Youth—Adult Partnerships in an Out-of-School-Time Program:
An Exploration of Power, Safety, and Respect

BY

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Abstract

Today's youth are not being effectively prepared to navigate school, work, and life as adults (e.g., Symonds, Schwartz, & Ferguson, 2011). Where schools have fallen short in their preparatory capacities, out-of-school-time programs (OSTPs) have shown promise in helping equip young people for adult life (e.g., Larson, Hansen, & Walker, 2005). Moreover, within OSTPs, youth—adult partnerships (YAPs) have demonstrated the potential to serve as a transformative developmental model for youth (e.g., Zeldin & Collura, 2010). Building on existing research on OSTPs and YAPs, and using a mixed-methods approach, I examined the experiences youth and adults had in an OSTP that was identified as a model of YAPs. Interviews, observations, and survey responses yielded findings related to power, psychological safety, adults serving youth, and the specialness of the OSTP. Both youth and adults exerted power, though adults had more than the literature would have predicted. The environment where youth and adults engaged in YAPs was psychologically-safe, which played an important role in the overall experiences of youth and adults. Despite anticipating a thoroughly egalitarian environment, I came to understand how adults served youth in a range of ways and how relentlessly adults strived to yield power to youth. Ultimately, youth and adults described how the OSTP was special and unique, especially compared to school. Together, these results imply that the existing conceptualization of YAPs needs to be more adequately grounded in the practical realities of OSTPs and that subsequent research should be conducted to more deeply understand the dynamism of youth—adult relations, in general, and YAPs, in particular.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Nature of the Problem

Today's youth[1] are ill-equipped for the challenges they will face as adults. Reports suggest young adults lack the skills and dispositions needed for many types of jobs (e.g., Symonds, Schwartz, & Ferguson, 2011). Regardless of the type and quality of the high-school school attended, graduates indicate that their schools inadequately prepared them for work (Maulden, Bentley, Dwyer, & Houston, 2004). One institution that has shown the potential to help prepare adolescents for adult life and work is out-of-school-time programs (OSTPs). Research indicates that OSTPs can provide opportunities for youth to develop skills, such as initiative, teamwork (Larson, Hansen, & Walker, 2005), and strategic thinking (Larson & Hansen, 2005) — skills young people need as adults that they may not be developing in other developmental spaces (e.g., home, school, leisure). Noting the failure of traditional institutions (e.g., family, school) to effectively cultivate the hearts and minds of young adults (Lauer et al., 2006), and considering the potential of OSTPs as a developmental setting, school leaders have co-opted this environment in hopes of supporting learning in schools (Silva & Headden, 2011). This co-opting will be challenging, though, as the underlying beliefs about youth held by adults throughout society may make it difficult for the benefits of OSTPs for schools to be fully reaped.

It is important to note, however, that the beliefs held by today's adults are not completely their fault — they have likely known nothing else. Historically, adultist beliefs (e.g., the discrimination of youth due to their not being adults) have propagated subsequent adultist beliefs, which are reflected in existing institutions (e.g., Creighton & Kivel, 1992). Though often unacknowledged, adultist beliefs have influenced past adults — who have failed to create

[1] "Youth," "young adults," "adolescents," "teens," etc., will be used interchangeably and refer to young people in their teens.

learning environments that were optimal for adolescent development then (see Gatto, 2000) — and the result is that today's adults are following suit (see Fletcher, 2015). Thus, it should not be surprising that today's environments continue the discriminatory, sub-optimal preparation of adolescents for their futures (see Lindeman, 1926). As Linda Camino wrote, "adults will find it hard to pass the torch if they themselves have not had a previous opportunity to hold the torch" (2000, p. 19). Regressive expectations for young people lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby youth fail to excel and achieve to their true potential, affirming the predictions and actions of adults (see Goyal, 2016). Over time, youth fail to acquire and develop the outlooks and abilities that will enable them to make the best decisions for themselves, in both short and long terms; youth grow up and adopt the same adultist orientations toward youth and perpetuate the same inadequate environments for other youth that contributed to their own sub-optimal development (see Collins, 2009).

One feature of OSTPs that holds promise promoting healthy youth—adult interactions (e.g., treat one another with dignity and respect, enabling the positive development of youth and community) is the youth—adult partnership (YAP) model. YAPs differ from other forms of youth—adult relations (YARs) (e.g., parent—child, teacher—student, etc.) because adults engage by 'doing with' youth rather than 'doing for' youth (Camino, 2005); youth and adults share power and decision-making responsibilities (Ginwright, 2005), which is unlikely to happen in other more adult structured settings in the lives of youth. Research indicates that there are several positive consequences for YAPs in OSTPs. More so than other aspects of OSTPs (e.g., staff qualifications, staff-student ratios, etc.), the quality of the interactions between youth and adults are better predictors of overall program effectiveness (Yohalem, Granger, & Pittman, 2009). In addition, YAPs have been shown to have positive outcomes for not only youth, but

also for adults and the broader community (Zeldin & Collura, 2010). Given the capacity of YAPs in the context of OSTPs to enable important developmental experiences for young people, further exploration into the YAP model, and how it relates to youth development is warranted. Moreover, scholars have called for a better understanding of the culture of YAPs (e.g., Camino, 2000; Zeldin, Petrokubi, & Camino, 2008).

Research Goal

The goal of this study was twofold: (1) to expand the research on OSTPs and YAPs, generally, and (2) to explore more deeply the experiences of YAPs from the perspective of youth and adults at an OSTP. By investigating YAPs at an OSTP that embraced and promoted egalitarian YARs, I gained a better understanding of how and why YAPs were manifested, what antecedents were relevant, and what youth and adults did to facilitate their creation, implementation, and maintenance. A thorough investigation of the perspectives and opinions of youth and adults engaged in YAPs enabled me to more fully understand the mindsets, needs, and expectations youth and adults have when navigating the inevitable challenges and opportunities of YAPs. The resulting understanding gained through this research expands existing scholarship, revealing potentially new avenues for inquiry into YAPs, YARs, youth development, developmental experiences, and nonformal learning environments.

I could not simply rely on quantitative research methods to extend the field's existing quantitative research involving YAPs (e.g., Jones & Perkins, 2005), partly because there is limited quantitative work in this area. In order to better understand YAPs and associated phenomena (Hansen & Crawford, 2011), I chose to emphasize qualitative research methods, incorporating quantitative methods to help interpret or give greater context to the qualitative findings (Creswell, 2003). Thus, this mixed-methods study, using semi-structured interviews,

observations, and questionnaires, aimed to begin to explore the beliefs and perceptions of youth and adults participating in an OSTP.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

"Yet as we end the first decade of the 21st century, there are profoundly troubling signs that the U.S. is now failing to meet its obligation to prepare millions of young adults. In an era in which education has never been more important to economic success, the U.S. has fallen behind many other nations in educational attainment and achievement. Within the U.S. economy, there is also growing evidence of a 'skills gap' in which many young adults lack the skills and work ethic needed for many jobs that pay a middle-class wage. Simultaneously, there has been a dramatic decline in the ability of adolescents and young adults to find work" (Symonds, Schwartz, & Ferguson, 2011, p. 1).

Rationale

In today's America, there is heightened anxiety across many sectors of society about the future of the United States (Boot, 2018; Sawhill, Winship, & Grannis, 2012). Journalists, scholars, employers, and the general public are not confident about the preparation of youth today for adulthood tomorrow. Evidence of adults' failure to prepare youth is evident in at least three transitional periods: (1) from high school to post-secondary education, (2) from high school to employment, and (3) from college to adult work/life.

First, there is concern that high school graduates are not ready for post-secondary education. Journalists have reported that millions of high school graduates failed to meet college readiness benchmarks on the ACT college entrance exam (Sheehy, 2012); others have reported that 40% of high school graduates are unprepared for post-secondary education or training programs (de Vise, 2011). Second, there is also concern that high school graduates are not ready for the world of work. Research indicates that high school graduates perceive their education to have ill-prepared them for the workplace (Maulden, Bentley, Dwyer, & Houston, 2004), and business leaders corroborate those findings, noting that graduates have deficiencies in math, reading, and writing, among other important skills (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). Third, there is concern that college graduates are not ready for life as adults. Employers have indicated their concerns about the lack of qualified and talented new workforce entrants (e.g., Casner-Lotto

& Barrington, 2006; Corporate Voices, 2008), and researchers have found that college graduates are ill-equipped for the challenges of adult life and work (Symonds, Schwartz, & Ferguson, 2011).

It is not only journalists, scholars, and employers who are aware of preparatory deficiencies; the general public has detected a problem as well. Recent results from the 2012 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll (Bushaw & Lopez, 2012) of more than 1,000 American adults' perceptions of public education echo the sentiments above: a mere 8% of respondents strongly agree that high school graduates are ready for college, 4% of respondents strongly agree that high school graduates are ready for the world of work, and 14% of respondents strongly agree that college graduates are ready for the world of work. Ultimately, this concern about the future of Americans — and the United States — has led some to question the legitimacy of the 'American Dream' for the next generation (Sawhill, Winship, & Grannis, 2012).

Most concerning about the failure of adults today to effectively prepare youth for tomorrow is that, though also products of the system, today's adults failed to heed the advice of yesterday's adults. In 1991, the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS; U.S. Department of Labor, 1991) report delineated "five competencies and a three-part foundation of skills and personal qualities that are needed for solid job performance" (p. iii). The five competencies that effective workers use are: Resources (allocating time, money, materials, space, and staff); Interpersonal Skills (working on teams, teaching others, serving customers, leading, negotiating, and working well with people from culturally diverse backgrounds); Information (acquiring and evaluating data, organizing and maintaining files, interpreting and communicating, and using computers to process information); Systems (understanding social, organizational, and technological systems, monitoring and correcting performance, and

designing or improving systems); and Technology (selecting equipment and tools, applying technology to specific tasks, and maintaining and troubleshooting technologies). The three-part foundation of skills and personal qualities that is required for competence includes: Basic Skills (reading, writing, arithmetic and mathematics, speaking, and listening); Thinking Skills (thinking creatively, making decisions, solving problems, seeing things in the mind's eye, knowing how to learn, and reasoning); and Personal Qualities (individual responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity).

Since the SCANS report was published, attempts have been made to enhance the ability of schools to develop in their students the competencies and skills outlined therein. Educators and policymakers have raised academic standards, have aimed to increase test-score performance, and have promoted 'college for all' as the main avenue to success (Symonds, Schwartz, & Ferguson, 2011). Considering the findings from scholars such as Nobel Laureate James Heckman — who have provided evidence for the importance of noncognitive skills in adult success (2006) — other educators and policymakers have enhanced school calendars (i.e., lengthened school days and increased the total number of school days), implemented expanded-learning-time programming (Devaney & Yohalem, 2012), and emphasized data and accountability (Silva & Headden, 2011). Additionally, other scholars have taken a broader approach to the effectiveness of education and have reported on the trend towards privatization in education (Ball & Youdell, 2007) — an attempt to "modernize" contemporary education to meet the needs of today's citizens. Despite existing attempts to better prepare young people for their futures, educators and policymakers have missed the mark. Students have continued to report diminished developmental opportunities in schools (Fusco, 2008), and school engagement

has continued to decline through middle- and high-school (Busteed, 2013). Clearly, today's leaders, en masse, have been unable to find a solution to the preparation problem.

Irrespective of efforts to better prepare youth for their futures, well-intentioned adults continue to perpetuate contexts and content that fail to excite and engage young people. Such perpetuation is likely influenced by the misinterpretation of outcomes (e.g., student disengagement and apathy) of institutional attempts at improvement. As Steinberg, Brown, and Dornbush (1996) explain, "disengagement is not a reaction to too much pressure or to classes that are too difficult, but a response to having too little demanded of them and to the absence of any consequences for failing to meet even these minimal demands" (p. 68). The misinterpretations stem from the ways in which adults comprehend adolescence; and, according to Lesko (2001), "If we want to see adolescence differently, we must first understand the ways we currently see, feel, think, and act toward youth, or we will merely tinker with the reigning practices" (p. 10).

There is a fundamental misunderstanding of human development that is responsible, at least partly, for ineffective preparation of young adults. Despite the fact that, throughout history, youth have accomplished impressive feats — started businesses, fought in wars, founded magazines, birthed and raised children, conducted scholarly research, influenced political and cultural revolutions, published books, launched websites, etc. (Epstein, 2010; Hine, 1999; Mintz, 2004) — there is a persistent belief among most of adult society that youth are incapable of functioning (e.g., cognitively, socially, professionally, etc.) at current adults' level without explicit, formal training by adults. However, it would be a mistake to think that such examples of young people engaging in "adult-like endeavors" are atypical (i.e., aberrations of the normally disengaged, bored, and uninterested adolescent population). Research indicates that all

adolescents, barring cognitive disabilities, have the capacity to function at optimal adult levels. In order for these capacities to emerge, adolescents need contextualized challenges (see Keating, 2004). The unawareness or misunderstanding of adolescents' as-yet-unrealized capacities by adults in positions of influence (e.g., educators, administrators, legislators, etc.) results in the application, administration, facilitation, etc., of challenges and demands for youth that are misaligned with and inadequate for youth needs and latent potential. It is this misalignment, I argue, that leads to youth disengagement, apathy, indifference, etc., and yields youth and adults who fail to reach their personal potentials. As a result, society continuously fails to optimally thrive.

The following sections will expand upon research in three relevant domains: (1) adolescent brain development, (2) out-of-school-time programs, and (3) youth—adult partnerships.

Understanding Adolescent Brain Development

Although the brain is constantly changing throughout the lifespan — adding and pruning neurons, forming new neural pathways — with the onset of puberty, the brain undergoes unique changes unparalleled in magnitude since early infancy (Giedd, 2008). These exceptional changes create the capacity for adolescents to function as adult members of society. Considering the primacy of brain changes in understanding adolescents' capacities, this section provides an overview of research from adolescent neuroscience and how experience plays an integral role in supporting the development of adolescents' capacities.

Towards the integration of two systems**.** At the onset of puberty (approximately 9-11 years-old for girls and approximately 10-12 years-old for boys), a tremendous overproduction of neurons and subsequent pruning of synapses occurs (Jensen, 2006; Strauch, 2003). "Modern

longitudinal neuroimaging research reports two kinds of change, one in the so-called 'gray matter,' which undergoes a wave of overproduction (paralleling one occurring in the early years) at puberty, followed by a reduction, or 'pruning,' of those neuronal connections that do not continue to be used" (Kuhn & Franklin, 2006, p. 957). Most importantly for adolescent development, overproduction and pruning occurs within and between two major systems: the limbic system and the prefrontal cortex (PFC).

The limbic system — composed of structures such as the amygdala and hippocampus — is associated with socioemotional functioning. The heightened affective arousal of this system during adolescence is implicated in motivation, fear/reward, and sensation-seeking. During puberty, changes to this system alter the incentivizing value of socioemotional events, especially with respect to peer-directed social interactions and risk taking (Spear, 2000a, 2000b). Contemporary researchers have seized upon these findings from neuroscience to blame increased levels of risky behaviors (e.g., unprotected sex, driving while drunk, etc.) among adolescents — compared to children and adults — on an 'immature' brain (e.g., Steinberg, 2008).

The PFC is associated with higher-order cognition including executive functions, complex deductive/inductive reasoning, goal-directed behaviors, long-term planning, prioritizing values, and coordination of other brain systems (Keating, 2004; Spear, 2000a). During adolescence, major PFC remodeling occurs, resulting in less total activation but more focused activation in the PFC on tasks requiring PFC engagement (e.g., go/no-go tasks; Spear, 2000b). Such remodeling is considered to be the result of neuronal overproduction and subsequent environment/experience-driven pruning of synapses, and it is the changes to the PFC that are often presumed to play the largest role in development from child to adult.

The integration of the limbic system and the PFC, however, may be more critical for adolescent development than the independent changes in the two systems; this integration may even be *the* essential achievement of this phase of life (D. Hansen, personal communication, June 23, 2012; Moore & Hansen, 2012). Neurologically, the integration of these systems occurs through interregional (e.g., limbic and PFC) neural connections and pathways that become established and myelinated (Keating, 2004). Characteristic of adolescents' brains beginning to integrate limbic and cognitive systems, an internalization of motivation enables the self-determination of actions, thoughts, moods, etc., towards environments and activities that attract their burgeoning interests; this internalization of motivation in adolescence is in direct contrast to the externally-provided (i.e., adult-provided) reasons and rationales that direct the lives of children. Adolescents also begin to detect and engage more complex aspects of life (e.g., human systems), influencing their ability to consciously conquer more challenging tasks (Keating, 2004). Importantly, the integration of these two systems can, but not necessarily will, result in a pattern of intentional pursuit of challenge, novelty, and accomplishment, which supports the long term, personal creation of a life that maximizes human potential. When the PFC, the limbic system, and others are connected and functioning in coordinated ways, it can be said that adolescence is on its way out and adulthood is on its way in.

Unfortunately, though, in today's world, much of the attention has been directed toward the so-called "risky behaviors" engaged in by young people. Based on the findings of research in neuroscience, scholars have interpreted such risky behaviors as the product of a mismatch between the timing and pull of sensation-seeking and inhibition. That is, it has been shown that the sensation-seeking of the limbic system develops prior to the inhibitory capability of the PFC, resulting in what has been coined 'reward deficiency syndrome' (Steinberg, 2008). Though this

interpretation is grounded in the findings, I suggest, along with other scholars (e.g., Bessant, 2008; Bessant & Watts, 2012; Kelly, 2012; Payne, 2010a, 2010b, 2011), that this biological determinism interpretation fails in at least one major respect: it neglects to account for any effect of (or interaction between) one's environment on the extent and complexity of neural networks between systems. I propose that adolescents grow up in cultures, contexts, and environments that fail (in practice) to attract and engage them in developmentally-appropriate challenges on a regular basis, which results in youth who have little to no opportunities to develop necessary, adult competencies. This lack of compelling and worthwhile opportunities is likely to yield adolescents who seek novelty and challenge elsewhere, including through behaviors deemed risky. Thus, I argue that by failing to consider the impact of experiences on the ontogeny of such brain systems, scholars misinterpret the findings, perpetuating an adultist view of adolescents.

The role of experience in neurological development**.** The structure of the brain is not solely, or even mostly, the result of a predetermined, biological blueprint. The brain is constantly interacting with an outside environment, which shapes and changes the brain (Markham & Greenough, 2004). "Experience (including thinking, feeling, remembering, watching, walking, and reading) creates physical structures in the brain. In other words, the brain as a structure is shaped not only by genetics, by biology, but also by environment, by experience" (Sercombe, 2010a, p. 34). The environments, contexts, interactions, and experiences engaged by the brain necessitate modifications to its composition. It cannot not be altered. When a person is alive, the brain is in constant flux internally (i.e., sprouting boutons, ridding itself of waste, using energy, releasing neurotransmitters, etc.). The brain is also always in an environment; there is always a brain—environment interface that the brain is interpreting. Even during sleep, the brain is working.

The changes that occur due to experience are guided by the type of experiences, the quality of experiences, the frequency of experiences, and the extent to which certain brain regions are activated during experiences. According to Sercombe (2010), "when a particular neural circuit is engaged repeatedly, it leads to changes in brain structure" (p. 34). For example, research has shown that repetitive exercise has been associated with an increase in neuron production; more importantly, exercise in environments that require learning have been associated with a strengthening (i.e., more intricate, myelinated pathways) of neuronal connections (Markham & Greenough, 2004). In addition to the establishment of new connections, myelination also occurs as the result of learning experiences. Myelination is "the wrapping of oligodendrocytes around axons, which acts as an electrical insulator and increases the speed of neuronal signal transmission" (Giedd, 2008, p. 336). Increased myelination is the result of increased usage. In other words, when a skill or competency is learned and subsequently used over time, the distinct network of neurons and synapses activated and associated with that skill or competency is myelinated each time. Lastly, neurons may form in expectancy of future usage. For example, Markham and Greenough (2004) note that "cells may be added to the adult hippocampus in anticipation of their need to mediate the acquisition, storage, and/or consolidation of future memories" (p. 7). Importantly, though, learning experiences do not result in ubiquitous neuronal growth, synaptic growth, and neuronal myelination across all brain regions; growth in particular brain regions is associated with the particular environmental demands placed on those regions.

