — spend their non-school time, and the amount and levels of basic “vitamins” they are provided by the adults and institutions they interact with (including the schools). The three neighborhoods are the intensive research sites in P/PV’s Community Change for Youth Development initiative, which aims to increase the “vitamins” in youth’s lives.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE DATA

These five documents provide a very rich source of information but, like all surveys, they have their limitations. Notably for the purposes of this report:

- The data tends to emphasize youth *volunteering* over other types of youth participation. Only the *Leadership for a New Century* study attempts to focus on youth leadership; and, it, too, intermingles data on community service. The reader is

advised to consider that much of the following information may, therefore, not be wholly indicative of youth’s attitudes and behaviors in regard to youth action broadly.

- With the exception of the P/PV report, data are drawn from nationally representative samples and may not reflect local trends. The P/PV report is included here to highlight the reality that significant local variances occur, and to generate insights into potential areas and implications of such variances. Actors seeking to address local concerns are advised to seek out, or, if need be, create local data sources.
- The data is cross-sectional, and is based on surveys, not experimentation. Only the Independent Sector survey attempts to be longitudinal. The reports reviewed make inferences regarding causality (e.g., what factors lead to increased participation over the course of a lifetime), as well as generational differences. Without the benefit of additional research methodologies, these inferences can not be proven.
- The data sources use different definitions of “youth” and “young people.” For example, the *Leadership for a New Century* report captures 18–30-year-olds; *Community Involvement Survey* captures 15–29-year-olds; and the *Volunteering and Giving* report captures 12–17-year-olds. Further studies which use one instrument to measure differences in age groups are warranted.

## CRITICAL QUESTIONS

These caveats aside, the data allows us significant insight into several critical questions.

- **How much are youth participating? Which youth are participating?** While youth are participating more than many had thought, there is significant room for improvement, especially among minority groups. Available data from localities suggest that national trends obscure significant need in specific communities.
- **Where are youth participating?** While youth are shunning political activity, they are flocking to contribute “closer to the ground and closer to



home.” Actors aiming to increase youth participation may want to focus on creating this type of opportunity, at the very least as a lead-in to other types of activity.

- **Why are young people participating?** Youth care deeply about those around them, and they want to make a difference. Youth report high levels of altruism and efficacy in this regard. They are ready and willing to make a contribution if given the opportunity.
- **What factors influence rates of participation?** Youth, just like adults, need to be asked. The most powerful and concrete way to increase the rate of youth participation is to create opportunities and ask youth to help. Youth value participation experiences most highly when given real roles and responsibilities coupled with the opportunity to develop skills.
- **What are the benefits of participation?** Participation has long-term benefits, as early childhood action appears to lead to lifelong action, and to renewed commitments to school and work. Adults who run community-based organizations and young people themselves agree that youth have the skills to make a significant difference.
- **Are community-based organizations good places for youth to participate?** Community-based organizations are doing a good job of creating the type of opportunity youth value, and the CBO’s are also willing to do more.

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS SUMMARY

This summary is intended as an initial cut through the data. Each of the data sources was very rich; more thorough reviews will tease out many of the subtleties contained within — for example documenting age differences between early, middle and late adolescence. Detailed cross-study analyses are warranted as well. Revealing and accounting for any apparently contradictory findings, for example, will likely lead to valuable insights. Nevertheless, even an initial cut through the data provides a firm starting place — both for more detailed analyses, and to ground ongoing conversations.

## Survey Results

### How much are young people participating?

*Young people are participating at high rates.* Despite stereotypes and “Generation X” labels to the contrary, most of the data strongly indicate that young people are volunteering at high levels and, according to some data, more than adults.

- 59 percent of teenagers report volunteering in the past 12 months, compared to 49 percent of adults; young adults volunteer at 38 percent (*Volunteering and Giving*).
- 73 percent of young people, aged 15–29, have worked on behalf of a community-based organization or have participated in grassroots activities designed to improve their communities at some point in their lives (*Community Involvement Survey*).

### Where are youth participating?

*Few youth take on traditional political roles . . . but the same goes for adults.*

- Only 1.2 percent of youth report taking on political assignments (*Volunteering and Giving*).
- The percentage of adults taking on political assignments, while higher than the percentage of youth, is still remarkably low, at 3.8 percent (*Volunteering and Giving*).