If a primary purpose of adolescence is the effective preparation of youth for adulthood, then the important brain regions of development are those that enable adults to function optimally (e.g., PFC, limbic system, etc.). During adolescence, the reorganization and

adultification of the brain is dependent upon the needs and challenges placed upon the brain by the environment. "The nature of experience-driven plasticity is such that, although it has been demonstrated in many brain regions, in any given instance *it is specific to those regions involved in processing behaviorally-relevant features of the environment*" (Markham & Greenough, 2004, p. 11; emphasis added). Thus, the nature of adolescent brain development will be associated with the extent to which their brains are in environments that necessitate advanced development.

Environments that enable young people to drive their own learning and experiences are optimal for their development. Formal learning paradigms of the past and present are unlikely to adequately offer the type of development adolescent brains crave. According to Flyvbjerg (2001), "Personal experience via trial-and-error is more important than context-independent, explicit, verbally formulated facts and rules" (p. 12). It is not good enough to mandate that adolescents face newly-challenging foe; carving out one's own way has value in and of itself. "Choosing one's educational path is in a way like choosing one's lovers: it's better that we do it ourselves because even though we may err, we learn much more from our own mistakes than from the results of decisions made for us by others" (Fuller, 2004, p. 119). "For Larson (2000), initiative arises largely from experiences in which children are expected to make decisions about how they use their time. However, Larson wonders whether children in contemporary Western society are given sufficient opportunity to develop initiative. He cites anthropological observations that suggest that youth in the United States and Europe have less responsibility for choosing their own activities than their counterparts in other societies around the world (Schlegel & Barry, 1991)" (Gauvain & Perez, 2005, p. 224). It is precisely this failure to connect one's own motivations with one's own cognitions that yields sub-optimal brain system integration (i.e., sub-optimal adult development).

Moreover, environments that are genuine and have real-world value to the adolescent are likely to yield beneficial experiences. Having authentic experiences in context is critical for learning; people who are not offered opportunities to gain concrete experience in context are unlikely to make the "qualitative leap from the rule-governed analytical rationality… to the intuitive, holistic, and synchronous performance of tacit skills" (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 71). By failing to gain experience engaging adult-like challenges, adolescents are unlikely to effectively absorb the implicit competencies needed to function well as an adult. And, as Dewey noted (1938), "basing education upon personal experience may mean more multiplied and more intimate contacts between the mature and the immature than ever existed in the traditional school, and consequently more, rather than less, guidance by others" (p. 21). The particular capacities, competencies, skills, dispositions, etc., that are developed by adolescents will be influenced by the type and quality of the experiences they have (Ord, 2007). Over time, quality experiences (i.e., challenging, self-determined, authentic, etc.) will contribute to enhanced brain structure, and enhanced brain structure will yield further quality experiences.

Summary. The adolescent brain is prepared for more; it yearns for more. The overproduction of neurons; the reorganization of the brain; the pruning and strengthening of connections — the adolescent is ready to begin tackling more complex, more dynamic, more adult-like tests. By building on past experiences and anticipating future experiences, the adolescent brain is optimized to capitalize on new challenges and opportunities. One environment that has tremendous potential to deliver the freedom, authenticity, and opportunity that adolescents crave is the context to which I now turn.

Out-of-School-Time Programs

Out-of-school-time programs (OSTPs) have emerged in an attempt to meet the needs of youth and society throughout history (Hansen, Chen, & Crawford, 2012). In today's landscape, OSTPs serve youth by ensuring adult supervision during the "at-risk" time between 3:00 P.M. and 6:00 P.M. (Afterschool Alliance, 2009), by offering additional time for academic enrichment (Halpern, 2002), and by providing opportunities to develop "21st century job skills" (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). Research suggests that participation in OSTPs is associated with numerous benefits for young people, in domains including academics (e.g., Eccles & Barber, 1999), intrapersonal skills (e.g., initiative; Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003), and interpersonal skills (e.g., teamwork; Larson, Hansen, & Walker, 2005). Moreover, youth who participate in OSTPs are less likely to abuse drugs, to engage in sexual activity, to worry about the future, and to feel socially isolated (Feldman & Matjasko, 2005); they are more likely to report higher levels of life satisfaction (Maton, 1990); and, upon leaving school, they are more likely to have a job with autonomy and a chance for advancement (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003). Additionally, it is not only the youth who benefit from participation in OSTPs, but also communities reap positive consequences (MacNeil, 2006; Marko & Watt, 2011). Hence, youth programs "stand out, relative to other settings in adolescents' daily lives, as places where youth can be purposeful agents of their own development" (Zeldin, 2004, p. 76).

OSTPs are not simply another place for standard education. Research indicates that youth programs are a distinct context for youth development (Larson, Hansen, & Moneta, 2006; Larson, Hansen, & Walker, 2005), especially compared to academic and general-leisure settings (Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003). Considering the traditional education establishment, Freire (2000) expounds: "It follows logically from the banking notion of consciousness that the

educator's role is to regulate the way the world 'enters into' the students. The teacher's task is to organize a process which already occurs spontaneously, to 'fill' the students by making deposits of information which he or she considers to constitute true knowledge. And since people 'receive' the world as passive entities, education should make them more passive still, and adapt them to the world. The educated individual is the adapted person, because she or he is better 'fit' for the world. Translated into practice, this concept is well suited to the purposes of the oppressors, whose tranquility rests on how well people fit the world the oppressors have created, and how little they question it" (p. 76). OSTPs, by way of their "emphasis on conversation, negotiation, and challenge are clearly contrary to any notion of education as transmission" (Ord, 2007, pp. 21-22). Participation in OSTPs is unlike that of traditional education (i.e., unlike the banking notion Freire describes), and OSTPs afford youth and adults unique contexts for interaction and growth. Hence, while well-intentioned, the co-optation of the OSTP setting by traditional education is destined for tragedy.

OSTP focus. Effective OSTPs separate themselves from other contexts (e.g., school) by focusing on the process rather than the product. Process over product is important for two reasons. First, pre-identifying outcomes (i.e., the product) is both extremely difficult and detrimental. In order to effectively identify the outcomes for participation in OSTPs, one must be able to accurately account for all of the inputs (i.e., youth aptitude, youth motivation, youth interests, adult aptitude, adult motivation, degree of complexity of the topic, external factors, etc.) and how they are expected to interact and result over time. Because the nature of youth work is such that youth are able to drive day-to-day and long-term goals and actions, and adults adapt to support and collaborate with youth, pre-identifying outcomes is essentially impossible. In addition, the work engaged in OSTPs is always a work in progress; it is always an unfinished

practice (Davies, 2005). Thus, identifying *a priori* outcomes is futile, as whatever is identified is always changing and transforming over time. Not only is pre-specification futile, but also it may be detrimental. As Stenhouse (1975) and Bloxham (1993) have noted, pre-specification can limit the adult leader's ability to capitalize on unexpected opportunities, requiring of him or her to maintain course, so as to achieve the expected goals (Ord, 2007). Such inflexibility may result in decreased motivation and effectiveness in adult leaders, and may undermine youth work process in general. Moreover, the time needed to accurately assess whether outcomes were achieved may not be available. As Ord (2007) describes, "In fact it is arguable whether or not anyone could ever know the full impact of a developmental group work process until a long time after, as who can really say what a young person will do with newly found self-belief" (p. 56). It is no surprise, then, that such a process-focused practice poses problems for those seeking to hold adults and programs accountable; Ord (2007) concludes, "Certainly the youth work process is not compatible with how accountability is framed within current policy with an emphasis on targets, which only consider the legitimacy of measurable outcomes, and which invariably are required to be specified in advance and be attributable specifically to identifiable inputs" (p. 89).

Second, process over product is important because the type of learning that occurs in OSTPs does not occur as the direct result of predictable inputs; instead, learning emerges obliquely (Kay, 2011). Ord (2007) notes: "Within the notion of process, outcomes are often best described as 'emergent'; they emerge out of the process as they are not necessarily related to any one particular intervention or series of interactions" (p. 92). Ord continues:

> The relationship between outcomes and process is further illustrated by what Smith (1988) refers to as the 'incidental' nature of learning, that is the learning or outcomes in youth work develop out of a process but are indirect. They are a consequence of the process, but he concurs are not necessarily specifically attributable to any particular part of it. Learning results from purposeful activity, but does not directly result from a single or series of specific inputs. The learning

> is not accidental but 'incidental'. The acquisition of social skills is like this, for example, in how young people learn to appreciate each other. It is learning which will derive out of a process of interaction over time. Even if each individual involved could attribute their learning to a specific incident within that process, where perhaps their need was met specifically by someone's intervention, in truth the change is most likely to be due to a complex interplay of a number of factors and incidences. Even if this was the case it is another thing to suggest that one could have anticipated such an eventuality and planned the activity accordingly, having previously specified this as a desirable outcome (p. 92).

Not only is pre-identifying outcomes detrimental — because pre-identification limits the spontaneous capitalization of arising circumstances by adults and youth — and not only is pre-identifying outcomes essentially impossible — because accurately identifying inputs and predicting how they will interact with circumstances is overly challenging — but also pre-identifying outcomes fails to acknowledge the nature by which learning occurs via youth work processes in OSTPs. Specific learning outcomes in OSTPs are unpredictable, thus attempting to predict them is illogical. As Stenhouse (1975, p. 81) articulates, "Objectives are not suitable because they do not '…take account of the indeterminacy of knowledge which arises because the structures of knowledge are not mere classification and retrieval systems but constitute a raw material for thinking'" (Ord, 2007, p. 33). That is, knowing what someone currently knows is not enough to predict what they will know after the learning process; learning in OSTPs occurs as an unpredictable, emergent, indirect consequence of process.

Youth work process. The youth work process itself is another way in which OSTPs are unique contexts for development. As Ord (2007) indicates, "The process approach does not therefore start with the end products — what is to be learnt, rather its starting point is *how learning is best facilitated*" (p. 32; emphasis added). In other contexts (e.g., school), the ways learning is facilitated (i.e., what happens, by whom, for whom, why, when, and where) are all determined from 'above.' Unfortunately, this often does not bode well for young people; Freire

(2000) elaborates: “Many political and educational plans have failed because their authors designed them according to their own personal views of reality, never once taking into account (except as mere objects of their actions) the men-in-a-situation to whom their program was ostensibly directed” (p. 94). In OSTPs, by contrast, learning is best facilitated when youth and adults are both and together part of the process. For youth, this means they are involved in decision making, they have opportunities for leadership, and they are able to influence both adults and peers (Marko & Watt, 2011). Adults are not absent from the process (see Hilfinger Messias, Fore, McLoughlin, & Parra-Medina, 2005), though a critical difference between OSTPs and other contexts is the fact that youth and adults are working together. As Ord (2007) describes, if adults “were to specify in advance what the objective would be, it would not be development from within but social control from without” (p. 37). He continues: giving the adults “absolute power and responsibility to plan, deliver and assess an educational enterprise based on objectives established exclusively by them, is anti-democratic and fundamentally runs counter to the principles which underlie curriculum as process” (p. 37). Hence, shared control, shared responsibility (Dewey, 1938), and shared generation of ideas (Tiffany, 1999) are all part of the uniqueness of OSTPs.

Another important aspect of the process is the flexibility and freedom afforded both youth and adults to design their own experiences. Youth work is not a production line (Curzon, 1990); it does not have a perfectly clear idea of what is to result from its process. Davies (2005) elaborates, emphasizing the detrimental consequences of an overly prescriptive process: “Practice which is obsessionally instrumental, preoccupied only with the technicalities of what is to be done or with which attitudes and behaviours are to be changed, is always liable to close down the space or block the responsiveness needed for these tasks to be adequately addressed.

And this in turn is liable to alienate young people, turn them into 'excludees', not just from key institutions and programmes but from an identification with core societal values and norms" (p. 17). Ord (2007) concurs, highlighting the necessarily incongruent power statuses resulting from a product-focused context: "In a product based curriculum all the desired educational ends are established by the teacher in advance, and likewise the methods, and the means of assessing their attainment. This places the teacher in a position of absolute authority" (p. 26). Especially in the urban core and inner city, OSTPs must allow youth and adults to adapt, to be creative, to identify ways and means that work appropriately for their particular circumstances (Halpern, 2005; Kelly, 2009). Within the agreed-upon foundation of values, purposes, and methods (Ord, 2007), youth and adults are able benefit from the interpersonal interactions (Davies, 2005) and extract for themselves "the full meaning of each present experience" — what Dewey (1938) asserts is "the only preparation which in the long run amounts to anything" (p. 49).

Learning experiences. Not all experiences are created equal, especially learning experiences. Dewey (1938) wondered about the way learning was facilitated by schools:

> How many students, for example, were rendered callous to ideas, and how many lost the impetus to learn because of the way in which learning was experienced by them? How many acquired special skills by means of automatic drill so that their power of judgment and capacity to act intelligently in new situations was limited? How many came to associate the learning process with ennui and boredom? How many found what they did learn so foreign to the situations of life outside the school as to give them no power of control over the latter? How many came to associate books with dull drudgery, so that they were 'conditioned' to all but flashy reading matter? (pp. 26-27).

By contrast, the types of learning experiences that regularly exist at OSTPs set them apart. Kurth-Schai (1988) identifies six types of learning experiences that OSTPs often incorporate into their programming: (1) youth-directed — youth determine what happens based on personal interests, aptitudes, needs, and values; (2) cross-generational — youth share skills, interests,

questions, and concerns with younger children and adults; (3) exploratory — youth engage opportunities to perceive and experience alternative conceptions of reality, displaying varied problem-solving strategies; (4) integrative — youth experience interactions between "affect and cognition, analysis and intuition, awareness and action, theory and practice, personal relevance and social significance"; (5) cooperative — youth work towards shared goals, utilizing supportive and egalitarian approaches; and (6) action-oriented — youth make decisions that result in personal and societal consequences, contributing to the welfare of others (p. 125). OSTPs offer optimal opportunities for youth to capitalize on the experiences they have. In OSTPs, youth are able to own their experiences, to drive what happens within the program, and to ensure that whatever it is they are doing has meaning for them (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 2000; Ord, 2007). The experience of the individual determines the developmental outcomes, both positive and negative (Chinman & Linney, 1998; Dewey, 1938), and adults can play a key role in such experiences.

Adults at OSTPs. OSTPs are a unique context for development because of the ways in which youth and adults interact. Adults who work in OSTPs are in a position to provide nurturance and support to youth in ways that differ from home and school and in ways that can be transformative for young people's lives (Krauss & Suandi, 2008). Youth are able to interact with adults, oftentimes in mentor—mentee relationships (Karcher, Kuperminc, Portwood, Sipe, & Taylor, 2006) and are able to develop relationships with knowledgeable adults that they may not have been able to elsewhere. When adults care and provide support, in diverse settings (e.g., faith-based organizations, interscholastic sports teams), youth are more likely to develop moral perspectives on issues (King & Furrow, 2004) and are more likely to report being engaged in their experience overall (Crawford, 2010). In addition, adults are also able to provide access to

useful resources, such as information, adult environments, and relevant feedback that youth may not receive in other contexts (Jarrett, Sullivan, & Watkins, 2005). Adults working in OSTPs are in a critical position with respect to how they interact with youth participants, thus it is not surprising that increased emphasis is being placed on understanding adults and OSTPs (e.g., Durlak, Mahoney, Bohnert, & Parente, 2010; Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010).

Adults at OSTPs are often responsible for many tasks. As leaders, adults must combine knowledge, skills, and ability with decision-making, voice, and authority to positively influence a diverse array of individuals, organizations, and communities (MacNeil, 2006). Adult leaders are frequently responsible for organizational innovation (Daft, 1978), defining and redefining such "innovation while concurrently restructuring the organization to accommodate it" (Zeldin, Camino, & Mook, 2005, p. 128). Adults in leadership positions must also work to extend the reach of their programs, interacting and connecting with parents, schools, local agencies, and other resources in their communities (Hilfinger Messias, Fore, McLoughlin, & Parra-Medina, 2005). As frontline staff, adults undertake many duties "from providing transportation for youth to program activities to writing grants, procuring sponsors, hiring staff, managing budgets, troubleshooting, and seeking out opportunities for youth in the community. Adults are instrumental in bringing youth into the programs, keeping them interested and active, and making certain that they had fun in the process" (Hilfinger Messias et al., 2005, p. 328).

Working well in OSTPs is a daunting enterprise. It requires "the ability to balance, negotiate, and creatively adapt adult roles to changing situations" (Zeldin, Larson, Camino, & O'Connor, 2005, p. 5); it requires the ability "to judge what attitudes are actually conducive to continued growth and what are detrimental" (Dewey, 1938, p. 39); it requires taking responsibility for the safety of youth, while also balancing the desire and need of youth for

autonomy and genuine decision-making (Ord, 2007); it requires identifying the needs and goals of youth, adults, and community, and ensuring that program activities align with those needs and goals (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Zeldin, Camino, &Mook, 2005); and it requires justifying one's existence by having something important or interesting to offer (Lawton et al., 1978). Not everything is within the power of the adult staff to influence (e.g., youth family history); thus, focusing on what he or she can control (e.g., his or her attitude) affords the adult the best opportunity to have a positive impact (Dewey, 1938). Adults must believe "that all children are terrific human beings… that all children, provided significant adult guidance and support, can build a socially interested view of the world" (Tate & Copas, 2010, p. 35); adults must strive towards "helping realize a version of each young person which is greater than the one she or he knows they are bringing with them; greater than the one they are currently displaying to others; and maybe even greater than the one they may yet have imagined for themselves" (Davies, 2005, p. 16); and adults must have and convey high expectations for youth, from "increased levels of youth autonomy, creativity, responsibility, accountability, self-confidence, and personal and peer expectations" to "being actively engaged in their communities, taking steps to improve intergenerational relationships, and making their communities better" (Hilfinger Messias et al., 2005, p. 327). Finally, "[a]s Ofsted (2002b) put it, the extent to which youth workers are 'doing things with', as opposed to 'doing things for' young people is a key indicator of the quality of their practice" (Ord, 2007, p. 46).

Unfortunately, though, it is not always that simple. Research indicates that many adults hold negative stereotypes about the motivation and abilities of youth participants to be effective in OSTP governance (Zeldin, 2004). Also posing a challenge, "Believing that partnering with young people is a good idea and being prepared to partner with young people are vastly different

things. Whereas adults may genuinely believe that young people have a valuable perspective to bring to the table, they may not be aware of the ways their meeting structure could limit the degree to which that perspective is shared, and often they are not prepared to value a young person's opinion as they would that of an adult colleague" (Libby, Rosen, & Sedonaen, 2005, p. 117). Similarly, adult treatment of youth "cannot just be a 'tactical' manouevre concerned only (as for example often in teaching) with easing them through 'boring' but pre-set and essential tasks in order to arrive later at the more interesting or rewarding ones. The youth work negotiation has to be based on a built-in long-term strategy and requires an openness to a real give-and-take which will probably have to be sustained throughout the whole period of the young person-adult engagement. Only then are the young people likely to stay long enough to become exposed to experiential opportunities which might (though they might not) interest and benefit them — and then to sustain a personally committed rather than a merely compliant participation" (Davies, 2005, pp. 8-9).

Overcoming negative stereotypes, effectively including youth in programming, and establishing authentic, genuine relations with youth are worth the strife. As Zeldin notes, "When the youth were asked to identify the factors that motivated them to engage in organizational governance, typically there was little hesitancy in their responses. The most salient domains were (a) the demonstrations of respect for youth voice and competence by the organization, (b) a balance of power and relationships with adults, (c) feeling of belonging and importance to the organization, and (d) the importance of youth contributing on their own terms" (2004, p. 80). Additionally, failing to effectively include youth in programming is problematic, because adults "lose opportunities to facilitate skill development, community building, and collective action on common goals" (McKay, 2011, p. 369), and because adults lose opportunities to improve their

own behaviors and attitudes in working with youth (Hilfinger Messias et al., 2005). Hence, it is clear that honest, constructive YARs are of utmost value to youth, adults, and communities.

Summary. OSTPs offer unique opportunities for growth and enrichment across many domains (e.g., academic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, etc.). As a unique space for development, OSTPs can be more than 'school-after-school,' enabling youth and adults to engage in new and productive ways. The emphasis on process (rather than product), on allowing the process to be democratically determined, and on enabling oblique and indirect learning via the process makes OSTPs a valuable vehicle in youth and community development. However, optimal development does not necessarily occur spontaneously; adults play a key role. In particular, the ways in which youth and adults interact in OSTPs determine the extent to which certain environments are created and specific goals are achieved. The next section will elaborate on one way youth and adults interact in OSTPs: the youth—adult partnership.