*Youth choose to take action “closer to the ground, closer to home.”*

- 87 percent of young Americans say that “making a difference in the life of someone close to you” is important to them, rating it as an eight or higher on a ten-point scale. “Young people respond much more enthusiastically to this more personal and direct concept of assisting others than to the more traditional notion of ‘service to your community and being involved in community affairs.’” (*Leadership for a New Century*).
- Youth volunteer heavily in the areas of religious organizations (26.3 percent), youth development (21.6 percent), informal (21.1 percent) and

education (20.3 percent), but only lightly with political organizations (1.2 percent), foundations (2.4 percent), and international/foreign organizations (2.7 percent) given the question: In which, if any, of these areas have you done some volunteer work in the past twelve months? (*Volunteering and Giving*).

## Which youth are participating?

While males and females appear to be participating at similar rates (*Volunteering and Giving*), all the data indicate that some subgroups of society are participating at higher rates than others.

### *Ethnicity*

- While 63.3 percent of white teenagers report volunteering in the past year, only 42 percent of black teens and 44.1 percent of Hispanic teens report such activity. This is a lower rate of volunteering than was reported for blacks in 1992 (down from 52.8 percent) (Data of Hispanic teenagers in 1992 is not available; Hispanic ethnicity determined by the question “Are you yourself of Hispanic origin or descent, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or other Spanish background?”) (*Volunteering and Giving*).
- “Volunteering and giving could be measurably increased if volunteering increased among young children, blacks, persons of Hispanic origin and all persons of color” (*Volunteering and Giving*).

### *Age*

While several studies showed mixed trends with respect to age, the P/PV study analyzed age differences closely and reported that:

- “The number of youth who are disconnected increases as youth get older. This drop-off in supports and opportunities that are available to older youth occurs simultaneously with an increase in negative activities, suggesting that older adolescents are a crucial group for communities to target when developing new activities in these neighborhoods” (*Support for Youth*).

## Why are youth participating?

*Young people want to make a difference.*

- “The most frequently cited reasons teens gave for volunteering in both surveys were that they felt compassion toward people in need; they could do something for a cause that was important to them; and they believed that if they helped others, others would help them. They ranked first compassion; then commitment; and finally, reciprocity in the treatment of others” (*Volunteering and Giving*).
- “Contrary to the stereotype of young adults being aloof and devoid of deep convictions, today’s young Americans have a strong sense of values and principles, and a well-defined direction for contributing to their community and country” (*Leadership for a New Century*).

*Adults often misjudge the sources of youth’s motivation.*

- Adult leaders of community-based organizations believe that “young people are mostly looking to gain skills, experience or training by volunteering for a community organization. But less than 5 percent of young volunteers interviewed as part of Do Something’s *Community Involvement Survey* mention these goals when asked to explain their involvement with community organizations” (*Young People as Volunteers*).

## What factors influence rates of participation?

*“Volunteers are not made, but asked”* (*Volunteering and Giving*). First and foremost, studies identified “asking them” as the most promising strategy to increase youth participation.

- 40 percent of teen volunteers first learned about their volunteer activities because someone asked them — most frequently a friend, a teacher or other school personnel, a family member or other relative, or someone at church (*Volunteering and Giving*).

*Encouragement from key institutions.*

- “Volunteer participation can . . . also be increased by encouraging involvement in youth groups, voluntary organizations, religious organizations and schools.” Nearly 75 percent of those who belonged to a youth group or similar group when they were children currently volunteer, compared with a 34.6 percent volunteer rate among those who did not volunteer as children (*Volunteering and Giving*).

*Modeling desired behaviors.*

- “Rates of volunteering can . . . be increased through the following: Ensuring that young people have positive adult role models, such as a parent who volunteers; increasing the opportunities for young people to volunteer; encouraging them to serve in school government; and seeing adults they admire — such as teachers — help others.” More than 63 percent of youth who had either seen someone in their family help others or had seen someone they admire (not a family member) helping others volunteer now, compared to 35.7 percent of those who had not (*Volunteering and Giving*).
- 63.3 percent of teens who have been “shown a lot of kindness” from someone (relative, friend, teacher, pastor/preacher, nurse, neighbor, somebody else) currently volunteer, compared with just 22.3 percent of those who have not (*Volunteering and Giving*).

*Logistical concerns.* It also appears that many youth don’t volunteer more because of day-to-day realities.

- The top four reasons teens report for not volunteering or not volunteering more are: “Personal schedule too full; don’t have transportation; my age; I already volunteer as much as I can” (*Volunteering and Giving*).

*Real roles and responsibilities that allow youth to develop skills.*

- “Young people do not want to play games. They respond to community programs that encourage them to take on responsibilities and to develop skills” (*Community Involvement Survey*).

- 50 percent of young people who feel they were given important responsibilities in the organization rate their experience working with the CBO as “excellent,” compared to 20 percent of those who do not feel they were given important responsibilities (*Community Involvement Survey*).
- 51 percent of young people who say they got a chance to make key decisions say that their experience was excellent, compared with 29 percent who did not get the opportunity (*Community Involvement Survey*).
- Twice as many young people who note that they gained valuable experience, skills or contacts working with community-based organizations rate their experience as excellent, in comparison with those who say they did not (46 percent versus 21 percent) (*Community Involvement Survey*).
- 83.3 percent of youth report that developing leadership skills was a “very important” or “somewhat important” benefit of volunteering (*Community Involvement Survey*).

*Inspirational adults.*

- 50 percent of young people who work with inspirational adults give their experience top marks, compared with just 17 percent who gave their experience top marks even though they lacked an inspirational adult leader (*Community Involvement Survey*).

*Other*

- Young people also want clearly communicated expectations, and they want a low turnover of key staff, they want well organized programs that make the best use of their efforts, and they want to see the effects of their work (*Community Involvement Survey*).
- “. . . receiving class credit for the work, receiving occasional gifts, meals, or other ‘perks,’ has no effect on young people’s feelings about their work with community-based organizations” (*Community Involvement Survey*).

## What are the benefits of participation?

*Participation as a child and young adult serves as a “gateway” to future civic action.*

- “Children, if encouraged and involved early, are more likely to continue volunteering later in life” (*Volunteering and Giving*).
- 68.7 percent of youth who, as younger children, had belonged to a youth group, did some kind of volunteer work, went door to door to raise money, or were active in student government currently volunteer. Only 20.4 percent of those who did not have those early life experiences currently volunteer (*Volunteering and Giving*).
- Half of the young people who held a leadership position in some high school extracurricular activity have volunteered their time to a community-based organization in the past year, compared to only one in three volunteers among those who had not held such positions (*Community Involvement Survey*).
- Interest in community involvement appears to start early if it starts at all: 70 percent of 15–17-year-olds; 71 percent of 18–21-year-olds; and 74 percent of 22–29-year-olds have participated in activities to help strengthen their community at some point in their lives (*Community Involvement Survey*).

*Participation appears to affect attitudes and behaviors regarding school and work.*

While none of the studies provided in-depth analysis of civic participation’s effect on attitudes and behaviors regarding school and work, there were some positive indications:

- “Among young people who have left high school, 79 percent of high school leaders subsequently went to college. Only 19 percent of young people who held no leadership positions in high school went on to college.” (*Community Involvement Survey*).
- One-half of volunteers who took a course requiring community service reported that they:
- “did better in school/my grades improved” (51.7 percent)

- “developed new career goals” (49.8 percent)
- “explored or learned about career options” (49 percent) (*Volunteering and Giving*)

*Youth and adults agree on what skills “a volunteer must have in order to be effective.”*

	Percent agreeing that the skill is essential	
	<i>CBO Leaders</i>	<i>Young People</i>
<b>Interpersonal Skills</b>		
Getting along well with people	97 %	97%
Seeing a situation from someone else’s point of view	92 %	93%
Resolving conflicts between others	58%	86%
<b>Managerial Skills</b>		
Completing projects	93%	96%
Setting priorities	79%	96%
Organizing projects or events	74%	86%
<b>Leadership Skills</b>		
Persuading others to do things	62%	77%
Speaking in public	48%	79%

Source: *Young People as Volunteers*.