Youth—Adult Partnerships

Youth—adult partnerships (YAPs) have emerged as promising alternatives to the school-like, top-down environment that has guided OSTPs in the past. In recent years, YAPs have been characterized in different ways. YAPs can be defined "as a collaborative effort where youth and adults come together to work on common issues. Unlike mentoring, where the relationship is one-on-one and often shaped by an adult role model, YAPs encourage shared decision-making and shared power, and they embrace a collective spirit, which emphasizes group success" (Ginwright, 2005, p. 102). Other scholars have defined YAPs similarly, stating that a YAP "is involving youth and adults in responsible, challenging, and collective action that seeks to benefit an organization or larger community. All individuals in the partnership have the opportunity to engage in planning, decision-making, and action consistent with their own interests and skill"

(Zeldin & Collura, 2010, p. 6). Thus, YAPs can be thought of as a mutually-respectful vehicle whereby youth and adults co-determine, co-create, and co-execute the goals of the activity for prosocial, organization, and/or community gain.

How can one tell if a youth—adult interaction is a YAP? Research by Jones and colleagues has attempted to answer that question, by creating a scale designed to assess the extent to which control is exercised by adults and/or youth. The Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale (IIRS; Jones & Perkins, 2005), stemming from previous work by Jones (2004), contains 38 bipolar items assessing three constructs: youth involvement (13 items), adult involvement (9 items), and youth—adult interaction (16 items). Scores on these three constructs place youth—adult relationships on a five-point continuum, from adult-centered leadership, to adult-led collaboration, to YAP, to youth-led collaboration, to youth-centered leadership. Subsequent work by Jones and Perkins (2006) found that participants in youth—adult relationships differed based on where along the continuum they fell. According to the researchers, "Participants in youth-led collaborations were significantly more positive toward youth involvement than participants in adult-led collaborations. Moreover, adults in youth-led partnerships were significantly more positive toward youth involvement and youth—adult interaction than those adults in adult-led collaborations" (p. 90). Though there is tremendous value for practitioners to be able to identify where their OSTPs fall along a continuum of youth-adult relationships, thorough exploration into how youth and adults describe their experience in YAPs or what beliefs and attitudes inspire their engagement in YAPs is lacking in the literature.

Benefits of YAPs. YAPs are unique and offer many benefits for different people. Traditionally, OSTPs have been designed with youth as the intended targets or recipients of any potential positive outcomes. By contrast, OSTPs that adopt YAPs as a primary mechanism can

expect numerous groups to reap the benefits of such partnerships. Youth have been found to have better school performance, better relationships with peers, and higher rates of college graduation, when working closely with adults on service activities (Zeldin & Collura, 2010). Adults in a YAP culture were more confident, were more competent at their jobs, and felt more satisfied sharing their experiences with the younger generation. Also, community leaders and institutions benefited by learning to respect young people more, by promoting youth engagement in more settings, by including youth more often in decision making, and by being more receptive to youth issues (Zeldin, Petrokubi, & Camino, 2008). Hence, an OSTP that adopts YAPs as an important component of its programming can expect a wide range of positive outcomes for diverse constituents.

More so than other contexts and types of YARs, YAPs have the potential to create the conditions for imperative domains of development. In particular, YAPs enable the augmentation of self-driven learning — arguably one of young adulthood's key developments. Grow (1991) described self-directed learners in the following way: "Self-directed learners set their own goals and standards — with or without help from experts. They use experts, institutions, and other resources to pursue these goals.… [They] are both able and willing to take responsibility for their learning, directions, and productivity. They exercise skills in time management, project management, goal-setting, self-evaluation, peer critique, information gathering, and use of educational resources…. [They] can learn from any kind of teacher, but [they] thrive in an atmosphere of autonomy" (p. 134). Youth and adults in YAPs engage challenges in situations that produce the experiences necessary to become more self-directed; co-determining and co-executing program goals and actions, youth and adults in YAPs must develop self-direction skills to achieve success. Additionally, elements of YAPs that enable their success are similar to those

of optimal adult learning environments, such as needing to know why something must be learned, being responsible for one's decisions, utilizing one's unique life experiences, being ready and willing to learn, having task- or problem-centered orientations to learning, and having internal (rather than external) motivations to learn (Knowles, 1975, 1990). By effectively enabling the development of self-driven learning in quality adult learning environments, YAPs are a powerful context for adult staff and young-adult participants to achieve goals and maximize personal potential.

Uniqueness of YAPs. Youth and adults, in YAPs at OSTPs, interact with one another differently than youth and adults in other environments. In YAPs, youth and adults engage in activities together, as equals. Camino (2005) describes: "'Doing to' youth often occurs in health treatments or in adjudication systems. 'Doing for' youth can occur when adults take over for youth because they assume youth lack necessary skills, such as when a parent or teacher does a young person's homework 'for' him or her. Finally… 'doing with' youth occurs when adults consider youth as having strengths and assets, and when the relationship is reciprocal" (p. 83). It is these relationships that are critical for development (Deutsch & Jones, 2008) — relationships where adults are open and available for youth (Hilfinger Messias et al., 2005), where youth ideas and experiences are considered and valued by adults (Zeldin, Larson, Camino, & O'Connor, 2005), and where communication and partnership across youth and adults is paramount (Eubanks, 2012; Freire, 2000). Such relationships are often characterized as professional (Ord, 2007), as both youth and adults are working toward a shared goal. Halpern (2005) explains, "In such relationships, adults take youth seriously, but treat them matter-of-factly. They are not unaware of who youth are, the vulnerabilities and stresses in some youth's lives, and the fact that some have received little adult attention and little recognition as individuals. They are willing

and able to help with personal struggles and support needs. However, they do so incidentally and, one might say, indirectly. While they are on youth's side, and may view their role in part as helping strengthen youth belief in themselves, they do not see it as their mission to save, validate, lecture to, socialize, re-parent or reform youth, and are not inclined to let the difficulties in youth's lives excuse them from the responsibilities of the work at hand" (p. 15). This type of professional, authentic, 'real' (Ord, 2007) treatment of youth by adults is a way in which YAPs in OSTPs differ from other YARs (e.g., teacher—student; social worker—client). Ord (2007) continues:

> Young people are in a developmental stage in which they are separating emotionally and psychologically from their parents (Biddulph, 1984) and do not want to be engaged with as if they are a child. Youth work ensures 'complementary communication', which allows for the development of a relationship, because youth workers consistently and reliably engage with the young person in an adult to adult way. Other professionals do not ensure an 'adult to adult' relationship because they too often either treat young people as if they were a child or operate in such a way that a young person will perceive them as an authority figure which inevitably results in the young person feeling as if they are being treated like a child. As the young person wishes to be communicated with as if they were an adult and communicate as an adult, this inevitably leads to 'crossed communication' and the breakdown of a relationship (pp. 59-60).

Establishing YAPs. Not only do the behaviors and interactions of YAPs differentiate them from other types of YARs, but also the beliefs, perceptions, and expectations of youth and adults are unique. Research has found that youth in YAPs have used words such as "understanding, compassion, being easy going, and encouraging" while adults have used words like "honesty, straightforwardness, being easy going, supportive, and being respectful" to describe their relations in YAPs (Marko & Watt, 2011, p. 323). Positive regard between youth and adults leads to trust of one another, enabling communication, cooperation, and sacrifice (Brooks, 2011; Freire, 2000). "Bidirectional respect" (Deutsch & Jones, 2008) is present, especially when adults focus on the work of the program — rather than the adolescent — which

conveys to the young person that he or she is “a person who can and should be doing this work” (Halpern, 2005, p. 17). These positive perceptions are held by youth and adults in YAPs despite notable challenges. Stereotypes of young people by adults “constrain the potential of young people” (Jones & Perkins, 2006, p. 91), and adultist beliefs can “produce the illusion of greater competence than exists in adults and of lesser competence than exists or could exist in children” (Flasher, 1978, p. 521). Also, research indicates that youth and adults do not always perceive YAPs in similar ways (Jones & Perkins, 2006), creating potential rifts. And, in particular, how adults view youth matters because “perceptions and feelings adults hold toward young people provide a frame of reference and a cultural blueprint for adult behavior and policy formation within the ecology of adolescent development (Bronfenbrenner, 1989)” (Zeldin, 2002, p. 331). These perceptions and feelings influence expectations, which influence opportunities (Gauvain & Perez, 2005; Hilfinger Messias et al., 2005), and such assumptions strongly affect YARs (Zeldin, Larson, Camino, & O’Connor, 2005). Ultimately, when adults hold questionable beliefs about and low expectations for youth, “adolescents are not afforded the important developmental opportunities that arise from purposeful youth—adult interactions” (Zeldin, 2002, p. 332).

Ultimately, the creation of YAPs in OSTPs is no easy feat. Considering the uniqueness of YAPs and the general context of society, YAPs are often new experiences for both youth and adults. In OSTPs, “there is no simple formula for creating strong youth—adult relationships” (Zeldin, Larson, Camino, & O’Connor, 2005, p. 4). Sharing or giving up power is not painless for adults (e.g., Camino, 2000; Hilfinger Messias et al., 2005; MacNeil, 2006; Shaw, 1996). YAPs do not initially emerge organically; they are often the result of intentional actions by adults. Such partnerships require of youth and adults mutual respect, equal status, and reciprocal support; that is, true relations cannot be established via coercion, manipulation, or force (Freire,

2000). According to Camino (2000), "Initially forming a positive relationship creates an environment where the attributes of a true partnership can flourish (e.g., trust, communication, mutual learning)" (Jones & Perkins, 2005, p. 105). In OSTPs where youth and adults share common goals (Ginwright, 2005) and power (Jones & Perkins, 2006), where respect and inclusion are present (Freire, 2000; Rhodes, 2004), and where high expectations and support are well-balanced (Zeldin, 2004), YAPs are able to effectively develop. YAPs are most likely to thrive when youth and adults receive training and support both before they begin working with one another (Libby, Rosen, & Sedonaen, 2005) and throughout their development (Camino, 2000). Over time, by working together in a supportive and respectful way, youth and adults are able to quell stereotypes, overcome stigmas, and eliminate prejudices that exist throughout society, their communities, and their programs (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005). Such work has incredible transformative power, enabling young people to see a future that they themselves are capable of building. Halpern (2005) elaborates:

> It is difficult to convince such youth that they are capable of taking their place in a 'new and wider world,' it is even more difficult to convince them that they are 'entitled to a place in that world' (Musick, 1999, p. 22). Actually, such convincing cannot be done; it has to come from experience, day-after-day; from feedback that does not question the self (or try to affirm it), but that communicates the concreteness of development and focuses on the seriousness of the work at hand. Witnessing others who are knowledgeable, engaged, and passionate about what they do is always a revelation. Joining them, on the other hand, can seem risky, not least because, in their very commitment, these others appear as vulnerable as they do competent. Yet, joining skilled adults in some body of work is also interesting, and it is just this quality that is sometimes underestimated in the arrangements for youth (p. 19).

Summary. YAPs are a particular type of YAR whereby youth and adults share in the decision-making and execution of tasks toward accomplishing co-determined objectives. Such partnerships rely on beliefs, perceptions, and expectations of young people by adults that are respectful, compassionate, supportive, and honest. Multiple groups — youth, adult staff,

community leaders, etc. — reap positive outcomes from YAPs; youth, specifically, benefit by engaging challenges in contexts that are akin to andragogical environments, enabling the development of self-driven learning and living. However, YAPs do not always form spontaneously; to establish YAPs in OSTPs, adults, in particular, need to work to dissolve the common top-down structure and to treat youth as partners in learning and doing.

Chapter 3: Methods

Research Question

This study used a mixed-methods approach, guided by the qualitative interpretive approach (Merriam, 2002) and non-statistical quantitative analyses to explore and understand (1) YAPs at an OSTP, and (2) how youth and adults' experience YAPs at an OSTP. Existing research has described the characteristics of OSTPs (e.g., Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003; Larson, Hansen, & Moneta, 2006; Larson, Hansen, & Walker, 2005) and YAPs (e.g., Ginwright, 2005; Jones & Perkins, 2005; Zeldin & Collura, 2010), however research has not illuminated the experiences and interpretations of youth and adults in offerings in an OSTP. Thus, this study was guided by the research question: *What are the experiences of youth and adults in an OSTP that has been identified as a model of YAPs?*

Sample

Program. The Neutral Zone (NZ) youth program was selected for this study because it had an established reputation for high quality programming, offered opportunities for YAPs, and was geographically located where I lived and worked at the time. NZ described itself as a "diverse, youth-driven teen center dedicated to promoting personal growth through artistic expression, community leadership and the exchange of ideas" (Neutral Zone Home, n.d.). Though precise demographic data was not available, NZ youth came from several area high schools, represented a variety of races, ethnicities, and religions (i.e., white, Latinx, Jewish, black, Hindu, etc.), and identified with a range of diverse sexual orientations (i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, agender/asexual, etc.). "A nearly equal proportion of high school freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors participates in Neutral Zone programs," and approximately 45% of youth who attend NZ are considered 'at-risk' (Neutral

Zone FAQs, n.d.). Moreover, NZ had more than 15,000 visits by approximately 650 teens per year, and NZ offered more than 20 programs, including programs in education, music, literary arts, leadership, and visual arts.

NZ involved youth in ways that were not typical among out-of-school (or school) programs in the United States. Youth were involved "[f]rom the Board of Directors, the very top policy making body at the Zone, to what happens on a day to day basis within every program" (Neutral Zone FAQs, n.d.). NZ emphasized teen voice and involvement as crucial and fundamental to the program: "We believe that in order to create a space that is inviting and engaging for teens, it must honor their interests, desires and values" (Neutral Zone FAQs, n.d.).

A key feature of NZ that made it well-suited for this study was that they specifically operated using a YAP model. Several articles and reports described the extent to which NZ embraced youth-driven spaces, youth voice, and YAPs (e.g., Van Egeren, Wu, & Kornbluh, 2012; Weiss, 2016a, 2016b), and NZ generated revenue by offering YAP trainings for schools and OSTPs through their Youth Driven Spaces project (www.neutral-zone.org/youth-driven-spaces). According to John Weiss (personal communication, July 21, 2015), Director of Strategic Initiatives at NZ, the YAPs model "is the framework [they] use at the Neutral Zone." Moreover, NZ played a critical role in the development of an observational youth—adult partnership instrument — the Youth-Adult Partnership Rubric (Wu, Weiss, Kornbluh, & Roddy, 2014) — which was used in this study.

Participants. Youth and adult study participants regularly attended one of two offerings at NZ: Teen Advisory Council (TAC) or Visual Arts Council (VAC). Of the offerings at NZ, these two were recommended by NZ leadership as those most likely to incorporate YAPs. TAC and VAC, according to NZ leadership, offered the best opportunity to observe YAPs at NZ. TAC

was the offering that oversaw all administrative operations at NZ, from fundraising and fund allocation, to determining which offerings would be available during the year, to conducting evaluations of all offerings and NZ overall; in terms of TAC youth participants, TAC did not completely reflect NZ participants, as TAC was composed of older youth and more youth who appeared to be white than NZ as a whole. VAC was the offering that oversaw key elements of the arts offerings at NZ (which were a substantial proportion of the offerings at NZ), from hosting events, to serving as judges for community art competitions, to visiting local schools and recruiting; in terms of VAC participants, VAC appeared to better reflect NZ participants as a whole, as VAC was composed of youth of a range of ages and youth who appeared to represent a wider range of races, ethnicities, and sexual orientations. Based on NZ leadership's recommendation, TAC and VAC were the offerings I focused on in this study.

To gather data for this study, I used interviews, observations, and questionnaires, which have precedent in the out-of-school-time field (e.g., Zeldin, Petrokubi, & Camino, 2008). One of the goals of participant selection was to ensure that heterogeneity of perspectives was captured (Maxwell, 2005) — or what Guba and Lincoln (1989) refer to as "maximum variation" sampling. Thus, it was important to interview both youth and adults who participated often (and not often), who seemed to participate "well" (and "not well"), who appeared to enjoy (and not enjoy) their experience, etc. Through observations at both TAC and VAC, interview participants were identified based on their participation. For example, in TAC, I selected both teen facilitators (to explore the perspective of teen leaders), one senior youth who had been in TAC for several years, and one junior youth who had only been in TAC for one year and who missed several TAC sessions. In VAC, for instance, I selected the teen facilitator and one youth who

started VAC a few weeks after VAC started. In both TAC and VAC, I included and interviewed all adult advisors.

For TAC, the one adult advisor and nine youth completed the survey, and the adult advisor and four youth were each interviewed once. The adult advisor was twenty-nine years old and female. She had been at TAC for one year, having been part of NZ for seven years in various capacities. The interviewed youth in TAC had all been part of TAC before, and they were all in high school: two seniors and two juniors. One of the seniors and one of the juniors were the teen facilitators.

For VAC, two adult advisors and eleven youth completed the survey, and the adult advisors and two youth were each interviewed once. One adult advisor was thirty-seven years old and female, and the other adult advisor was twenty years old and female. The older adult had been at NZ for several years, and the younger adult had been at NZ as a teen and then as an adult advisor. The interviewed youth in VAC were in high school: one freshman and one sophomore. The freshman was a teen facilitator, and the sophomore had been part of VAC as a freshman.

Procedures

Prior approval for the study was attained from the University of Kansas Human Subject Committee Lawrence. All research materials were kept secure in a locked file cabinet or on a password-protected computer.

I used a method of data collection known as theoretical sampling. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), the purpose of theoretical sampling is “to collect data from places, people, and events that will maximize opportunities to develop concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions, uncover variations, and identify relationships between concepts” (p. 143). For this study, theoretical sampling was adopted for both the program site and the participants.

I spoke in-person with the supervisor of the site and provided her with a description of the study. Upon approval by the supervisor, I later went to the site and described the study to the youth and adults.

Prior to any data collection, consent was acquired from adult participants via the Adult Participant Consent Form (see Appendix B). Approximately two weeks before the study began, the Parent/Guardian Decline Adolescent's Participation Form (see Appendix C) was given to the parents/guardians of youth and the Youth Participant Assent Form (see Appendix D) was given to the youth themselves. These forms described the purpose and procedures of the study and provided my contact information in case anyone had questions. Parents/guardians indicated their consent decisions regarding their adolescent's participation in the study either (a) by returning the Parent/Guardian Decline Adolescent's Participation Form or (b) by electing not to return the Parent/Guardian Decline Adolescent's Participation Form. Prior to observations, survey administration, and interviews, assent was obtained from youth using the Youth Participant Assent Form.

Data Collection: Qualitative

Participant observation. This study used overt, participant observations (Jorgensen, 1989). The observations were *overt* because the participants knew why I was there. The observations were *participant* because I was sometimes involved in the establishment and execution of program activities. After 48 occasions at NZ (24 occasions at TAC and 24 occasions at VAC), which yielded 67 pages of informal notes compiled in field journals, I felt well-acquainted with the offerings and how they operated and, thus, I discontinued observations (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). At both TAC and VAC, I would arrive a few minutes early and find a seat. I would mostly remain off to the side, scanning the room and listening intently. In the field

journals, I would record quotes I heard, actions and movements of participants, questions and ideas that came to mind, and general reflections on what I was observing. On occasion, I would contribute to the activity or dialogue, engaging as a participant. When TAC and VAC were done for the day, I would leave. Upon returning home, I would revisit my notes, adding additional details, questions, musings, and reflections.

Participant interviews. I conducted semi-structured interviews with six youth and three adults, totaling 512 minutes (range: 45-67 minutes per interview, average: 57 minutes per interview). I audio recorded all the interviews, and I transcribed all the interviews myself, totaling 234 transcribed pages (transcript range: 20-36 pages per interview, average: 26 pages per interview). The total number of interviews and interview participants were determined by the extent to which I felt I had achieved a corpus and heterogeneity of perspectives and experiences from participants. Iterative analysis occurred throughout the research process to inform ensuing interviews. This analysis exposed opportunities for exploration, highlighting intriguing prospects for subsequent interviews.

I created an interview guide after initial observations and survey data were analyzed. As data from questionnaires, observations, and interviews were analyzed, new avenues of inquiry were incorporated into subsequent interviews. The interview guide was composed of semi-structured questions, which allowed me to ask follow-up questions as needed, and allowed the participants more freedom to explain what was important to them (Corbin & Morse, 2003). If the participant mentioned another topic that I deemed to be important, I asked follow-up questions to explore the topic. Based on the incoming data, the interview guide evolved over time.

For example, initial iterations of the guide included questions about how NZ is similar to and different from other contexts (e.g., school), about teen-to-teen and adult-to-teen interactions

at NZ and other contexts, about how this year's programming was similar to and different from last year's programming, and about whether programs could exist without adults. Subsequent iterations included questions about youth and adult spaces, about youth and adult roles and responsibilities, and about recommendations and ideas for program improvement. And later iterations included questions about program structure, about maturity, about differences between youth and adults, and about working with youth and adults.

Data Collection: Quantitative

Collecting quantitative data served the purpose of using individual and aggregated responses to identify areas of inquiry for observations and interviews to explore in a more-informed way (see Taylor, 1977). Though quantitative data was not statistically analyzed, it served to contextualize qualitative findings and stoke ongoing interpretations and reinterpretations of all the data collected.

Quantitative data were collected in two ways. One, I conducted quantitative observations of offerings using the Youth-Adult Partnership Rubric (YAPR), which produced YAP scores by offering. Two, I administered a self-report questionnaire (see Appendix A). I collected quantitative data at the midpoint of the school year, once per offering. This data collection schedule allowed youth and adults at the offerings time to get settled into their work and me time to incorporate the results of that data collection into my approach to subsequent observations, interviews, and analysis.

Quantitative Measures

Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale (IIRS). The IIRS (Jones & Perkins, 2005) is a 38-item questionnaire based around three constructs relevant to OSTPs and YAPs (youth

involvement, adult involvement, youth—adult interaction), and the results place programs on a five-point continuum from adult-centered leadership to youth-centered leadership.

Youth Experiences Survey (YES). The YES (Hansen & Larson, 2005) is an 18-subscale assessment based around six positive domains of youth development (Identity Work, Initiative, Basic Skills, Teamwork and Social Skills, Interpersonal Relationships, and Adult Networks). This study focused on the 14 positive subscales, assessed through two distinct variations of the YES (i.e., YES1 [first 9 subscales], and YES2 [second 5 subscales]).

Engagement with Challenge (EWC). The EwC (Moore & Hansen, 2012) is a 6-item scale that measures a "form of intrinsic motivation, assessing the [participants'] enjoyment of the challenges that occur while working on a goal or project (p. 926). In this study, the EwC was modified and used to examine youth motivation by offering.

Self-Determination Scale (SDS). The SDS (Sheldon, 1995) is a 10-item scale, with two 5-item subscales, assessing the respondent's feelings of one's sense of self and sense of choice with respect to one's behavior. In this study, the SDS was modified; only the perceived choice subscale was used to examine youth perception of choice by offering.

Youth-Adult Partnership Rubric (YAPR). The YAPR (Wu, Weiss, Kornbluh, & Roddy, 2014) is an observational tool used to assess four dimensions of YAPs — authentic decision-making, natural mentors, reciprocity, community connectedness — based on research in the field (Zeldin, Christens, & Powers, 2013). Each dimension is composed of between three and eight items, and each item is rated from 1 (low) to 5 (high).

Analysis: Quantitative

Analysis began as soon as the first data were collected (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). No statistical analyses were conducted. Instead, means and standard deviations were calculated for each instrument, which aided the qualitative analysis.

Analysis: Qualitative

Observations were logged in field journals, and interviews were transcribed. By analyzing data immediately after collecting it, I used what was garnered from earlier analyses to collect subsequent data in a more-informed way (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987). Analyses identified important areas of inquiry, enabling the incorporation of tangible targets for observation and interview. Observation notes and interview transcripts were read and re-read to become familiar with the data as a whole (Creswell, 2003; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995).

Qualitative analysis took the form of a hierarchical content analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Researcher notes and participant statements were analyzed and separated into “meaning units” (i.e., a single, indivisible incident containing meaning). As analysis proceeded, I compared meaning units, grouping similar units together under higher-order concepts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As Corbin and Strauss (2008) indicated, “This type of comparison is essential to all analysis because it allows the researcher to differentiate one category/theme from another and to identify properties and dimensions specific to that category/theme” (p. 73). Interview data, observation data, and survey data were continuously co-analyzed, in an effort to explicate the beliefs, perceptions, and experiences of youth and adults.

Validity. With any qualitative or quantitative research, validity is an important concern. Maxwell (2005) identified two potential threats to validity in research: reactivity and personal bias. First, reactivity refers to the influence on the participants and setting by the very presence

of the researcher. Though this is of some concern, researchers assert that eliminating the complete influence of the researcher is impossible (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), and other scholars urge researchers to understand how their biases are influencing their research, rather than working to minimize all possible biases (Becker, 1970). Second, personal bias refers to the threat that conclusions drawn from the data will be based on the researcher's preconceived theories and/or that conclusions will be based on data that is "hand-picked" to align with the researcher's existing conceptions. Eliminating personal bias is impossible and, in fact, discouraged. Rather, the researcher best addresses the researcher's personal bias by understanding it, by identifying how and why it influences interpretations, and by using the results of such introspection to explain what is being concluded from the data.

For this study, I used two methods to enhance the likelihood that conclusions were valid. First, member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) were used. In addition to confirming that transcriptions and notes were accurate, I asked participants to respond to my conclusions of their statements and behaviors. I used member checks by sending my conclusions to the participants to ensure that what I interpreted and concluded from observations and interviews were accurate, reasonable, and legitimate. Participants had the opportunity to indicate where I may have misinterpreted data and to clarify, from their perspective, what was meant or intended. This process helped to ensure that my understanding of participants' words and actions were truthful.

Second, I engaged in researcher reflexivity (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In addition to providing participants with opportunities to further inform my interpretations and conclusions, I frequently reflected upon and revisited my assumptions, beliefs, and biases. I, as the researcher — and the qualitative instrument — brought to this research experiences and cognitive infrastructure that deserved scrutiny throughout the duration of this study. Thus, I included,

where valuable, interpretive commentary, shedding light on my own beliefs and biases and how they may have impacted my perceptions, interpretations, and conclusions.

Trustworthiness of data. To ensure that data is accurate, I relied upon two techniques: triangulation and member checks. First, triangulation refers to "collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 112). This study collected data using three methods (i.e., surveys, observations, and interviews) and from two sources (i.e., youth and adults). However, as Fielding and Fielding (1986) explained, triangulation is not a guarantee of data accuracy. Instead, to ensure that triangulation "worked" towards ensuring that data was trustworthy, I used one method of data collection with one source of data to corroborate the data obtained from another method of data collection and another source of data. It is not simply enough to have used multiple methods of data collection. It was important for me, for instance, to use observation to confirm that the data collected from interviews was accurate.

Second, member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) were used. Also referred to as respondent validation (Bryman, 1988), member checks refer to the practice of sending the data collected to the participants to ensure that what has been gathered via observations and interviews is accurate. Participants had the opportunity to indicate where I may have misquoted them or misremembered an interaction and to clarify what they in fact said or did. This process helped me be certain that the data was accurate.

Chapter 4: Results

Overview

The entirety of the results chapter is a fusion of all of the types of data I collected. Guided primarily by interviews, this chapter is also informed by observations and survey data, which helped to provide context, corroboration, and clarification.

Power at NZ

Based on my understanding of YAPs and about NZ at the onset of my research, I expected power to be shared evenly and ubiquitously between teens and adults. The results of this research partially support my expectations, but, more interestingly, the data require a more nuanced, dynamic understanding of power relations in YAPs.

In line with my expectations, NZ was a place where youth and adults interacted with one another in ways that demonstrated unique power conditions. According to Shay (senior), "there's no power differentials [between teens and adults, at Neutral Zone]." Avery (senior) noted how impactful working with adults can be: "it really gives you a lot of self-confidence that you have and power, that if you have an idea, you can like, you're really like working together." Avery elaborated on how this arrangement improved their life: "the fact that you sort of interact with adults in a different power dynamic, gave me a lot of confidence in who I am, and I think it's really gonna, and I think it's already helped me, and I think it's gonna, it's already further helped me like, even like just emailing certain people, or like talking with random adults, and stuff, I feel like, and not being nervous about that, I feel like it's already helped me, and I feel like it's gonna continue to help me throughout my life, so I'm glad I had that experience." For these youth, then, they perceived a more egalitarian power structure through the YAPs, which appeared to alter their confidence for engaging with adults.

While teens and adults did share power sometimes, this power dynamic also differed in important ways. For example, Avery (senior) made several comments that suggested that youth and adults were understood to be different from one another:

> "[The adult] was very helpful, I believe, in sending us, in the right direction."
>
> "I just felt [adult's] voice was a little bit more present in the general meeting discussions than [past adult's] was last year. But I still felt that she did a great job, and she definitely helped us make the major decisions. But yeah, I guess I think I appreciate it this year. I think it was needed due to the fact that it was just [the other teen facilitator] and I's second years, and both of our first years as facilitators. I'm kinda glad that it was that way. Not that that's a bad thing at all. Nothing major, I just feel like her voice was just a tiny bit more sort of, present, in the day-to-day discussions than [past adult's] was."
>
> "Not that it's a bad thing at all, I mean, I thought sometimes [adult] would sometimes pick up our slack as a group, which is really nice."

Clearly, there were meaningful differences noted by participants between teens and adults and their experiences with power at NZ. Youth recognized that adults, having more experience and ascribed power (because of their role in society and at NZ), could offer guidance or direction when needed. The following sections examine the extent to which teens and adults had power, and the implications of power for YAPs.

Teen power. Teens described having power and opportunities to exert that power at NZ. Avery (senior) reflected on power, leadership, and the benefits of NZ. Avery said that having power benefits all teens:

> "[having power] feels really good. And I think it has given me confidence in talking to other adults."
>
> "it just sort of became important to me that, 'cause I really liked the, I don't want to sound like power, I like the power it gave me as a teenager that I felt most teens don't have. And the control it gave me. It boosted my confidence in that way, 'cause I felt like, hey, I'm making a difference, and I was doing something that I thought I really couldn't do before."

> "I can't think of a teen that wouldn't benefit from the Neutral Zone, due to the fact that it gives you that experience with like, you can, you have that type of power that you just don't have really anywhere else in your life."

The teens who held the most power were the teen facilitators, who had run for this year's teen facilitator positions at the end of last year and were voted on by both teens and adults. According to Morgan (junior), adults gave advice, but it was ultimately the teen facilitators who determined the final direction:

> "I think that the facilitators really do have a lot of power…. it's the facilitators that plan every single meeting, and decide what we're gonna do. And I think that's a big deal…. When you say that you want to be a facilitator, like you say the direction that you want TAC to go in the next year. Because in reality, you are the one that's going to decide what's gonna happen next year, because you are the one planning the meetings. And so, I think that that really is the biggest way that TAC changes. When you become a facilitator, you do get a lot of power, because yeah, like [the adult] will give advice, and like say, 'hey by the way, we're gonna have to do this this week' but like, especially from what [past adult advisor] told me when I was thinking of running, is that you really do decide a lot of what you do. So, that changes it."

Teen facilitators had different responsibilities, concerns, and experiences than teens who were not facilitators (i.e., teen participants). Sam (adult) shared how they relied on teen facilitators to provide feedback on behalf of teen participants: "if there was an idea that I had, that I was like, oh this is gonna be perfect. They could say, 'Hey [Sam], I don't think that the rest of the group is feeling that,' or 'ehhh, before you do this, let's consult with the rest of the group first.' And so they're really additional eyes and ears."

Teen leaders had an impact at NZ in many ways. For example, teen facilitators served as a bridge between teen participants and adults, which Sam (adult) appreciated: "Their role is super important. So last year, [teen leader 1] and [teen leader 2] were my two teen facilitators, and then [teen 3] sort of made hisself an unofficial... assistant.... Their job is to I think have a lens that I don't have. And to have a lens that the teens don't have. And to help sort of provide

that bridge, or provide that holistic perspective. And so what [teen leader 1] and [teen leader 2] can do really well is if someone wasn't coming to TAC, maybe a teen might not let me know, but they let [teen leader 1] or [teen leader 2] know."

In one of the offerings at NZ, there was not consistent teen leadership. The teen facilitators showed up randomly at first, and then mostly not at all, as time passed. Though leadership played an important part in the unfolding of a program, Alex (adult) wondered aloud whether the lack of teen leadership had an effect on teens' experiences, sharing "Um, I guess I don't really know if it affected how they, I don't know. I don't know if it affected anything, or if they felt different that [Mel] and I were coming up with stuff for the most part." Alex also was not sure whether teens noticed that there was not consistent teen leadership: "Um, I personally don't know [if the other teens noticed that there wasn't teen leadership]."

Maintaining friendships while a leader was a particularly challenging type of relationship that teens had to navigate. Avery (senior) noted how they struggled to balance leadership and friendship, saying "as a facilitator, the hardest part that I had was the fact that I was friends with a lot of these people and like, we would hang out on weekends and after school. But in this scenario, like, 'cause you wanna, I guess, as a facilitator, you wanna like be a leader but at the same time, you don't wanna be someone, you still want to be viewed as equals, you don't want to seem like the boss or anything, especially if it's a peer like that. So I'd say, again, finding that balance between, leading and facilitating, and um, I guess not being too overbearing."

Avery also noted how it was difficult to motivate friends: "I've known a lot of these people for years, when you've known someone for years, I kind of feel like, sometimes I kind of felt like awkward reminding them to do stuff, 'cause like, I don't know, it's a position that you never had with them before, you never really saw yourself as someone who would be trying to

take your friends, trying to make sure your friend stays on top of his stuff, but like. I guess as a facilitator that's something that you have to do in order to make it successful. Keeping them motivated. So I guess that was kinda difficult."

And Quinn (freshman) shared the considerations they made when approaching the disciplining of friends: "It's pretty frustrating [getting other teens to do stuff] because, they are your friends, and you don't want to hurt them, and you don't want to make them think that you're really crappy or something like that. At the same time, you really have to like discipline, and you have to show that you are pretty much running this little group thing. And it's frustrating if they don't really care."

For teen leaders, knowing when and how to step back and step forward was a challenge. For instance, Robin (junior) noted:

> "Um, it was hard [as a new teen facilitator] to find that balance, I think for me, between stepping back and letting conversation totally take itself where it was gonna go, and stepping forward and doing more formal leading type things. I think it took me, basically, all year to figure out how to make that... 'cause like, I feel like, in the beginning, I would always feel bad when I tried to step in and turn the conversation a certain way, and I felt like I should be stepping down more. But then, as the year went on, I realized that, so many more things got done and people were happier, when I did take a more, took a more like, I don't know, a role that was I don't know what word I'm looking for."

Similarly, it was not easy for teen leaders to be both at the same level as their teen peers and able to administer discipline: "the facilitator is sort of driving the bus, but they're not the security guard, ya know. They're not the protector of the group. Ya know. It's like, they're leading, but they, yeah, I don't know. I'm just thinking about this now and like, how would, how would the facilitators be able to maintain an equal status with the rest of the group, if they were also like the sole people that could, like, discipline when discipline needed to happen. You know?" (Morgan, junior).

Throughout NZ, teens exerted power, especially teen facilitators, and they discussed leading and the challenges of leading in 'adult-like' ways. They had opportunities to influence decision-making, initiate projects, tackle tasks, and more. Examining a program that declared to be guided by YAPs, I was not surprised that teens had power. I was, however, surprised by the extent to which adult power was present.

Adult power. Adults acknowledged their power in both words and deeds. In describing their experience as an adult at NZ, Sam (adult) said, "It was my first year running TAC," conveying a clear belief that they were responsible for its leadership. Quinn (freshman) communicated something similar, describing the role and importance of the adults at NZ: "[Mel (adult) and Alex (adult)] are the backbone for VAC."

The adults at NZ appeared to be aware of their power, based on the way they spoke about their responsibilities. For instance, Sam (adult) shared how they worked to keep teens plugged in to the program, after the main event they hosted was over: "I'd say one of the other challenges is, which historically happens, is after the TAC gala, folks sort of lose steam, and so ya know, there were more teens that stayed than I think I was sure would stay, but I think finding things for them to do, or finding ways for them to like, really understand their goal as a group was not just to raise the money, but it is to really know the programs, and teens in the programs well, was a challenge."

Adults and teens spoke of power, responsibility, and discipline in ways that indicated that adults were the authority at NZ. Mel (adult) noted how they were "giving the teens the utmost power to make decisions and decide what they wanna be doing," signaling that they had the power to start with. Similarly, Sam (adult) mentioned sharing power, stating "I think that [navigating structured chaos is] really, it's also risky, because I think it involves a little bit of us

having to share power, and so sort of telling teens, that we're not the end all be all of information, that we're not the only source, that we're not the only ones that are right." Sam also noted how adults shared responsibility, saying "if we do something that they might wanna change or do differently, we've gotta be willing to also sort of share in some of the responsibility, which I think that, as adults, we go to, 'I have to do everything, I have to do it on my own.'"

I did not observe adults overly displaying or using the power they did have, as Quinn (freshman) noted, "they [NZ adults] are the boss... it's just that they're not as like, they don't really flaunt it, I guess. They're very much just like, they understand, that they are in charge, but they don't really upfront say it, I guess."

In addition to working with youth to manifest program objectives, adults had an elevated, decision-making role. For instance, Quinn (freshman) noted how the adult ensured that youth behavior was not deviant and destructive, saying that the adult "makes sure that everyone is in line." Similar to findings from previous research (e.g., Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005), Sam (adult) listed several executive responsibilities they had, including keeping teens safe and helping teens stay clear on the mission:

> "It's my job to protect them, which in ways, as youth workers, it is our job to make sure that they're safe. I think the role of the adult advisor is a few things. It's one, to remind them of the mission of TAC. I think with not just teen programming, but programming in general, you can get so stuck in doing the day to day, or doing the two to three key events, that you sort of forget the purpose and the goal and the mission. Which I think can happen for any program. And so I think that, for TAC, reminding them, your job is not just to help just raise money and to do this TAC gala, one, you can do any kind of gala, you can do anything that you wanna do, but your real purpose is to ensure that programs are running well, or to hear teens in this community, to hear their voice, and to provide resources, or to provide a way to where board members and members of this organization, know that youth want to see certain things improved. Ya know. So I think that the job of the TAC advisor is to one, remind them of that."

Alex (adult) shared a similar story, where the adults determined what was not working and adapted their approach: "For the first month, they were meeting with me, like we met on Tuesdays, and VAC was on Wednesdays, so the first few weeks we met on Tuesdays, and we would come up with what we wanted to do, but then, everyone just kinda stopped coming, so [the other adult] just decided to stop doing that. And then, we would meet half hour to an hour before VAC time on Wednesday, and that wasn't working out. So then we just started kind of like, whatever group of kids, whatever group of teens was there first, we would just ask them like, 'okay, what are we doing today?' or like 'this is what we're doing today' or something like that." Additionally, based on their judgment, Mel (adult) decided how the year was going to go, with respect to how much the youth would drive the program, saying "I let this year be a transition year, in terms of how much is really being youth driven."

According to Shay (senior), adults made the space one in which teens felt comfortable and safe, saying "making the teens in their programs, feel, like they want to be there, wanting to be there, they can voice their opinion, they don't have to be scared about bringing stuff up." Morgan (junior) shared that the adults do the disciplining, which affects how teens act: "And it's not even that because the advisor's there, the youth act differently. Like I'm sure you can see that it's pretty, the walls come down pretty quick. It's more that, when something does happen, the facilitator doesn't have to be the only one that's having to kind of handle kids that are their own age. It's not really one teen against another. And like, I mean, it works though. It does help the relationship between teens and adults."

Summary. According to youth and adults, power played a critical role at NZ. Though the findings deviated from my expectations, they revealed a more nuanced appreciation of YARs and YAPs. The adults in this study held most of the power, making decisions and establishing

the environment in which teens engaged. But teens also held power, having opportunities to make choices and shape programming. Ultimately, how adults exercised their power created the conditions where both teens and adults could feel comfortable, be their authentic selves, and consequently engage unique opportunities.

Psychologically-Safe Environment

For many teens, NZ appeared to enable a kind of authenticity and openness for teens to be themselves — and to *become* themselves — where they seemed unencumbered by the social constraints of other spaces where adults are present. At NZ, youth joked around, they called themselves by other names, they laughed loudly, they traded playful insults with the adults, and they sang. By deploying their power in judicious ways, adults created the type of environment that made it possible for high-quality youth development.