*Young people believe that they can make a difference and community-based organizations agree.*

- 73 percent of young people (ages 15-29) believe that they can have a big or moderate impact making their community a better place to live (compared to 66 percent of adults 30 or older) (*Community Involvement Survey*).
- 78 percent of community organizations reject the assertion that young people do not have the necessary skills to be volunteers (*Young People as Volunteers*).

## Are Community-Based Organizations Good Places For Youth To Participate?

The available data consider community-based organizations in depth — this allows us to explore youth's roles in these organizations more closely.

*Most CBOs involve youth in some way.*

- 86 percent of community-based organizations have volunteers in their teens and 20s (*Young People as Volunteers*).
- 74 percent of community-based organizations with a paid staff employ young people under age 30 (*Young People as Volunteers*).
- 33 percent of community-based organizations have young people serving in a position of leadership-as supervisors, coordinators or other decision makers (*Young People as Volunteers*).
- 34 percent of community-based organizations with a governing board have young people serving on the board (*Young People as Volunteers*).

*The heads of community-based organizations feel that they are doing a good job of giving youth significant roles.*

- 45 percent of CBO leaders report they do an excellent job of giving young volunteers important responsibilities; 39 percent say they give young volunteers the chance to make key decisions (*Young People as Volunteers*).

*Young people agree.*

- 76 percent of young people involved with a CBO say that they had at least some input into how they actually spend their time with the organization, including 30 percent who say they had “a lot” of input (*Community Involvement Survey*).
- 76 percent of young people contributing to CBOs report being given important responsibilities (*Community Involvement Survey*).
- Of all young people, 20 percent report having held a leadership position while working or volunteering for a community-based organization (*Community Involvement Survey*).
- Of young people involved in CBOs:
  - 66 percent participate in decision making meetings;
  - 53 percent give presentations/speeches;
  - 42 percent coordinate events/activities with other organizations;
  - 36 percent plan or lead meetings; and
  - 24 percent contact government officials (*Community Involvement Survey*).

*Heads of CBOs are willing to bolster efforts.*

- 59 percent say they would be very willing to offer leadership opportunities as a step to increase involvement of young volunteers; 41 percent said they would be very willing to include young people as voting members on decision-making bodies (*Community Involvement Survey*).



## APPENDIX B

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# CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROFILED ORGANIZATIONS

**Asian Pacific Islander Youth Promoting Activism and Leadership (AYPAL)**

Asian Community Mental Health Services  
310 8th Street  
Suite 201  
Oakland, CA 94607  
(510) 451-6729  
[www.acmhs.org](http://www.acmhs.org)

**Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association**

863 Prospect Avenue  
Bronx, NY 10459  
(718) 328-1086  
[www.people2people.org](http://www.people2people.org)

**Center for Youth as Resources**

1000 Connecticut Ave, NW, 13th Floor  
Washington, DC 20036  
202-261-4131  
[www.yar.org](http://www.yar.org)

**Community Impact**

1815 H Street, NW  
Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20006  
(202) 331-0592  
[www.community-impact.net](http://www.community-impact.net)

**East Bay Conservation Corps**

1021 Third Street  
Oakland, CA 94607  
(510) 992-7800  
[www.ebcc-school.org](http://www.ebcc-school.org)

**El Puente**

211 South Fourth St.  
Brooklyn, NY 11211  
(718) 387-0404

**The HOME Project**

Beacon Day and High School  
2101 Livingston Street  
Oakland, CA 94606  
(510) 436-4466  
[www.beaconschools.org](http://www.beaconschools.org)

**Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center (LYRIC)**

123 Collingwood St.  
San Francisco, CA 94114  
(415) 703-6150  
[www.lyric.org](http://www.lyric.org)

**Leadership Excellence**

287 17th Street, Suite 400  
Oakland, CA 94612  
(510) 267-9770  
[www.leadershipexcellence.org](http://www.leadershipexcellence.org)

**Oakland Fund for Children and Youth**

150 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, Suite 4353  
Oakland, CA 94612  
(510) 238-4911

**Philadelphia Student Union**

1315 Spruce Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
(215) 546-3290

**Project 2000 (now Envision Utah)**

P.O. Box 30901  
Salt Lake City, UT 84130  
(801) 973-3307  
[www.envisionutah.org](http://www.envisionutah.org)