Adults cared about the youth. I observed adults at NZ engaging in actions and behaviors that suggested they were empathetic toward youth. Adults were excellent active listeners, and their questions appeared to be authentic. Teens described how nice, kind, and trustworthy adults were:

"They're just, they're so nice, and they're amazing" (Quinn, freshman).

"I think that she was kind and empathic" (Morgan, junior).

"I really think, I think they're very, I think they're very kind" (Avery, senior).

Quinn (freshman) noted, "[the adults] give off this kind of vibe that is, um, like, 'I am here to help, you can talk to me, I am trustworthy.'" Not only did they give off that vibe, but also adults vocalized their willingness to talk and help, whenever teens needed it.

The adults at NZ also made it clear the extent to which they cared about the teens. Sam (adult) said, "I loved the teens in TAC. I really enjoyed TAC." Mel (adult) described the

importance of paying attention to teens: “knowing more about young people, their sensitivities, their need for space, and an ear of listening, as opposed to being barked at.” In my observations, I never once saw adults raise their voices in communicating with teens. Mel continued, emphasizing the importance of ensuring that teens felt safe: “And that’s my job, is to pick up on those little nuances, and make sure I’m connecting with the teens, and not making them feel vulnerable or excluded or insecure.” Showing empathy for teens is valuable, according to Mel, “it really helps to put yourself in their shoes. Remember when.” Cameron (sophomore) shared similar sentiments, noting how much the adults understood their circumstances: “I feel like everyone at Neutral Zone, among the staff, is really aware of what’s going on right now [with teenagers], just like, I just feel like they’re pretty aware.”

Quinn (freshman) indicated that, compared to adults at school, adults at NZ were more empathetic and focused on teen well-being. Quinn said that NZ adults:

“are very understanding of teens,”

“remember [being a teen] more,”

“[were] more comfortable with [how teens are].”

Adults at NZ interacted with teens in a way that seemed to disarm teens (i.e., let down their guard with adults), showing teens through adult action how much they cared about them. Quinn (freshman) also added that, compared to NZ adults, adults at school were “very much like work-oriented, and they’re very, like, not really empathetic of the students. They just want to see the work, and they don’t wanna get too personal with anything.”

Adults consistently put youth needs and wants first. Shay (senior) noted, “every adult that works there, is behind this philosophy, of for teens, by teens. Like, not for teens, by adults. Like,

you cannot be for teen, and it's all adult. That's like the main difference. You can't try to say you're doing stuff for teens if the entire thing is planned by adults."

Adults recognized that teens were more capable than they were often given credit for. Avery (senior) said, "I think Neutral Zone is a great space, for adults to recognize, that I feel like that teens, ya know, can do a lot of special stuff, too. And I feel like the adults there really recognize that, which is something really special to me." When brainstorming about projects, adults engaged with teens as equals, asking and answering questions, posing and listening to answers, offering arguments and counter-arguments, etc. Quinn (freshman) added, "they don't underestimate us. Like they see us as who we are, and people, and stuff.... They don't really take [youth experiences] for granted."

Quinn (freshman) went further, sharing their thoughts on how much the adults at NZ really tried to understand where teens were coming from and how the adults were especially sensitive to teen needs. Quinn said, "they keep in mind that everyone's a teenager and then they understand that people are going through things," adding "I definitely think that they do have empathy for teens, even if they don't know them, they just have to assume that they could be going through hard times or something." Quinn continued, emphasizing the extent to which adults were mindful of teen needs: "But I feel like that is sometimes because they are around teens and they wanna, um, like, be extra nice, almost, just because they know that being a teenager can kinda be rough and they wanna be extra, like, supportive and kind. More than the usual usually are, maybe."

Despite teen decision-making that was not always optimal or efficient, adults at NZ accepted how teens were. Mel (adult) put it this way: "I think that they're supposed to be grown up and mature by now, but they're not. And so, just being, accepting of their shortcomings and

immaturity…. just remembering also their sensitivity and vulnerability. I feel like I can be a little direct, and so, and I assume that most, that the teenagers are gonna respond to that well, but some of them don't. Having patience."

Adults at NZ tended to focus on teen potential, rather than their behavioral mistakes, and they gave teens frequent grace to do the right or better thing. Cameron (sophomore) compared adults at NZ to adults at their school: "if [high school] was more like Neutral Zone in the way that they were uh, they were more like, they were more worried about the kids' potential, rather than their behavior at the moment, 'cause behavior is something that is changing a lot in your teenage years. And I think Neutral Zone does a really good job and their staff does, of like keeping that under control, and like kind of generating movement rather than holding kids back when they feel like they can't express themselves."

Adults at NZ embraced diversity of all kinds, and they were adept at modulating their interactions accordingly. For instance, one particular teen at NZ asked incessant questions, followed the adult around, and required noticeable interpersonal savvy on the adult's part, who never interacted with this teen in any way other than what seemed best for this teen.
Mel (adult) said it this way:

> "There were some very talented kids that you and I were observing this year, that they almost didn't want to be told what to draw. They wanted to be creating... Or what about [Fallon]? Fallon has zero artistic, less, he tries, he's there, and he wants to interact. The interaction for him of being with creative problem solvers, and young artists, stimulates him, and Fallon is, he's like aces, in my book. Those are the kind of kids I want to bring in. Ya don't have to be a really good artist to be a part of visual arts council. Just enjoy the camaraderie. And the challenge of sketching and drawing. And getting over your fears, right? 'I'm afraid to show what I just drew, because I think it sucks, and it's not exactly what I intended, but here it is.' That's bravery."

Respect. Youth and adults demonstrated and articulated the extent to which respect played a critical part in the unfolding of YAPs at NZ. According to Shay (senior), adults

respected teens at NZ: “So, I think just, the people that work at the Neutral Zone are really conscious of the fact that: respecting [others]....” Simply by interacting with teens in a respectful way, Morgan (junior) noted, adults were communicating their values: “I think the Neutral Zone is just sending a different message [by interacting with teens in a respectful way].” As Quinn (freshman) indicated, adults were very even-handed with everyone, saying “[the adults were] very level, with everybody.”

Unsurprisingly, respect for the other went both ways, with teens and adults respecting one another. Avery (senior) shared how they and the adult respected one another, focusing on a shared goal: “I cannot think of an instance where I ever felt like I had to like, strongly argue for something, one way or another, and I think that was like, [adult] didn't, and I think that was due to the fact that we had a mutual respect of like, we're all working towards this goal.” Shay (senior) emphasized the importance of mutual respect, saying “the biggest thing at the Neutral Zone is like, the teens respect the advisor, the advisor respects the teens in the same way.” One tangible way mutual respect unfolded was, as Mel (adult) stated, respecting everyone’s voice when they were speaking: “respect each other's time on the microphone.”

The environment created by mutual respect appeared to inspire Quinn (freshman) to describe working with adults as being “really relaxed.” At NZ, teens called adults by their first names, which was a big deal, according to Shay (senior), who praised the practice in a school environment: “That's why I just feel really blessed that the NZ exists, and also that the high school like [high school] exists. Cuz if you're lucky enough to get to take a class there, it's just like, the way that you are treated there is just not the same as a public school. It's just that mutual respect is there. And part of that like is, this might sound stupid to you, but like, calling your teachers by their first names. Like, that, already, day one, makes a huge difference.”

An ethos of respect and community was embedded within the core value of collaboration between youth and adults at NZ, enriching the experience of YAPs. Youth and adults joked around with one another, shared stories, and asked questions. Shay (senior) noted in the interview that NZ had consistent ideals that they could see throughout the program and across offerings: “Everyone knows what the Neutral Zone expects and is about.” Robin (junior) described how NZ was not simply a collection of individuals, but instead that it was a coherent unit: “It’s like one organism, growing together, and you’re all part of that same thing.”

NZ was not a program that benefited teens only. Both youth and adults grew, together, respectfully. Robin (junior) described her enjoyment learning with the adult advisor, saying “it was amazing growing with her.” Robin went on to describe what they said was “mutual growth,” noting “And there's kind of a mutual understanding between the adults and the teens that everyone is kinda just working toward the same thing and wants and to be the... it's like mutual growth. I think there's more mutual growth in the Neutral Zone than in most school environments.”

Not only did adults appear to impact youth directly, but also they appeared to influence youth indirectly through their actions and approach. Morgan (junior) said as much, sharing how the adult led by example: “the main role of the adults at the Neutral Zone, is to lead by example. And I think that's very much what they do.” Morgan also indicated how such leadership by example demonstrates respect, saying “I don't think I've ever really seen [Sam, the adult] snap at anyone. Like, I think that, if someone was acting out in TAC, a kid would probably snap out at another kid before the adult would. And I definitely see that. By leading through example, in terms of disciplining the kids if they're not really doing what they're supposed to do, it shows us that we can treat each other that way, like we can show each other that respect.”

Very informal. Youth and adults shared how adults at NZ were easily approachable and that they seemed more like friends, older siblings, or respectful elders, than adult authorities. Adults established an informal, "pretty relaxed" (Quinn, freshman), flexible vibe. Alex (adult) noted how there's minimal pressure on youth from adults:

> "It was a lot of like, this is what we're doing, and like, week after week, this is the project we're working on. But I also like that um, I like that although we're kinda trying to push that there's never any pressure, so like if they don't want to be working on it, the Neutral Zone is supposed to be a safe space for teens to come and like, you know, do what they need to do. I remember people would come and they would kind of draw and partake in activities and do a share around but they'd be doing their math homework or something. And I think that's also important, just like, I guess on days when we're like, there's no deadline for us to be working on this bigger project, I think it's important to like not be pressuring them to do anything they don't want to. And just make it an artistic space where you can come and hang out with other artists."

Teens interacted with adults without appearing to be nervous or anxious, asking questions, sharing ideas, proposing plans. In describing how this year went, Mel (adult) alluded to the flexibility of their approach and the space: "it's been different every year, in terms of participation, leadership, what we've done, on a community outreach scale, and then what we've done... I think this is the first time there was such a heavy emphasis on 'I just wanna draw and giggle and be over here.'"

Adults at NZ were seen to be more reasonable than other adults in other spaces. Cameron (sophomore) described how adults at NZ enabled youth to have more freedom, saying "I think the adults at Neutral Zone are a lot more reasonable, just because at [high school], the teachers and hall monitors, are basically told certain rules to make kids follow. And at Neutral Zone, there's not really a set of rules. Kids can kinda do what they want." Though there were rules and norms, they were the type that enabled adults to yield power and support teens making decisions.

Robin (junior) noted that the adult leader was easy to communicate with ("She was also so easy to talk to") and amazing, overall ("She was so awesome").

The informal environment at NZ seemed to make it more likely that YAPs existed that included genuine contributions from youth. Quinn (freshman) shared how teens were quite willing to voice their opinions and participate in what was happening: "The people, the teens in the group are willing to participate and willing to um, voice their opinions and stuff, which is really great, I really like that." Avery (senior) shared how the teens were able to have input and contribute without having to sway the adult:

> "I think it is [unique to be able to make decisions without having to sway the adult]. I mean like, I have a bunch of ideas for how to improve, how to improve, I've had a bunch of ideas of how to improve places where I've been employed including the restaurant I worked at beforehand, but I never, but I really didn't feel, and I'll be honest, I didn't feel comfortable really bringing them up. That was 'cause, I didn't want to act like I was unappreciative and I don't know, in a sense, ya don't, what is that saying go, ya don't bite the hand that feeds you. You very much do not want to, in any way, disappoint anyone. I mean, it definitely is taking a risk. 'Cause like, ya definitely want to respect, I guess, you want to respect that dynamic. And um, so yeah, I really think that it is very, maybe a little bit in school, but I feel like that's something very, very unique to the Neutral Zone, and that is that teens have any input to the space."

Teens acknowledged how the special circumstances at NZ shaped how they experienced them. For example, Cameron (sophomore) noted how teens have great freedom and flexibility at NZ to be creative and build their environment, saying "Definitely [teens have open paths to create new things]. Definitely. Neutral Zone and VAC give kids a lot of, they give 'em a lot of, freedom to implement what they want the world to be like, I feel like. So like, like let's say some kid was in the songwriting class at Neutral Zone, or beat making or something like that, and they made a beat that they really liked, or they made a song that they really liked, they could promote it themselves, and I've actually seen this."

For all youth participants, adults encouraged questioning, involvement, curiosity, and challenging the status quo, as Morgan (junior) articulated: “There's a level of transparency where things are more open to teens to, like, they want you to ask questions, and they want you to get involved, and to be curious, and if you see something that you don't think is working as well as it could, challenge it. Uh, and I think that that's pretty unique.” Morgan continued, highlighting how the adult focused on the positive: “Even with me, who was like a little flaky, like, [the adult] was always more, like, more prone to talking about the positives, or like if I did something really well, than if I had missed a meeting.”

Summary. The environment at NZ was psychologically safe for teens and adults to more fully embrace their authentic selves through YAPs and beyond. The adults cared deeply for the well-being of the teens, and both teens and adults respected one another greatly. This context — enabled by the power adults wielded — made it possible for teens to embrace leadership opportunities, voice their opinions, and direct their own program engagement. This was made possible through the ways adults approached their work with teens, to which I now turn.

Adults Served Teens

Despite my expectations that NZ would be a mostly egalitarian teen center, adult power was prevalent. How adults used their power varied, but two key themes emerged: adults supporting teens where they were, and adults striving to yield power to teens.

Supported teens where they were. One of the most prominent ways I observed adults engaging with youth at NZ was as resources. Avery (senior) noted that adults were very supportive and helpful, this year and last, saying “I think they're usually like, try to be supportive, try to help in any ways they can” and “I thought [last year’s adult leader] was very helpful, very helpful… I'd say [last year’s adult leader’s] involvement, was I think [they were],

[they were] there as a resource for us, and I guess, certain aspects that, you know, that I obviously [thought were] extremely helpful. [They] stood as a resource." Robin (junior) added how adults at NZ worked to "make sure that the youth have all of the resources that they need." Similar to findings from Larson, Hansen, and Walker (2005), adults offered to make phone calls, make introductions to non-NZ adults, and meet outside of NZ to support teens. Morgan (junior) expanded upon how, when youth sought help, adults provided helpful feedback: "the facilitators come up with their agenda for the week, right, and then they go over it with the advisor. And then the advisor gives them notes or ideas or like, 'ya know, this kind of conversation might be really good with this style of brainstorming.' Little things like that that can help the facilitators learn how to facilitate."

Adults, too, recognized themselves as resources for youth. Alex (adult) reflected on their shift from a youth participant to an adult leader, saying "I think now that I'm an adult facilitator, it's a little bit different, because now I'm taking on the role of being the resource, when people need me, rather than being the person who's going to people asking for resources." Sam (adult) spoke of their role as being the resource who can find and secure other resources: "It's also to help with any of our programs that sort of do larger scale projects, to help provide the resources. So they might say that ya know, we wanna order this, we want this guest speaker, but as the adult adviser, to be able to find the guest speaker, or to help them understand, this is how you look up how much someone's guest speaking rates are, this is how you look up things online."

As resources, adults were there to offer support when the youth determined they needed it. Mel (adult) highlighted this fact, saying "if they needed a phone number, or if they needed me to send an email and facilitate a conversation, and bring something in. Like that's, they were telling me what they needed" and "if they had a question, I was there to answer it." Teens, also,

noted that adults were available, when teens needed that support. Quinn (freshman) said, "it was really nice, because if I was, like, not up to yelling at people, if I wasn't up to leading the group, then they would step in, and it was really nice, because they were willing to do that, when I wasn't really feeling up to that." Morgan (junior) put it concisely, "[the adults] step in if they need to."

Though they often had executive decision-making status, adults also were involved in the mundane operations of their programs. For example, Quinn (freshman) said, "[the adult] always wrote down the schedule on the backboard." In addition, adults prepared the space before teens arrived, and they tidied up the space when teens left. Teens also described how the adults planned most of the shows including the logistics:

> "[the adult] also very much, her and [the other adult], actually, they very very much plan the art shows, like Potential, and the VAC art show. And they, um, for Potential, I think that they were one of the judges. I'm not sure. But, yeah, they very much... they pretty much run the show, when it's public, in the public" (Quinn, freshman).
>
> "things like, using the Neutral Zone space for the gala, reserving that space, and other logistical things that like, through the fact that [they were] a member of the Neutral Zone staff, [they] had more control over, [they were] very helpful with that" (Avery, senior).

Echoing findings from Wood, Larson, and Brown (2009), exploring responsibility and accountability in youth programs, Morgan (junior) noted how adults served as a form of accountability check — a type of quality assurance — saying, "they're kind of just like a check. 'Okay, what did you come up with this week. Okay, sounds good.' Like, it's just, it's making the facilitators have like someone that they have that's relying on them that's more than just the group of teens." Adults helped teens continue to show up and do the work. Cameron (sophomore) said that "[the adult's] job is to keep us working," and Sam (adult) said that their job was in "making sure that [teens] follow through in those details of running an event." Though teens did most of the within-program work, adults helped teens pay attention to the

details, as Sam noted, “I think the details and logistics of things, I think that's why we as adults are there, to also help provide another, ask another question, or say ‘hey did you think about this,’ or ‘did you know that might cost us an extra $200,’ and so I think that sort of the attention to detail is what they sometimes need support with.”

In addition to encouraging teens to execute on the work, adults also helped teens to see themselves as worthy of intentional consideration and improvement. Sam (adult) mentioned helping teens learn how to care for themselves, saying “they're really overextended, and I think that that was a big thing particularly about the teen advisory council was helping them learn how to kind of balance and take care of themselves.” Mel (adult) described their role as helping teens feel confident in their contributions to the group: “I'm a coach to helping all those teens in visual arts council understand their place at the table and feel confident, like they have something to contribute, no matter what their interests are.”

In their role, adults supported youth leadership in several ways. Morgan (junior) shared how the adult took pressure off the teen facilitators — what Larson and Angus (2011) described as *facilitative assistance* — saying:

> “the [adult] advisor is relying on the [teen] facilitator to come and be prepared. So it's like, it's more than just the group of teens relying on the facilitators to lead them, and I think it also takes the pressure off the facilitators, in terms of like, not having to feel like they're so far superior to the rest of the group. The goal is to keep the facilitators on the same level as the rest of the group, even though they have more responsibility, right. But, if you take away the advisor, then it's really difficult to maintain that. Like, how could the facilitators still kinda be on the same level as the rest of the group, if they're the sole leaders in the group? Having the advisor takes that pressure off of them in terms of them having to discipline the teens that are their age, but also makes them responsible for what they have to bring to the table.”

Morgan (junior) noted that the adult served as a type of emergency system: “the advisor also kind of becomes the safety net, if things get out of control… [and they] did address

problems when they came up.” And Sam (adult) shared about their role helping teen leaders approach youth leadership, saying that they “help[ed teen facilitators] think of different and creative ideas in regards to them being the leadership at the Neutral Zone, in regards to sort of being ambassadors between teens and the board of directors.”

Though they did many things together, not every teen had the same experience at NZ. Quinn (freshman) shared how grateful they were for the adult’s involvement, saying “I'm really thankful for [the adult’s help running and planning the meetings], because I don't think I could've ever done that.”

Morgan (junior) acknowledged how adults had to compensate for teen leaders sometimes, saying “I honestly think [adult leader] did an amazing job. I think she was put in a tough position. Because, I do think that if [past adult leader] had been there this year, it would've been a stronger year. But that's only because our facilitators were more soft spoken and like, I guess, like they weren't as aggressive in getting, getting the agenda going, and like, really keeping the meetings on task. And part of that is their job.”

Shay (senior) described adults as guides — “in TAC, it's like, [the adult] is really like our guide. Like [the adult] is guiding us” — and drew a distinction between teaching and guiding:

> “Leadership isn't like, ‘let me teach you about leadership.’ Leadership's experience. It's not like, they're not gonna sit down and be like ‘okay, this is how you're a leader.’ In art, she can show them, ‘this is how we do this type of art, I know that. I'm an artist.’ I know. Same with writing. ‘I'm gonna show you how to publish a book, and you're gonna learn that from me.’ [Adult’s] guiding us in a way that we'll become better leaders. It's not so much the actually teaching. It's not like a craft. So I think that it's just like that difference has to be there. Just cuz it's like the difference between the programs. Same with like, another good example would be like, RISE, the internship thing. The mentor for that, you know, they're guiding them to become a mentor, a Neutral Zone mentor. Whatever exactly they train them for. But that's not the same as [other adult] teaching someone how to make a beat, in beatmaking. It's not the same thing.”

Morgan (junior) described the *hand of guidance* the adult provided, saying "And I think that's probably the best way to describe the leadership of the adults in the Neutral Zone. Is that like, they do take a backseat to the teens. And it's more just to provide a hand of guidance than to push in one direction," adding "And I think that that really shows the biggest difference, and that's what I can come away with from my interactions with adults at the Neutral Zone. And what I would hope for with adults outside of the Neutral Zone."

Adults assisted when assistance was necessary: "[adults] assisting when [teens are] needing assistance" (Avery, senior). Robin (junior) shared how the adult was most helpful when they were discussing ideas and plans with teens, saying "I feel like an adult advisor is most helpful when they're just talking things through with you. I think, yeah, I think it's really their ability to kind of take things into perspective and talk your ideas out with you, as a youth, um, while bringing some of that expertise." Sam (adult) was described as a good mentor: "She's a really good mentor to me" (Robin, junior). Other adults were seen to help teens with creating and manifesting ideas, as Shay (senior) described: "Adults are helping you make ideas, and they're helping you get your ideas into action."

Moreover, adults provided recommendations for teens to improve as leaders, as Robin (junior) shared, "I remember at the beginning of the year when I was still not confident at all in being a facilitator, and I'd go up to her and be like, 'Oh, [adult], I'm so bad at being a facilitator, like what do I do?' And she told me to go home and think of three things that I thought I was really good at. And that helped me to kind of have more confidence in my facilitator ability." Morgan (junior) described their appreciation of the adult as the manager, saying:

> "I loved [adult's] management style. Cuz like, that's kind of what the adult is. They're kind of like a manager. They kinda oversee and make sure everything runs smoothly and they step in if they need to. And I think that she couldn't have done a better job. I really don't think she could've done a better job. I have nothing

> but good things to say about her, because I think that she was kind and empathic, and there were some, there were some kids in TAC that are a handful, and were a handful, and could be a lot to deal with, just like behaviorally. And she always just handled situations with ease, and had a smile on her face, and was excited to see us, and there was a genuineness about her wanting to be there, and that always shined through, like when I see her. Even with me, who was like a little flaky, like, she was always more, like, more prone to talking about the positives, or like if I did something really well, than if I had missed a meeting. So, I think that that was really good, and I think that she did address problems when they came up."

Leading by example made it possible for various learnings to emerge, which cannot be formally or explicitly taught. For instance, emphasizing the ways in which adults at NZ engaged with youth, Shay (senior) acknowledged the difference between teaching a known skill and guiding through skill development:

> "the difference comes down to the fact that TAC is a leadership program, and [VAC's] an art program. Leadership isn't like, let me teach you about leadership. Leadership's experience. It's not like, they're not gonna sit down and be like 'okay, this is how you're a leader.' In art, she can show them, this is how we do this type of art, I know that. I'm an artist. I know. Same with writing. 'I'm gonna show you how to publish a book, and you're gonna learn that from me.' [The adult is] guiding us in a way that we'll become better leaders. It's not so much the actual teaching. It's not like a craft."

Sam (adult) noted how adults had past program experiences, which separated them from teens:

> "I've been at the Neutral Zone several years, and so I've seen how certain programs run, or I've seen that, if we have an event on this day of the week, it's not likely to go well, because of my experience. Like, we've tried it multiple times, and it hasn't necessarily worked out. So I have, like you said, and I think a number of adults do, is a vantage point sometimes for saying, 'I've tried this before, um, I've worked on this particular project before, and remembering the ways in which it worked well and the ways that it didn't,' and I think that sort of that lived experience, that age, the ability to sort of gauge, 'is this a healthy risk, is this not a healthy risk,' adults have."

Adults were also seen to be the gateway/bridge between adolescence and adulthood. Robin (junior) said "In raising money, and stuff. And, kind of just like, um, connecting those two parts of, ya know, what, like TAC interacts, we are a youth space that interacts with adults. And

having an adult there, is kind of that gateway" and "... [adults are] bridging that gap between a youth space and an adult world."

Adults strived to yield power to teens. Despite the consistent mention of youth being in charge at NZ, adults appeared to hold substantial power that they worked to yield. Mel (adult) put it this way when alluding to the power they held by describing how they gave it away: "We're already giving the teens the utmost power to make decisions and decide what they wanna be doing. So with the right guidance, that is ultimately my job, is to help give them voice." Avery (senior) echoed that notion by praising the adult for how they transferred power, saying "I thought [adult leader] did a great job with that, like giving us that independence."

Adults tried to share power, but it was not easy. Just because adults had power at NZ does not mean adults wanted it or wanted to wield it all the time. In fact, they often worked to constrain their own power, which was often challenging. Avery (senior) spoke about how the adults at NZ worked to limit their own power, saying "the adult advisors try really hard to, I guess, make that power dynamic as equal as it possibly can be." Sam (adult) said, "I think that giving up some of that power is, it's not an easy thing." As explored by Larson, Walker, and Pearce (2005), part of the struggle stemmed from knowing when to step in and when to step back, as Sam noted the importance of "being really intentional about when to insert yourself as an adult, when to scale back, or to also, ya know, facilitate, and just have a meaningful, active conversation."

Additionally, adults often felt compelled to step in to lead when teen leadership was lacking. For example, Alex (adult) described how the adult leaders absorbed leadership responsibilities when teen leaders started faltering, saying "on a weekly basis, on those Wednesdays, [adult leader] and I would have to ask whoever was there first, we would ask them

what they wanted to do. Um, so I think that was like a little bit of trying to make up for [the absence of teen leadership], and trying to put everyone in a little bit of a leadership position without like putting them, cuz it was like groups of people, ya know. Putting less pressure on just like one person." Alex noted, also, how this type of involvement from them, as adults, wasn't preferred: "I think not having, or not having consistent leaders made it a little bit difficult, because it put that responsibility back on [adult leader] and I. And just as the adult facilitators, we're really trying to push for the teens to be coming up with what they want to do on a day to day basis, on a weekly basis."

At times, the adults had to exert their authority when they did not want to, like for quieting teens down: "I don't like having to be like, 'hey, you guys, quiet.' I don't like that tone. So that's hard for me, if I feel like I have to have that tone" (Mel, adult). There were also times where the adults had to adapt their expectations, based on teen engagement: "ya know, maybe instead of this last semester, [where] they were all kind of making the decisions, collectively... it was a different vibe, and that's okay. Ya know. Like there isn't like a complete rubric for how that's supposed to work out" (Mel, adult).

The challenge of knowing when to insert oneself and when to allow teens to self-govern was detected by the youth. Avery (senior) reflected on the difficulty of being an adult leader at NZ:

> "I believe it's a hard job because, the main thing, you have to find the balance between, due to the fact that the Neutral Zone is like a youth-driven space, you have to find the balance between being there for the youth, but giving them independence as well. And I think that can be tricky, I think that can be very, very tricky. So I think it's finding that balance of like, supporting them, but allowing them to be independent and do things and run things on their own. I think that's a very hard sort of balance to find. So I think that's what makes an adult advisor such a hard job."

Even for the tricky condition of leading while yielding some aspects of power, adults showed how they knew how to lead while enabling teens to maintain decision-making capacity, as Robin (junior) said, “[the adult] knew how to lead without taking over the space.” Additionally, Alex (adult) indicated that there were times when more youth voice would have been appreciated, saying “Sometimes I think there could be more youth voices heard in certain areas.”

And because the adults at NZ still maintained their power, they had to intentionally make an effort to be on the same level as the teens, as Avery (senior) noted: “I really feel like they try to, um, as much as possible, try to like, I guess, act, I guess as, as equal, as equals.” Sam (adult) emphasized the importance of intentionality regarding when to step in and when to step back, saying “being really intentional about when to insert yourself as an adult, when to scale back, or to also, ya know, facilitate, and just have a meaningful, active conversation.” In fact, sometimes when adults intervened, they made sure teens were okay with it, as Mel (adult) noted: “It kinda felt like there were times where I really had to take the lead, and but made sure they were okay with it. I don't know if you noticed. Sometimes, I was like, ‘well here are the tasks we need to do, if it's okay with everybody, I'm gonna take this one. And who else can do this one. Or I'm gonna run the meeting today, because [teen facilitator] didn't show up. Are people okay with that? Can you come up with the ice breakers.’”

Resembling findings from Larson, Walker, and Pearce (2005), in terms of adults needing to step in to bolster the work, Alex (adult) said the lack of consistent leadership by teens forced them to take action when they did not want to: “I think not having, or not having consistent leaders made it a little bit difficult, because it put that responsibility back on [the other adult] and I. And just as the adult facilitators, we're really trying to push for the teens to be coming up with

what they want to do on a day to day basis, on a weekly basis." Mel (adult) echoed a similar sentiment, saying "I don't want to be the one anymore that comes up with the cool idea. I want to hear what they have to say."

At NZ, adults made it clear, through encouragement, that teen creativity and risk-taking were not only welcome but also important for NZ to thrive:

> "I think in spaces like the Neutral Zone or in other sort of youth voice-centered spaces, we try to push a lot of 'this is your idea, this is your project,' so I think that they also know up front that we are encouraging that creativity. Not to say that it's a requirement, per se, but that that's welcomed and encouraged. And so I think that if someone knows that, in general, if you know that you can share an idea, or you can share something even if it might not go over well with everybody, if you know that it's an okay space to do that, and that there's not necessarily a risk, you're more apt to share. And I think that a part of our culture at the Neutral Zone, is making that a very apparent thing for youth when they come in" (Sam, adult).

Adults often asked teens what they thought, what they wanted to do, how they should approach a task, etc. Mel (adult) described the preferred circumstances from the year before where a teen leader did an excellent job leading the group:

> "I feel like that year worked really well, because it's peer facilitated, it's peer recruited, it's goofy, it's awkward, it's exciting. It's not, it's not me looking like, it's not me as a teacher, it's not me as an adult. They're looking up to [the teen leader] cuz he's a senior, and he's in a band, and he's a filmmaker, and he's an amazing illustrator, and he loves to do collage. And instead of being uptight and cool, he's like, 'oh you're 14 and wow you can…' he was able to reach out to all these different young people, and so they kinda looked up to him in a way that I could never fill. Like I could never be their peer."

Summary. Adults served youth in two primary ways. First, they supported teens where they were, based on their interests and needs. Second, they attempted to empower teens at every opportunity, be they the teen facilitators or the teen participants. Adults did not always succeed, in terms of enabling youth to have and exercise power. But the striving to yield that power made NZ a special place for YAPs to flourish.

NZ was Special

From the outset, NZ presented itself as a distinct environment for young people compared to other youth programs I have observed in both a research and a personal capacity, as well as compared to other common settings in adolescents' lives. NZ was unlike other environments (e.g., school) where youth and adults interacted, from its walls of teen-created graffiti, to the ambient noise of teens laughing, joking, talking, and yelling, to the freedom with which youth and adults could move throughout the various rooms in the building.

NZ was co-created, co-owned, and co-led by youth and adults. I saw evidence of this in regular meetings between youth and adults in which they "checked in" with each other, asked each other questions, and planned future meetings and events. For example, I observed youth and adults deliberating about meeting structure, event timelines, project goals, session objectives, etc. Commenting on how youth and adults worked together, Quinn (freshman) indicated in the interview that the decision-making in NZ was shared evenly: "it's pretty much balanced, between the teens and the adult. It's balanced between the adult facilitator and the teens." Similarly, Robin (junior) remarked during the interview, "I think there's more of a sense of people, whether young or old, working towards a common goal, together at the Neutral Zone."

That teens wanted to be there, and that they and adults collaborated around shared interests, made it possible for deeper relationships to form, as Morgan (junior) noted:

> "It [NZ] takes kids that are all interested in one topic, and puts them together, and gives them one adult, that's gonna work with them and guide them, that's also somewhat interested in what they're doing. And so, by taking a group of people that all have a common interest, you're already giving them something that they can relate to. By giving them a common cause, you're, like say, if kids are, or teens are slightly lower down and adults are higher up, you're bringing them more level. Because they're given something they have in common, and something that they have to work together on. And I think any time you give any group of people that, you open up the possibility for friendships to be made, that you might not otherwise make."

Adults at NZ were passionate about their work. They loved what they did, and it showed. They laughed with the teens, gave them hugs, joked with them, and listened to them. Sam (adult) shared their thoughts on passion and its impact on working well with teens, saying "I think that you've gotta have a passion or enjoy something," adding "I've always liked [the work]. I think I've always enjoyed it, which I think has helped me be good at working with teens."

Adults' passion for the work did not go unrecognized by the teens. Several of the teens commented:

> "[the adult] was excited to see us, and there was a genuineness about her wanting to be there, and that always shined through" (Morgan, junior)

> "the adult, advisor people, they're also very like into it, and they're really, how do I put this, they're very passionate about what they're doing, in the group and stuff. And they're like willing to talk about it to us, with teens" (Quinn, freshman)

> "I really think it's just about having a passionate advisor, and then, it doesn't matter which path they use to interact with the teens. If they're passionate about what they're doing, and the teens are passionate about it, that's gonna work out" (Shay, senior)

Shay (senior) noted how, when things do not always go as planned, they might feel that they are letting the adults down and experience disappointment:

> "if you don't go to TAC, then like, [adult leader is] like, 'why didn't you come to TAC?' And you feel bad because, unless you have a real excuse, you know, then you tell her, and she understands. But if you just skip because you're lazy, or like, you don't like it, you're bored, you don't want to listen, you don't want to drive there, whatever, then you feel like you're letting her down, basically. Or it's disrespectful. You know, 'cause she puts her time in every week, and you're just not doing that."

Youth interact with adults across a range of environments, but how youth and adults interacted at NZ was special. Shay (senior) said "[compared to other contexts] I would say that it's mostly the teen to adult stuff that's real different." According to Shay, how adults guide teens in NZ was unlike at school: "The biggest difference is like, the biggest divide, like you're saying

with TAC is the way that we interact with adults in the programs. This is just from my experience. Like in [another NZ program], we really relied on the [advisor].” Moreover, interactions between youth and adults within NZ could also be different than other YARs elsewhere, as Shay explained: “It's not like she's instructing as much. There's still stuff that she tells us that we don't know, but it's like, it's definitely not the same like teacher student type thing.” Alex (adult) noted how adult administrative staff treated youth differently than adult program staff, stating “That was just the thought. Like it does make sense [that admin at NZ treat youth differently than staff], ‘cause they don't interact with the teens on the same level as, like, people who are like working in these certain departments who have, you know, classes that they work every day.”

Amidst a tightly-bonded, collaborative community, NZ managed to remain open, and it embraced new people and ideas as well. NZ welcomed diversity of all kinds into their community. Based on my observations and interviews, I learned that teens came from all backgrounds (e.g., race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, school, neighborhood, etc.). Consequently, their aspirations and interests varied, often resulting in youth and adults having and accomplishing separate goals that were particularly relevant for them. For example, responding to a question about youth and adult goals, Morgan (junior) described: “I think that the youth can have a goal that is exclusive from the adult's goal. And then, they bring it up, because that's part of the Neutral Zone: accepting new ideas. And then, the adults back it. I think that definitely happens…. the adults can have goals. Like, the Neutral Zone doesn’t happen on its own. They have some heavy sponsors. And that's not necessarily a goal of the youth at the Neutral Zone to gain sponsors, or make this amount of money at this event.”

Though teens at NZ got to make decisions like adults elsewhere typically get to make, there were perceived differences between teens and adults. For example, Sam (adult) recognized that teens were riskier than adults, for a range of reasons, articulating:

> "I do think that, just within teens developmentally, that risk factor is a little broader, ya know. I think that, they're just a little more, developmentally, able to take risks and do things that as adults, we've sort of, partially developmentally and socially, been conditioned to sort of scale back on. Um, ya know, I think that, some of it is definitely, probably the social pressure, and then also I think that, depending on the space that you're in, we might have a different, the outcome might be heavier, or might hold more weight. So for instance, even if TAC doesn't raise $3,000, the Neutral Zone will still exist. And so, we can afford to be experimental, because we've also in all of our programs, we've almost budgeted to have a level of experimentation and creativity, understanding that the risk of failure, the risk of failure might be a little bit higher. Versus, as an adult, if you're doing a fundraiser, you might really need to raise that $3,000. And so you can't afford, logistically can't afford, to try one or two things that might not work, because it's heavier. Or your job might be at risk. Or ya know, or ya know, the social pressure also affects your work culture and your work dynamics. So I think that there are ways, particularly in the Neutral Zone, as an organization, where we, it's, it might be risky for us as adults, it might be risky for us as an organization to sometimes let teens do things. And, ya know, they have had programs where they don't go over well. But, I think that we've built some of that in, versus where I think a lot of other spaces, where adults are doing projects, or it's a business or an organization, they might not have that privilege, if I can put it that way."

NZ placed a high value on the people who constituted it, as they shaped the full experience of NZ, from the physical environment to the programs offered to the overall culture. The youth and adults were interested in music, civil rights, art, service, leadership, activism, and more. Youth came by foot, bike, car, and bus. The adults were former educators and social workers, and they were musicians, artists, and graduate students. Morgan (junior) put it this way: "The Neutral Zone without the people is just a building. If it was empty, and you walk in, you don't know what's going on there. And so I think that the people are everything."

Unlike school. NZ appeared to provide a structure that was different from the one school provided. Alex (adult) responded to an interview question about how NZ differs and said, "it's

completely structured differently. Teens are really the ones laying out the rules, laying out, you know, like, I'm sure you saw with TAC and stuff, we would have like, a big sticky note, and we would set our own ground rules. Where like at school, it would be an adult, usually a teacher, who would like, these are my rules in this classroom, you have to follow it." Differences between school and NZ were not by accident, as Quinn (freshman) said, "[adults] don't want to exactly like mimic a school classroom," adding, "there's no grading system, and you're not really put into these boxes based on what you know. It's very much like your personality, and what you can bring to other people, I guess. It's less stressful, and less stressful leads to more calm."

Youth and adults also perceived NZ to be less formal than school. I observed this informality as teens could come and go between rooms as they pleased. They brought food into rooms; they stepped outside to take phone calls; they ran into the hall to hug a friend who just arrived. Replying to a question about how NZ differs from school, Robin (junior) described, "there's no tests, there's no things like that…. it's less, it's less formal [than school]." Cameron (sophomore) shared how, compared to school, NZ was more relaxed: "in general, I think the [high school] people are um, a little bit more stuck up and like prude than just the general vibe we have at Neutral Zone, where like, everything's kinda chill. Um. But even when it's not chill, it's not like the end of the world. It's just like, we gotta figure out what we gotta do, ya know? And at [high school], I don't really feel that." Teens and adults at NZ could focus and get to work, when they needed to, and they also did not take themselves or their work too seriously. Alex (adult) echoed teens' sentiment, praising the go-with-the-flow nature of NZ, "it was really laid back… I kinda like that, although we try to put as much structure as we can specifically in VAC, I think it's really cool that it's really, we really go with the flow for the most part. Unless there's an art show coming up in a week, then we have deadlines and stuff that we need to do.

But like, other than that, like, yeah, I kinda like that it's just whatever we're feeling that day and try to get what we can done."

Compared to the atmosphere at school, the atmosphere at NZ was very 'laid back' and relaxed. Responding to an interview question asking about how NZ contrasts with school, Quinn (freshman) said, "it's more relaxed at the Neutral Zone, because at school there's like a lot of rules that you have to follow, and there's like protocol. But at the Neutral Zone, it's very much laid back." Though NZ did have rules, they were established by teens and adults, which is not typically the case in school. I often witnessed teens lounging on couches, looking comfortable and laughing, or they were moving between areas with confidence and ease. Mel (adult) contrasted NZ with school, replying to an interview question, and said, "it's a relaxed environment. There's no grading. There's no homework. It's a time to hang out with friends, but also be involved, and there's food, there's snacks." Teens would frequently use the kitchen at NZ, preparing snacks and shareable meals, like macaroni and cheese.

In contrast to other settings in teens' lives, especially school, youth at NZ were there voluntarily and wanted to be there. I saw teens who were having a tough day leave their program room and find a different area in NZ to spend their time, rather than leaving altogether. Others who showed up in a "bad mood" quickly began to smile and plug in. According to Robin (junior), "everyone wants to be there at the Neutral Zone, where in school, not everyone wants to be there. So everyone's gonna be more engaged and interested in what they're doing." Teens knew they could come and go as they pleased, which meant that the teens who were there, wanted to be there.