**ROCA**

101 Park Street  
Chelsea, MA 02150  
(617) 889-5210

**San Francisco Peer Resources Program**

Balboa High School  
1000 Cayuga Avenue, Room 28  
San Francisco, CA 94112  
(415) 469-4216

**San Francisco YMCA**

YMCA of San Francisco  
44 Montgomery Street, Suite 770  
San Francisco, CA 94104  
(415) 391-9622  
[www.wmcasf.org](http://www.wmcasf.org)

**Seattle Youth Involvement Network**

2017 E. Spruce St.  
Seattle, WA 98122  
(206) 325-7922  
[www.seattleyouth.org](http://www.seattleyouth.org)

**Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC)**

Social and Public Art Resource Center  
685 Venice Boulevard  
Venice, CA 90291  
Phone: (310) 822-9560  
[www.sparcmurals.org](http://www.sparcmurals.org)

**St. John's Educational Thresholds Center**

3040 16th Street  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
(415) 864-5205  
[www.sjetc.org](http://www.sjetc.org)

**Youth Development Institute**

Fund for the City of New York  
121 Avenue of the Americas, 6th Floor  
New York, NY 10013  
(212) 925-6675  
[www.fcny.org/ydi/index.html](http://www.fcny.org/ydi/index.html)

**Youth Force**

320 Jackson Avenue  
Bronx, NY 10454  
(718) 665-4268  
[www.youthforcenyc.org](http://www.youthforcenyc.org)

**Youth Making A Change**

Coleman Advocates  
459 Vienna Street (at 22nd Street)  
San Francisco, CA 94112  
(415) 239-0161  
[www.colemanadvocates.org](http://www.colemanadvocates.org)



## APPENDIX C

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# FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

As indicated in the introduction, three sets of conversations were particularly critical in development of the ideas contained in this publication. One set of conversations involved interviews and a meeting with key national and local organizations, co-sponsored with the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, focusing on the various youth action strategies — governance, organizing, advocacy, leadership, service and others (G.O.A.L.S). A second set were made possible through the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, and focused on youth leadership organizations in the San Francisco Bay

Area. The participants in these conversations contributed to this publication in critical ways, both directly and indirectly. A third group of conversations took place among members of the International Learning Group on Youth and Community Development (ILG), bringing together youth development and community development practitioners from around the world. For more information on the ILG process, look to *Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared: Reflections from the International Learning Group on Youth and Community Development* (Irby, 2001), another volume in this publication series.

## G.O.A.L.S MEETING PARTICIPANTS — JUNE 1999

Eric Braxton	Philadelphia Student Union	Philadelphia
Douglas Calvin	Youth Leadership Support Network	Washington, DC
Joy DeMarais	National Youth Leadership Council	Minneapolis
Jules Dunham	Forum for Youth Investment (then IYF-US)	Takoma Park, MD
Ditra Edwards	LISTEN, Inc.	Washington, DC
Maria Figueroa	Council on Foreign Relations	New York
Hartley Hobson	Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development	Washington, DC
Katie Hultquist	Youth Venture	Washington, DC
Merita Irby	Forum for Youth Investment	Takoma Park, MD
Nicole Johnson	Center for Community Change	Washington, DC
Adam Kendall	Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development	Washington, DC
Brad Lewis	Corporation for National Service	Washington, DC
Michael McCabe	Youth Service America	Washington, DC
Kim McGillicuddy	Youth Force	New York
Karen Pittman	Forum for Youth Investment	Washington, DC
Galen Price	International Student Activism Alliance	Cullowhee, North Carolina
Matt Rosen	Youth Leadership Institute	San Francisco
Jenny Sazama	Youth On Board	Boston
Cynthia Scherer	Youth Outreach, Points of Light Foundation	Washington, DC
Robert Sherman	Surdna Foundation	New York
Amy Weisenbach	Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development	Washington, DC
Wendy Wheeler	Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development	Washington, DC

Note: Affiliations noted were current at the time of the meeting date.