Despite having power, compared to adults in school, for instance, adults at NZ tried to avoid asserting their adult-authority role. Avery (senior) noted:

> "Teachers show power, I mean I don't, I'm not talking, I hesitate to use the word power, cuz I don't want to sound like anybody's running a dictatorship or anything, but I think teachers show more power in school in the fact that like, they usually tell you exactly what to do, ya know. They give you your grade. They, they tell you sometimes where to sit, what time, all this stuff. And the adults at the Neutral Zone just don't show that power. I mean, I'm never gonna walk into the Neutral Zone, and [the adult advisor's] gonna say, 'oh, [teen], you're sitting next to blah blah blah,' or like, 'you get a B on the work you did last week.'"

Quinn (freshman) articulated how teens are less likely to challenge adults at NZ, compared to school, sharing "I don't know exactly why, but, in the classroom, I feel like, the students challenge the teacher more, and almost aggravate them." And Cameron (sophomore) said that, because NZ was so special, teens did not want to squander their experience: "just because Neutral Zone is such a good opportunity that no one wants to like, I guess, disrespect it in any way."

Adults and teens appreciated teen voices, taking their ideas into consideration, Quinn (freshman) said: "Um, I'd say [NZ is] pretty different [than school], because, it's like a youth run space. And I would say that, at least for [school], it's very much adult-oriented. And I feel like the staff at Neutral Zone and even the teens, they just take your, opinions and um, like what you're saying into consideration more, because they've been around it more."

Shay (senior) noted how the kind of YARs that exist at NZ are ideal: "In any good college, that should exist. I think that at any good university or higher education institution, it should be a relationship exactly like that [that takes place at NZ], and it should be a relationship like that in high school. There is no reason that people that are 16, 17, and 18 years old, can't have a mutual respect relationship with an adult." Avery (senior) supported that perspective, sharing how, if teens were willing to engage, NZ was the optimal environment: "I still really believe that the opportunities it gives you, whether you're in to get out in the community to make a difference and to do things that most teens don't do. I think it really is [the ideal space for

teens]. I can't think of a teen that it wouldn't be optimal for…. I really can't think of a teen, that I think if they, were able to commit to the Neutral Zone that it would not be beneficial for."

Summary. NZ was special. From its informal and authenticity-evoking environment, to adults' attempts to yield power, to its distinction from school, NZ enabled the kind of YARs and YAPs that youth and adults craved.

Quantitative Findings

Quantitative findings were used to corroborate qualitative results and provide context for overall interpretations. In general, participants in both TAC and VAC reported high levels across all quantitative instruments, resulting in ceiling-like effects. Such findings were not surprising, given that these two offerings were expected to yield high marks on YAPs and related constructs. The following subsections describe the quantitative findings from this study.

IIRS. The overall ratings for TAC and VAC met the criteria of "good" (score of 7-8 out of 10; see Table 1). For the adult and youth in TAC, the overall score was 8.48. They rated adult involvement the highest, followed by youth—adult interaction, and youth involvement. For the adults and youth in VAC, the overall score was 8.60. They rated adult involvement the highest, followed by youth—adult interaction, and youth involvement.

Table 1

IIRS Scores from TAC and VAC

Subscales	TAC (n = 10)	VAC (n = 13)
Youth Involvement	7.95 (1.01)	8.31 (0.72)
Adult Involvement	8.98 (0.76)	9.06 (0.68)
Youth—Adult Interaction	8.59 (0.67)	8.58 (0.69)
Overall	8.48 (0.67)	8.60 (0.58)

YES1. Overall, for adults and youth, VAC (4.75) provided ratings slightly higher than TAC (4.73), on a scale from one to seven (see Table 2). For TAC, they rated group process skills the highest, followed by effort and persistence, goal setting, a two-way tie (time management and emotion regulation), overall, identity exploration, leadership and responsibility, identity reflection, and feedback. For VAC, they rated group process skills the highest, followed by emotion regulation, effort and persistence, overall, identity exploration, time management, identity reflection, goal setting, feedback, and leadership and responsibility.

Table 2

YES1 Scores from TAC and VAC

Subscales	TAC (n = 10)	VAC (n = 13)
Identity Exploration	4.50 (1.02)	4.69 (0.98)
Identity Reflection	3.87 (1.53)	4.46 (1.78)
Goal Setting	4.90 (1.94)	4.33 (1.70)
Effort and Persistence	5.03 (1.71)	5.02 (1.36)
Time Management	4.77 (1.85)	4.57 (1.37)
Emotion Regulation	4.77 (1.79)	5.55 (1.75)
Group Process Skills	5.90 (1.00)	5.57 (0.88)
Feedback	3.65 (1.44)	4.03 (1.17)
Leadership and Responsibility	3.97 (1.36)	3.90 (1.61)
Overall	4.73 (1.11)	4.75 (0.79)

YES2. Overall, across adults and youth, VAC (2.88) provided ratings slightly higher than TAC (2.71), on a scale from one to four (see Table 3). For TAC, they rated diverse peer relationships the highest, followed by overall, linkages to community, prosocial norms, linkages

to work and college, and integration with family. For VAC, they rated diverse peer relationships the highest, followed by linkages to community, overall, linkages to work and college, prosocial norms, and integration with family.

Table 3

YES2 Scores from TAC and VAC

Subscales	TAC (n = 10)	VAC (n = 13)
Diverse Peer Relationships	3.08 (0.51)	3.32 (0.66)
Prosocial Norms	2.65 (0.69)	2.58 (0.76)
Integration with Family	2.30 (0.75)	2.50 (1.00)
Linkages to Community	2.70 (1.03)	3.00 (0.96)
Linkages to Work and College	2.43 (0.96)	2.64 (0.85)
Overall	2.71 (0.48)	2.88 (0.61)

EwC. Overall, across adults and youth, TAC (5.15) provided ratings higher than VAC (4.67), on a scale from one to six (see Table 4). For TAC, they rated "The goals people are working on in this program are not important to me" [reverse-coded] the highest, followed by a three-way tie ("I feel challenged in a good way in this program," "The activities in this program are boring" [reverse-coded], and "I'm not working toward anything in this program" [reverse-coded]), "There are always things I'm trying to work on and achieve in this program," and "What we do in this program is both difficult and enjoyable." For VAC, they rated "There are always things I'm trying to work on and achieve in this program" the highest, followed by "I'm not working toward anything in this program" [reverse-coded], "The activities in this program are boring" [reverse-coded], "I feel challenged in a good way in this program," "What we do in

this program is both difficult and enjoyable," and "The goals people are working on in this program are not important to me" [reverse-coded].

Table 4

EwC Scores from TAC and VAC

Items	TAC (n = 10)	VAC (n = 13)
There are always things I'm trying to work on and achieve in this program	5.00 (1.25)	4.92 (0.64)
I feel challenged in a good way in this program	5.10 (0.74)	4.62 (0.96)
The activities in this program are boring (rev)	5.10 (0.57)	4.77 (1.17)
I'm not working toward anything in this program (rev)	5.10 (1.60)	4.85 (1.07)
What we do in this program is both difficult and enjoyable	4.90 (0.88)	4.54 (0.88)
The goals people are working on in this program are not important to me (rev)	5.70 (0.48)	4.31 (1.49)
Overall	5.15 (0.52)	4.67 (0.65)

SDS. Overall, across adults and youth, TAC (2.88) and VAC (2.98) slighlty differed, on a reverse-coded scale from one to five (see Table 5). For TAC, they rated "I do what I do in this program because it interests me / I do what I do in this program because I have to" the highest, followed by a three-way tie ("I always feel like I choose the things I do in this program / I sometimes feel that it's not really me choosing the things I do in this program," "I choose to do what I have to do in this program / I do what I have to in this program, but I don't feel like it is really my choice," and "I am free to do whatever I decide to do in this program / What I do in this program is often not what I'd choose to do"), and then "I feel pretty free to do whatever I choose to in this program / I often do things in this program that I don't choose to do." For VAC,

they rated "I choose to do what I have to do in this program / I do what I have to in this program, but I don't feel like it is really my choice" the highest, followed by "I do what I do in this program because it interests me / I do what I do in this program because I have to," "I am free to do whatever I decide to do in this program / What I do in this program is often not what I'd choose to do," "I feel pretty free to do whatever I choose to in this program / I often do things in this program that I don't choose to do," and "I always feel like I choose the things I do in this program / I sometimes feel that it's not really me choosing the things I do in this program."

Table 5

SDS Scores from TAC and VAC

Items	TAC (n = 10)	VAC (n = 13)
I always feel like I choose the things I do in this program / I sometimes feel that it's not really me choosing the things I do in this program	2.90 (0.74)	2.38 (1.45)
I choose to do what I have to do in this program / I do what I have to in this program, but I don't feel like it is really my choice	2.90 (0.57)	3.42 (0.67)
I do what I do in this program because it interests me / I do what I do in this program because I have to	3.10 (0.57)	3.31 (0.95)
I am free to do whatever I decide to do in this program / What I do in this program is often not what I'd choose to do	2.90 (0.57)	3.00 (1.08)
I feel pretty free to do whatever I choose to in this program / I often do things in this program that I don't choose to do	2.60 (0.84)	2.77 (1.17)
Overall	2.88 (0.45)	2.98 (0.66)

YAPR. The overall scores on the Youth-Adult Partnership Rubric (YAPR) for TAC and VAC differed slightly, at 4.30 and 4.10, respectively, on a scale from one to five (see Table 6).

For TAC, the highest score was for Dimension 4: Community Connectedness, followed by Dimension 1: Authentic Decision-making, Dimension 3: Reciprocity, and Dimension 2: Natural Mentors. For VAC, the highest score was Dimension 2: Natural Mentors, followed by Dimension 4: Community Connectedness, Dimension 1: Authentic Decision-making, and Dimension 2: Natural Mentors.

Table 6

YAPR Scores from TAC and VAC

Dimensions	TAC	VAC
Dimension 1: Authentic Decision-making	4.40	4.00
Dimension 2: Natural Mentors	4.13	4.38
Dimension 3: Reciprocity	4.25	3.50
Dimension 4: Community Connectedness	4.67	4.33
Overall	4.30	4.10

Results Reflection

When I embarked on this research study, based on the existing literature I expected to see youth and adults engaged in the purest form of YAPs — where youth and adults were equals, co-determining everything. Were it not for the obvious, mostly physical differences between adults and teens, I expected to struggle to distinguish between youth and adults based on how they interacted as relative equals. Very quickly, however, I saw something other than the YAPs I expected.

At first, failing to see the egalitarian YAPs I expected left me disappointed. Based on everything I read and heard, NZ was one of the — if not, *the* — best programs in the nation, in terms of youth voice, youth governance, and YAPs. Moreover, the research literature did not

describe the dynamism of YAPs that I witnessed. Thus my initial feeling was that if NZ was not engaging in the YAPs I expected, were any other programs able to so?

But, over time, my understanding of what was happening at NZ with youth and adults began to evolve. No longer was I disappointed that I was not witnessing my pre-conceived expectations for YAPs in action. Instead, I came to recognize that what I was seeing was a version of an optimal YAP in an ideal OSTP for youth development, given the contextual and cultural constraints of modern American society. That is, if today's society sees and treats youth and adults differently, if adults get paid to work with youth and youth attend such programs for other reasons, if adults are ultimately responsible and liable for the happenings of the program and youth are not, then the results of this research may demonstrate a more-refined, reality-based YAP that other OSTPs can begin to adopt.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study sought to better understand youth and adult experiences in an OSTP that has been identified as a model of YAPs. Findings from this study call attention to the need to revisit and refine existing definitions of YAPs. At present, research examining YAPs has established it as a relatively static, program-wide concept, which does not appropriately map to the realities faced by OSTPs. That is, the existing understanding of YAPs fails to account effectively for the dynamism and nuance with which relations between youth and adults unfold in reality. The present study highlighted how, as evidenced at two offerings at a YAP-guided OSTP, YAPs fluctuated from youth-driven decision-making, to adult-determined activities, to egalitarian collaboration, all in the span of one session. For YAPs to yield consistent, maximum benefits, a more thorough understanding of how they emerge and change is warranted.

Based on this research, three key themes emerged that can serve to inform subsequent research in an effort to forge an updated conceptualization of YAPs: power, safety, and respect.

Power

At NZ — a self-declared teen center that embraced YAPs — power between and among youth and adults was an especially relevant element of how they experienced YAPs. Despite the emphasis on youth governance and YAPs at NZ, adults were the primary administrators and executors of power, and both youth and adults acknowledged that fact. Youth liked adults' handling of power, as adults did not flaunt their authority or impose their will. Instead, adults tried to yield power to youth on a regular basis, at which they often succeeded. Though there was no experienced power differential at times, teens noted that teens did have power and that they made consequential decisions. Teens appreciated having power, and such power shaped how they viewed themselves and what they were capable of.

Relevant scholarship related to power and YAPs supports the range of experiences youth and adults had in YAPs at NZ. YAPs are understood to be an excellent arrangement for positive human development, psychological empowerment (Zeldin, Christens, & Powers, 2013), and shifting the balance of power from adults to young people (see Akiva & Petrokubi, 2016; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). When power is balanced between youth and adults, youth report that they are motivated to engage in organizational governance (Zeldin, 2004). Although it may not be ideal for adults to hold absolute power and responsibility (see Ord, 2007), yielding (at least some) power is challenging for adults (see Camino, 2000; Hilfinger Messias et al., 2005; MacNeil, 2006; Shaw, 1996). Consequently, adults often engage in "micro-power compensation" (Ozer, Newlan, Douglas, & Hubbard, 2013), enabling youth to have power over non-critical decisions. However, scholarship indicates that power should not be yielded by adults haphazardly or indiscriminately, as this may place a "disproportionate burden on young people to assume roles they may not be able to fulfill by virtue of their minor status, limited experience with conventions of program and research operations, and potential developmental capabilities" (Wong, Zimmerman, & Parker, 2010, p. 103). With youth sometimes wanting power, and adults oftentimes wanting to yield power, NZ seemed to achieve a healthy and balanced power environment.

Safety

Youth and adults felt safe at NZ to fully engage in YAPs. Adults felt that it was their job to create a safe environment. In order to limit opportunities for youth to "feel vulnerable or excluded or insecure," adults were driven to be in tune with what young people were thinking and feeling. This safety emerged in an environment that youth and adults described as being "really laid back" and "relaxed." Adults also worked to reduce the pressure young people felt,

allowing them to feel more comfortable and confident in their abilities, choices, and relationships. Youth acknowledged the value of safety, as well, for example, having described how adults serve as the safety net when things get out of control. Plus, compared to school, YAPs at NZ were much more "laid back," which enabled young people to be motivated to show up and empowered them to speak up, without feeling scared.

The existing literature supports the importance of psychological safety for YAPs and OSTPs. According to Edmondson and Lei (2014), "Psychological safety describes people's perceptions of the consequences of taking interpersonal risks in a particular context" (p. 23). Such safety is a vital component of the types of environments that enable adequate development (Musa, Meshak, & Sagir, 2016), such as those that promote easy going (Martko & Watt, 2011) and warm (Futch Ehrlich, Deutsch, Fox, Johnson, & Varga, 2016) YARs. In fact, safe environments impact our limbic system, as Hartman and Zimberoff (2011) describe, "When the environment is appraised as being safe, the defensive limbic structures are inhibited, enabling social engagement and calm visceral states" (p. 18). And safe environments promote overall positive youth development in OSTPs (see Eccles & Gootman, 2002) and the exercising of agency throughout life (Wanless, 2016). That NZ was a safe environment for both youth and adults enhanced how YAPs were experienced.

Respect

Youth and adults noted how YAPs at NZ were unique, compared to other contexts. At NZ, how adults supported youth, and the ways in which youth and adults interacted and respected one another, were different from other spaces, like school and home. Youth were revered — the focal point. They had input into the space. And their ideas did not require substantial persuasion of adults to be appreciated and incorporated. At NZ, YAPs gave youth the

"freedom to implement what they want[ed] the world to be like." There was transparency and an openness in the ways youth and adults interacted, which encouraged young people to ask questions, get involved, be curious, and challenge the status quo. This type of engagement between youth and adults was something that youth and adults do not typically get to do. Ultimately, teens did not want to squander their opportunity to interact with adults in the respect-laden way they did.

The scholarship on YAPs supports the finding that YAPs in OSTPs are special. Because OSTPs emphasize dialogue and negotiation (Ord, 2007), and mutual respect is prioritized (Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005), adults are in a position to interact with youth in atypical ways (Krauss & Saundi, 2008). Scholarship has described how adults in YAPs 'do with,' as opposed to 'do for' (Camino, 2005), enabling youth and adults to share power and decision-making responsibilities (Ginwright, 2005). Zeldin, Christen, and Powers (2013) noted how the "constellation of role, activity, and behavior distinguishes YAP[s] from other types of interactions between youth and adults" (p. 393). And acknowledging the unique benefits of YAPs (see Zeldin & Collura, 2010; Zeldin, Petrokubi, & Camino, 2008), Akiva and Petrokubi (2016) recommended that YAPs "should be available in multiple locations, ample enough for most youth to access these opportunities" (p. 249). The mutual respect demonstrated by youth and adults for one another at NZ enabled a special context to manifest the powerful YARs that are YAPs.

Implications

The results of this research have implications for positive social impact at the community level, the organization level, and the offering level. At the community level, the results of this research may have implications for cities, states, and regions throughout the country. This

research intended to more fully understand the experience youth and adults have in YAPs. Findings suggest that YAPs are preferred by both youth and adults, and previous research notes the benefits to youth, adults, and more, of OSTPs and of YAPs (see Yohalem, Granger, & Pittman, 2009; Zeldin, Christens, & Powers, 2013; Zeldin, Gauley, Barringer, & Chapa, 2018). The present study adds to the literature concluding that YAPs have a powerful, beneficial effect on the impact OSTPs can have, which implies that more OSTPs should work to manifest and maintain YAPs. Doing so could make it possible for the wide-ranging positive effects of OSTPs to grow, and for OSTPs to be more effectively and appropriately implemented.

At the organization level, the results of this research may have implications for the governance of OSTPs. This study examined YAPs and how youth and adults experienced YAPs in an OSTP. Results indicated that youth preferred and thrived in YAPs, especially in positions of leadership. Relative to other programs at NZ, the two programs in this study were the ones responsible (in addition to the board of directors, which youth were part of) for the direction of NZ. Thus, because youth meaningfully contributed in leadership positions, and because YAPs are preferred, more OSTPs should work to establish YAPs at the level of overall organizational governance which should happen more often (see Akiva, Cortina, & Smith, 2014; Wong, Zimmerman, & Parker, 2010; Zeldin, Christens, & Powers, 2013). Doing so could make it possible for more OSTPs to establish the kinds of offerings that attract, enrich, and empower young people and adults.

At the offering level, the results of this research may have implications for youth, adults, and YAPs. This research explored how youth and adults experienced YAPs, and power emerged as a key finding. In NZ, youth and adults described their experiences with power, from youth having to hold friends accountable, to adults having to share power with youth. Results indicated

that adults were able to yield power to young people, which aligns with past research (see Krauss, 2018; Mitra, 2005; Weybright, Trauntvein, & Deen, 2017). Given the benefits of youth having opportunities to lead and make decisions, adults should strive to create an egalitarian environment for youth and themselves. Doing so could make it possible for more young people to explore their identities, develop skills, and contribute to their communities today, benefiting all of us (Wong, Zimmerman, & Parker, 2010).

Limitations

Although intentional, I limited the sample, in a few notable ways. I included one organization: Neutral Zone. I also focused on two of NZ's offerings: TAC and VAC. Moreover, I interviewed nine people in total (six youth and three adults), and I surveyed 23 people in total (20 youth and three adults). More organizations, more offerings, more interview participants, and more survey participants would have yielded a greater quantity of evidence.

In this study, to ensure confidentiality, I used pseudonyms for individual participants. However, due to the small number of individual participants, it is conceivable that participants may have altered their interview responses, for self-protection. That is, because individual participants knew that their programs were limited in numbers, they could have modified their responses (e.g., by withholding criticism of NZ, their offering, their adult advisors, their teen participants, their peers, etc.) for fear of potentially being identified.