**BAY AREA PRACTITIONERS AND “BIG PICTURE” PLAYERS FOCUS GROUPS — JULY 1999**

Debbie Alvarez	San Francisco Department of Children Youth and Families	San Francisco
Margaret Brodtkin	Coleman Advocates for Youth	San Francisco
John Fung	Asian Mental Health Center	Oakland
Shawn Ginwright	Leadership Excellence	Oakland
Gregory Hodge	Oakland Child Health and Safety Initiative	Oakland
Taj James	Coleman Advocates for Youth	San Francisco
Louise Jones	San Francisco Unified School District	San Francisco
David Kakishiba	East Bay Asian Youth Center	Oakland
Joanna Lennon	East Bay Conservation Corps	Oakland
Duane Marsh	San Francisco Foundation Faiths Initiative	San Francisco
Leslie Medine	The HOME Project	Alameda
Lorne Needle	Peer Resources	San Francisco
Nancy Netherland	Community Networks for Youth Development (formerly of the YMCA of San Francisco)	San Francisco
Sam Piha	Community Networks for Youth Development	San Francisco
Maureen Sedonaen	Youth Leadership Institute	San Francisco
Orin Schlossberg	Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center (LYRIC)	San Francisco
Ted Uno	Quilombo	Oakland
Landon Williams	Better Choices	Oakland
Oscar Wolters-Duran	St. John’s Educational Thresholds Center	San Francisco

Note: Affiliations noted were current at the time of the focus group date.

## BAY AREA YOUNG PEOPLE FOCUS GROUPS — JULY 1999

Audra	.....The HOME Project	.....Alameda
Conchita	.....Youth Making A Change, Coleman Advocates	.....San Francisco
Danielle	.....East Bay Conservation Corps	.....Oakland
Kim	.....Asian Pacific Island Youth Promoting Activism & Leadership (APAL) .....Asian Mental Health Center	.....Oakland
Milton	.....Youth Making A Change, Coleman Advocates	.....San Francisco
Min Lee	.....Asian Pacific Island Youth Promoting Activism & Leadership (APAL) .....Asian Mental Health Center	.....Oakland
Nina	.....The HOME Project	.....Alameda
Rochelle	.....Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center (LYRIC)	.....San Francisco
Sofia	.....The HOME Project	.....Alameda
Shannon	.....East Bay Conservation Corps	.....Oakland

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 Note: Affiliations noted were current at the time of the focus group date.

## INTERNATIONAL LEARNING GROUP ADVISORS AND MEMBERS

Bas Auer	.....Youth for Development and Cooperation	.....Egypt
Pedro Bellen	.....Entrepreneurial & Livelihood Training Center	.....Philippines
Julia Burgess	.....Center for Community Change	.....Washington, DC
Michele Cahill*	.....Youth Development Institute	.....New York
Barry Cullen/ Louise Hurley	.....The Children's Research Centre	.....Ireland
Marilyn De Castro	.....Baguio Center for Young Adults	.....Philippines
Francisco Gerdes Delgrave	.....Oaxaca Community Foundation	.....Mexico
Warunee Fongkaew	.....Chiang Mai University — The Urban Life Network Project	.....Thailand
Della Hughes	.....National Network for Youth	.....Washington, DC
Anton Lopukhin	.....Association of Young Leaders	.....Russia
Bene Madunagu	.....Girl's Power Initiative	.....Nigeria
Inca Mohamed*	.....The Ford Foundation	.....New York
Richard Murphy/ Raul Ratcliffe	.....Center for Youth Development & Policy Research	.....Washington, DC
Jennifer Nicholls	.....Australian Youth Foundation	.....Australia
Bolaji Owasanoye	.....Human Development Initiatives	.....Nigeria
Ron Register*	.....Cleveland Community Building Initiative	.....Cleveland
Gregg Taylor	.....Community IMPACT!	.....Washington, DC
Gary Walker*/ Corina Chavez	.....Public/Private Ventures	.....Philadelphia
Matthew Wexler	.....Local Initiatives Support Corporation	.....New York
Wendy Wheeler	.....Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development	.....Washington, DC
Clive Willemse	.....Change of Life Style Homes Project	.....Namibia

\* Advisor

Note: Affiliations noted were current at the time the learning groups convened. For current affiliations see *Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared: Reflections from the International Learning Group on Youth and Community Development* (Irby, 2001).







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