Additionally, the interviews in this study explored a wide range of beliefs, expectations, and perceptions, among youth and adults. However, it is possible that I missed important aspects of YAPs, specifically, and YARs, more generally. A lengthier and deeper interview process may have uncovered elements of YARs that are of critical importance to YAPs and beyond.

Recommendations

This research investigated one particular type of YAR: the YAP. More specifically, I aimed to learn more about the experiences youth and adults had at an OSTP known for its YAPs. Within NZ, there was a wide range of interactions between youth and adults, including, but not limited to, YAPs. So how is it that YAPs emerge? What conditions, if any, must be present for YAPs to develop? Why, when, how, and to what extent do YAPs emerge and recede in afterschool environments? Existing research has described the features (e.g., Zeldin, Christens, & Powers, 2013), benefits (see Akiva, Cortina, & Smith, 2014), and challenges of YAPs (e.g., Zeldin, Krauss, Collura, Lucchesi, & Sulaiman, 2014), but researchers have failed to investigate the dynamism of YARs found in this study. Future research should investigate the ontogeny, range, and frequency of YARs (including YAPs) in OSTPs.

This study examined YAPs, in an attempt to better understand the experiences youth and adults had. The findings indicated that both youth and adults want to engage in YAPs and that youth and adults believe that YAPs require more effort than other YARs. If they're more difficult, uncomfortable, and challenging to build and maintain than status quo YARs, then why do youth and adults prefer YAPs? Also, to what extent do they actually require more effort, and how does that manifest? Scholarship to date has discussed the seeking of opposition in power dynamics (see May, 1972), and has examined benefits of YAPs (see Zeldin, Christens, & Powers, 2013), but it has not specifically explored the attraction to YAPs by youth and adults. Future research should examine the preference for and seeking of more effortful relationships between youth and adults.

This research explored how youth and adults experienced an OSTP known for its YAPs. Some of the young people interviewed shared that one of the schools they attended embraced

some of the same values and practices as NZ did. Given the benefits of YAPs, if the school embraced similar values to NZ, could it also enable YAPs? In other words, in what ways are youth and adults interacting in school, and to what extent are there YAPs in school? There has been some research into YAPs in academic settings (see Chopra, 2016; Mitra, 2008a, 2008b; Zeldin, Gauley, Barringer, & Chapa, 2018), but not enough. Considering the benefits of YAPs in OSTPs, future research should further explore YAPs in school.

The goal of this study was to better understand how youth and adults experienced participating in YAPs at an OSTP that was renowned for its YAPs. Valuable insights were gleaned from examining their experiences and their perceptions of those experiences. Moving forward, subsequent research should be done with study participants to explore how their experiences at NZ impacted them in other contexts (e.g., work, home, school, leisure), adding to the literature on developmental experiences and transferability of key competencies. Additionally, further research could examine how their participation in YAPs at NZ influenced the development (or not) of key attitudes, behaviors, and skills, relative to other youth and adults who were not at NZ. Follow up studies with current study participants could meaningfully contribute to the literature on OSTPs, YAPs, and positive youth development.

Conclusion

This research strengthened my belief that teens deserve better from adults. Teens are capable of more than they are typically given opportunities for, and their development depends on rich, challenging, appropriate experiences. OSTPs and YAPs are powerful vehicles for helping young people discover, activate, and unleash their most genuine selves. Research and practice should continue to advance what is possible for young people. Their lives depend on it, so do ours, and so does our collective future.

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Appendices
Appendix A: Survey Battery

YOUTH—ADULT PARTNERSHIPS IN AN OUT-OF-SCHOOL-TIME PROGRAM: AN EXPLORATION OF POWER, SAFETY, AND RESPECT

SECTION 1: YOUTH AND ADULT INVOLVEMENT AND INTERACTION

Instructions: When completing this part of the questionnaire, think about the projects, youth, and adults you expect to encounter in this program at Neutral Zone. The purpose of this section is to allow you to rate the levels of youth involvement with other youth, adult involvement with other adults, and youth working together with adults. Place an 'X' on the line (within the middle boxes) that you feel is the most accurate statement. For example, if you feel the statement on the right or left best describes your situation, you would place an 'X' in the box closest to that statement. If you believe that both statements are accurate or somewhat accurate, then you would place an 'X' at or near the middle. See the example below.

Example:

Youth and adults have lots of fun.		X									Youth and adults do not have lots of fun.

Youth Involvement

1.	Youth take lots of initiative in working on projects.											Youth take little initiative in working on projects.
2.	Youth arrive to meetings/events on time.											Youth arrive late for meetings/events.
3.	Youth are given little or no responsibilities for specific tasks or assignments.											Youth are given major responsibilities for specific tasks or assignments.
4.	Youth rely on themselves to make key decisions.											Youth make few decisions for themselves, often relying on the decisions of adults.

Youth Involvement (continued)

5.	Youth have full access to information that is needed to make decisions.											Youth have very little access to information that is needed to make decisions.
6.	Youth never have the opportunity to discuss their concerns about group decisions.											Youth always have the opportunity to discuss their concerns about group decisions.
7.	Youth frequently share ideas that matter to them.											Youth rarely share ideas about things that matter to them.
8.	Youth do not have an equal vote in the decision-making process.											Youth have an equal vote in the decision-making process.
9.	Youth help one another in developing new skills.											Youth do not help one another in developing new skills.
10.	Youth are not be fully committed to their duties.											Youth are fully committed to their duties.
11.	Youth are very excited about their involvement with this program.											Youth have little or no interest in being involved with this program.

Adult Involvement

12.	Adults display a willingness to accept and nurture youth leadership.											Adults display a sense of wanting to control youth.

Adult Involvement (continued)

13.	Adults tend to be followers of youth leadership.											Adults display a tendency to want to guide youth.
14.	Adults always listen to the suggestions of youth.											Adults never listen to the suggestions of youth.
15.	Adults never totally take over everything when working on project activities.											Adults always take over everything when working on project activities.
16.	Adults learn new skills from one another.											Adults do not learn new skills from one another.
17.	Adults never take the ideas of youth seriously.											Adults always take the ideas of youth seriously.
18.	Adults encourage youth to come up with their own ideas.											Adults command youth to follow the directions of adults.
19.	Adults have no interest in being involved with projects.											Adults are very excited about being involved with projects.

Youth—Adult Interaction

20.	Youth and adults get along well together.											There is arguing/tension among youth and adults.
21.	Youth appear uneasy and intimidated by adults.											Youth seem comfortable working with adults.

Youth—Adult Interaction (continued)

22.	Adults seem comfortable working with youth.											Adults appear uneasy and afraid of youth.
23.	Adults do not consult with youth on project activities at all.											Adults actively and consistently consult with youth on project activities.
24.	Adults provide direction and mentoring for youth.											Adults provide little or no direction and mentoring for youth.
25.	Youth always go along with the decisions of adults.											Youth never go along with adults and will always make their own decisions.
26.	Youth and adults often agree on most decisions.											Youth and adults rarely agree with one another.
27.	Youth rely on the experiences of adults when making decisions.											Youth make decisions based on their own experiences.
28.	Youth and adults work separately on project tasks.											Youth and adults work together as partners on project tasks.
29.	Youth and adults learn a lot from one another.											Youth and adults learn little from one another.
30.	Youth and adults rarely help one another develop new skills.											Youth and adults frequently help one another develop new skills.
31.	Adults are very considerate of youth opinions.											Adults are not at all considerate of youth opinions.

Youth—Adult Interaction (continued)

32.	Youth are not at all considerate of adult opinions.											Youth are very considerate of adult opinions.
33.	Youth and adults always engage in respectful conversations.											Youth and adults never engage in respectful conversations.
34.	Youth do not trust adults to handle power responsibly.											Youth trust adults to handle power responsibly.
35.	Adults trust youth to handle power responsibly.											Adults do not trust youth to handle power responsibly.

SECTION 2: YOUTH AND ADULT EXPERIENCES

How Often

Instructions: This section is about what you have experienced **only in this program** and **only since August 2015**. Please rate how often you had each experience by placing an 'X' in the box that most closely matches how often you had the given experience.

Since attending this program in August 2015, how often did you…	Never	One or two times	A few times	About half the time	Most of the time	Almost every time	Every single time
1. Try new things in this program just to see what they were like?							
2. Do something different or new at this program?							
3. Do things in this program you couldn't do anywhere else?							

How Often (continued)

Since attending this program in August 2015, how often did you…	Never	One or two times	A few times	About half the time	Most of the time	Almost every time	Every single time
4. Do things in this program that made you think about your future?							
5. Think about the direction of your life because of this program?							
6. Do things in this program that made you think about who you could be in the future?							
7. Set a goal for yourself to achieve in this program?							
8. Find ways to achieve a goal you set in this program?							
9. Consider possible obstacles when making plans to achieve a goal you set in this program?							
10. Put all your energy into an activity in this program?							
11. Put a lot of effort into an activity in this program?							
12. Work hard in this program?							
13. Set priorities for how to use your time in this program?							
14. Choose how to spend your time in this program?							

How Often (continued)

Since attending this program in August 2015, how often did you…	Never	One or two times	A few times	About half the time	Most of the time	Almost every time	Every single time
15. Schedule when you would do tasks or activities in this program?							
16. Control your temper?							
17. Deal with fear and anxiety?							
18. Handle stress?							
19. Work together with others?							
20. Compromise in order to get things done?							
21. Share responsibility for getting things done?							
22. Use patience with other group members (calm, didn't lose your temper)							
23. Not let your emotions affect others?							
24. Not let your attitude (mood) affect others?							
25. Work with people who you didn't always like?							
26. Give feedback to others (not adult) to help them get better?							

How Often (continued)

Since attending this program in August 2015, how often did you…	Never	One or two times	A few times	About half the time	Most of the time	Almost every time	Every single time
27. Get feedback from others (not adult) to help you get better?							
28. Get feedback about your performance from an adult at Neutral Zone?							
29. Get feedback about your performance from *other* adults (like parents)?							
30. Feel the pressure of being a leader?							
31. Have others count on you?							
32. Have a chance to be in charge of a group?							

How Much

Instructions: Please indicate how much you did the following behaviors **only in this program** and **only since August 2015**.

	Since attending this program in August 2015, how much did you…	A Lot!	Quite a Bit	A Little	Not at All
33.	I got to know someone of the opposite gender (boy/girl) in a non-romantic way	1	2	3	4
34.	I noticed I had a lot in common with people different from me (people from different backgrounds)	1	2	3	4
35.	I got to know someone from a different racial group (black, white, Hispanic, other)	1	2	3	4
36.	I got to know someone from a different social class (someone richer or poorer)	1	2	3	4
37.	I got to know someone with a different sexual orientation (gay, lesbian, transsexual, other)	1	2	3	4
38.	I helped others (like volunteering, serving food, picking up trash)	1	2	3	4
39.	I changed my school or community for the better	1	2	3	4
40.	I stood up for something I believed was right	1	2	3	4
41.	I talked about morals and values (like honesty or respect)	1	2	3	4
42.	Improve your relationship with your parents/guardians	1	2	3	4
43.	Have good conversations with your parents/guardians because of this activity	1	2	3	4
44.	Get to know people in the community	1	2	3	4
45.	Feel that people in the community got to know you better	1	2	3	4
46.	Get job and career opportunities	1	2	3	4
47.	Get prepared for college	1	2	3	4
48.	Feel that your desire to stay in school went up	1	2	3	4

SECTION 3: YOUTH AND ADULT ENGAGEMENT

Instructions: Please read each statement and circle the number that is most correct about your participation in this program at Neutral Zone.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	There are always things I'm trying to work on and achieve in this program.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	I feel challenged in a good way in this program.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.	The activities in this program are boring.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.	I'm not working toward anything in this program.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.	What we do in this program is both difficult and enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	The goals people are working on in this program are not important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6

SECTION 4: YOUTH AND ADULT CHOICE

Instructions: Please read the pairs of statements, one pair at a time, and think about which statement within the pair seems more true to you. Indicate the degree to which Statement A feels true, relative to the degree that Statement B feels true, on the 5-point scale shown after each pair of statements. If Statement A feels completely true and Statement B feels completely untrue, the appropriate response would be 1. If the two statements are equally true, the appropriate response would be a 3. If only Statement B feels true, the appropriate response would be 5.

1. A. I always feel like I choose the things I do in this program.

   B. I sometimes feel that it's not really me choosing the things I do in this program.

   Only A feels true 1 2 3 4 5 **Only B feels true**

2. A. I choose to do what I have to do in this program.

   B. I do what I have to in this program, but I don't feel like it is really my choice.

   Only A feels true 1 2 3 4 5 **Only B feels true**

3. A. I do what I do in this program because it interests me.

   B. I do what I do in this program because I have to.

   Only A feels true 1 2 3 4 5 **Only B feels true**

4. A. I am free to do whatever I decide to do in this program.

   B. What I do in this program is often not what I'd choose to do.

   Only A feels true 1 2 3 4 5 **Only B feels true**

5. A. I feel pretty free to do whatever I choose to in this program.

   B. I often do things in this program that I don't choose to do.

   Only A feels true 1 2 3 4 5 **Only B feels true**

SECTION 5: ABOUT YOU

What is your age? (give number) _____

Are you? (circle one) Female Male Other/Neither/NA

Appendix B: Adult Participant Consent Form

YOUTH—ADULT PARTNERSHIPS IN AN OUT-OF-SCHOOL-TIME PROGRAM: AN EXPLORATION OF POWER, SAFETY, AND RESPECT

Adult Participant Consent Form

The Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with the Neutral Zone, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Research has shown that out-of-school-time programs can contribute positively to the psychosocial development of adolescent participants. Moreover, youth—adult partnerships, among other elements of such programs, have been identified as important contributors to the positive power of out-of-school-time programs. Scholarship in the field has described the characteristics of out-of-school-time programs and youth—adult partnerships, but a thorough examination of the perspectives and opinions of participants has yet to be undertaken. Findings from such an examination could be used to support the work of practitioners in the field and inform subsequent research of related phenomena. Thus, this study aims to fill that void. The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the beliefs and perceptions of youth and adults participating in youth—adult partnerships in an out-of-school-time program: the Neutral Zone.

PROCEDURES

This study incorporates a survey questionnaire, observations, and interviews. Upon granting your consent to participate in this study, your program participation will be observed; you may be asked to be interviewed; and you will be asked to complete a survey. The observations will be conducted during Neutral Zone programming; interviews are expected to last between 30-60 minutes each; and the survey will take approximately 10-20 minutes to complete. Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher, and you may discontinue participation at any time. All research materials will be kept in a locked filed cabinet or password-protected computer and will be destroyed one year after the study is complete.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

There are no anticipated risks for you, and you will not be intentionally deceived. The benefits for you in taking part in this study will be twofold. First, you will have the unique opportunity to contribute to science as a participant in a university research study. Second, you will be contributing to a body of knowledge that will be used by practitioners in the field to enhance people's lives, the programs in which people participate, and the communities in which people live.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your name will not be associated in any publication or presentation with the information collected about you or with the research findings from this study. Instead, the researcher will use a pseudonym rather than your name. Your identifiable information will not be shared unless (a) it is required by law or university policy, or (b) you give written permission.

You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form, and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the Neutral Zone and/or the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to sign, you cannot participate in this study.

You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose further information collected about you, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: Michael Crawford, 1122 West Campus Road, Joseph R. Pearson Hall, Lawrence, Kansas 66045. If you cancel permission to use your information, the researcher will stop collecting additional information about you. However, the researcher may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher listed at the end of this consent form.

PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385, write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045, or email irb@ku.edu.

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature, I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

_________________________________	___________________
Printed Participant Name	Date

____
Participant Signature

Michael J. Crawford, MS	David M. Hansen, PhD
Principal Investigator	Faculty Supervisor
Educational Psychology	Educational Psychology
1122 West Campus Road	1122 West Campus Road
Joseph R. Pearson Hall	Joseph R. Pearson Hall
University of Kansas	University of Kansas
Lawrence, KS 66045	Lawrence, KS 66045
(248) 789-1451	(785) 864-1874
michaeljc@ku.edu	dhansen1@ku.edu

Appendix C: Parent/Guardian Decline Adolescent's Participation Form

YOUTH—ADULT PARTNERSHIPS IN AN OUT-OF-SCHOOL-TIME PROGRAM: AN EXPLORATION OF POWER, SAFETY, AND RESPECT

Parent/Guardian Decline Adolescent's Participation Form

The Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish for your adolescent to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to allow your adolescent to participate, you are free to withdraw him/her at any time. If you do withdraw him/her from this study, it will not affect his/her/your relationship with the Neutral Zone, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

- Out-of-school-time programs can contribute to positive adolescent development.
- Youth—adult partnerships can be powerful relationships for youth and adults.
- Research has yet to fully explore youth—adult partnerships in terms of youth and adult perspectives and experiences.
- This study aims to better understand youth and adult beliefs and perceptions in youth—adult partnerships in an out-of-school-time program.

PROCEDURES, RISKS/BENEFITS, AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- This study will use a survey questionnaire, observations, and interviews. The survey will take approximately 10-20 minutes to complete; the observations will be conducted during Neutral Zone programming; and interviews are expected to last between 30-60 minutes each.
- Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher.
- All research materials — including observation notes and interview transcripts — will be kept in a locked cabinet or a password-protected computer.
- In order for your adolescent to participate, you must consent. S/he may stop participating at any time.
- There are no anticipated risks for your adolescent.
- There are at least two benefits for your adolescent. One, s/he will have the unique opportunity to contribute to science as a participant in a university research study. Two, s/he will be contributing to a body of knowledge that will help people in the field improve programming for youth and communities.
- Your adolescent's name will not be associated with this study in any way. A pseudonym will be used instead of his/her name.

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT TO ADOLESCENT'S PARTICIPATION

You may withdraw your adolescent from participating in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose further information collected about your adolescent, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: Michael Crawford, 1122 West Campus Road, Joseph R. Pearson Hall, Lawrence, Kansas 66045. If you cancel permission to use your adolescent's information, the researcher will stop collecting additional information about your adolescent. However, the researcher may use and disclose information that was gathered before he received your cancellation, as described above. Permission granted on this date will remain in effect for up to three years after the study is complete. Your adolescent's identifiable information will not be shared unless (a) it is required by law or university policy, or (b) you give written permission.

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher listed at the end of this consent form.

I have read this Parent/Guardian Decline Adolescent's Participation Form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my adolescent's rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385, write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045, or email irb@ku.edu.

By my signature, I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form. By my signature, I decline to allow my adolescent to take part in this study as a research participant.

_________________________________ ______________________
Printed Adolescent Name Date

____
Printed Parent/Guardian Name

____
Parent/Guardian Signature

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Appendix D: Youth Participation Assent Form

YOUTH—ADULT PARTNERSHIPS IN AN OUT-OF-SCHOOL-TIME PROGRAM: AN EXPLORATION OF POWER, SAFETY, AND RESPECT

Youth Participant Assent Form

The Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to print your name on this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with the Neutral Zone, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

- Out-of-school-time programs can contribute to positive adolescent development.
- Youth—adult partnerships can be powerful relationships for youth and adults.
- Research has yet to fully explore youth—adult partnerships in terms of youth and adult perspectives and experiences.
- This study aims to better understand youth and adult beliefs and perceptions in youth—adult partnerships in an out-of-school-time program.

PROCEDURES, RISKS/BENEFITS, AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- This study will use a survey questionnaire, observations, and interviews.
- All research materials — including observation notes and interview transcripts — will be kept in a locked cabinet or a password-protected computer.
- Your parents/guardians must say it is okay for you to be in the study. After they decide, you get to choose. You can stop participating at any time.
- There are no anticipated risks for you.
- There are at least two benefits for you. One, you will have the unique opportunity to contribute to science as a participant in a university research study. Two, you will be contributing to a body of knowledge that will help people in the field improve programming for youth and communities.
- Your name will not be associated with this study in any way. A pseudonym will be used instead of your name.

PARTICIPANT ASSENT

You are not required to print your name on this Assent form, and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the Neutral Zone and/or the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to print your name, you cannot participate in this study.

You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose further information collected about you, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: Michael Crawford, 1122 West Campus Road, Joseph R. Pearson Hall, Lawrence, Kansas 66045. If you cancel permission to use your information, the researcher will stop collecting additional information about you. However, the researcher may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher listed at the end of this consent form.

I have read this Assent form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385, write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045, or email irb@ku.edu.

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By printing my name below, I affirm that I have received a copy of this Assent form.

_____________________________________ ______________________

Printed Participant Name Date

Michael J. Crawford, MS
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