It takes a community:

NINE PRINCIPLES OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE YOUTH SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

All youth need a caring adult in their lives – someone who is not their parent, who values them for who they are, who helps them navigate life's challenges, and who flames the "spark" of contribution that all youth desire to share with the world to make it a better place. These caring adults can change the life of youth and alter the trajectory of their lives from merely getting by to thriving.

For youth in disadvantaged communities access to these adults is harder to come by. Moreover, these youth are more at risk for problem behaviors and sub-optimal outcomes due to a paucity of safe places and environments where relationships with caring adults can grow and flourish. In addition, the risk factors for youth in disadvantaged communities necessitate a special kind of non-parental, caring adult: one who is aware of their special needs, can help mitigate the enormous obstacles they face, and can break through youths' protective armor which make relationships with them challenging. Like access to universal day care, youth of all communities – especially disadvantaged communities – should have safe places outside of home and school where they can cultivate meaningful relationships with caring adults.

There are safe places where youth can go, where they can find adults that care – places where they can belong and contribute, places where they are honored and heard. These are the countless organizations in cities and across the country that intentionally provide youth with access to caring adults, and more, whose very mission is to serve youth by offering guidance and care. These programs come in many forms: a youth community center, a place teaching a specific skill, an organization dedicated to an ethnic community, a gender specific program, or one that offers life-skills classes in schools. They offer disadvantaged youth more than just caring adults – they offer a place to belong, a community of shared values to emulate, opportunities to expand their world and to give back to their communities. They also provide training and support for the caring adults that will be the ones to make the difference – who are the "change makers" in the lives of disadvantaged youth.

The truth is that it takes more than a mentor – a single caring adult – to help youth in disadvantaged communities to reach their full potential. It takes a community – an intentional community - committed to the welfare of the youth it serves. This report highlights eight such places – communities of values with a commitment to youth – that provide safe and welcome environments where relationships with caring adults can flourish and where youth can thrive. These eight programs are 2015-2016 Thrive Foundation for Youth grantees that received general operating grants to support their work with youth. This report evaluates them according to nine principles shared by these organizations that makes them highly effective in providing for the needs of disadvantaged youth and leading them to a purposeful future.

METHOD – PRINCIPLE FOCUSED EVALUATION

In 2014, the Thrive Foundation, acting on its new mission to "guide disadvantaged youth to reach their full potential by strengthening the presence and impact of caring adults in their lives," searched across the nation for organizations providing services to disadvantaged youth nationwide with a caring adult at the center of their program delivery model and found eight exemplary organizations (see Appendix A for a profile of each).

Thrive then embarked on an evaluation of these organizations to see what they were doing with youth – especially in regard to the caring adults in the youth lives – that made them so effective. Using a method called "principle-focused evaluation," developed by Michael Quinn Patton (2015), we discerned nine principles that guided their work. We then interviewed staff and youth at these organizations, and coded those interviews, to see if the interviewees articulated the nine principles in their interaction with the organization.

Using a "grounded theory" approach that allows for themes and principles to emerge from these organizations' documentation, we examined mission statements, public statements from websites, and grant review documents submitted to Thrive, to discover the processes and practices in the nine principles (see below). This "grounded theory" process was informed by knowledge of the positive youth development field from which evidenced-based best practices and principles have been established (for example, that adolescence is a time of identity development, and having a purpose in life affords more optimal outcomes). The nine principles were tested with a focus group of the organizations' CEO's and program leads in which they affirmed that these principles were an adequate summation of their youth development approach.

We then conducted interviews with one exemplar youth from each of the eight organizations who had fairly extensive contact with the organization and had done well. For a point of comparison, we also interviewed a youth

who was new to the organization and therefore had less contact. The interviews were general in nature, asking the youth about their day-to-day experience with the organizations and the caring adults with whom they had contact (see Appendix B for the interview protocol, and other methodological considerations). To provide context for the experience of the youth, we also interviewed a caring adult from the organization who was in relationship with the youth. The interviews were then coded according to the nine principles to see if the youth spoke about their experience in those terms.

The evaluation had two purposes:

1) To evaluate the fidelity between how the organizations talked about their approach with youth, and the actual experience of the youth with the organization.

2) To better understand the dynamics of the caring adult/youth relationship within the context of an organization committed to serving youth and to examine what specific behaviors and interactions with caring adults lead to helping youth to thrive.

The evaluation fulfilled those purposes. A careful analysis of the transcripts of the youth proved the existence of all nine principles in each of the organizations and demonstrated the fidelity between how the organizations talked about their approach with youth and the actual experience of the youth. In addition, from the transcripts of both youth and staff interviews we garnered an extensive understanding of what makes these organizations successful by affording a detailed look at the caring adult/youth relationship within the context of a values-driven organization.

The bulk of the report is devoted to qualitative results of the principle-focused evaluation. In what follows we illustrate each of the nine principles by showing how they are collectively practiced by the organizations. Then we ground each of the nine principles in the psychology of positive youth development through a review of the literature demonstrating the scientific basis for each principle.

We then give examples of the principles in the lived experience of the youth of these organizations as they articulate them in their own words. The identity of each youth is masked by an alias of his or her own choosing and the organizations they belong to are masked. We also include quotes from interviews of the caring adults who work with these youth, revealing some of the best practices of these organizations. Appendix B lays out the methodology of the qualitative analysis in more detail, including the interview protocol.

To confirm the findings of the principle-focused evaluation we employed an additional method, using Latent Semantic Analysis, a computational technique that calculates semantic similarity between texts. This quantitative analysis provided corroborative evidence that these nine principles are practiced by all eight organizations. In addition, no significant differences were found between the organizations in terms of the presence of the principles. Appendix C gives the methods and results of the Latent Semantic Analysis and includes a mixed method comparison between organizations and between types of youth (experienced vs. new to the program).

THE NINE PRINCIPLES

Organizing Perspective

The principles begin with the perspective that *relationships of trust, mutuality, and support with caring adults, embedded in communities of learning and practice,* help disadvantaged youth reach their full potential.

The nine principles

1) Create supportive, values-driven communities to support disadvantaged youth.

2) Provide trusted, committed, caring adults with whom youth can establish relationships.

3) Help youth develop their identity and sense of agency.

4) Orient youth to a purposeful future.

5) Expand youth's world through exposure to new experiences and connecting them to resources.

6) Develop academic and critical thinking abilities.

7) Teach life-skills and healthy habits.

8) Advance youths' social, emotional, and relationship skills.

9) Empower youth to engage in the betterment of their communities and the world.

Statement of the Nine Principles

We create supportive, values-driven communities in which youth and adults can engage in trusting, committed, caring relationships. These relationships, embedded in community:

• help youth develop identity and agency and orient them to a purposeful future.

• expand resources for youth.

• provide opportunities to learn and practice:

– academic and critical thinking skills

– life-skills and healthy habits, and

– social emotional skills.

• Empower youth to engage in the betterment of their communities and the world.

CREATE VALUES-DRIVEN COMMUNITIES TO SUPPORT DISADVANTAGED YOUTH

The practice

These organizations provide a safe place for youth and adults to interact, for deep, caring relationships between youth and adults to occur, and for youth to develop their interests, talents, and identity. Sometimes they are place-based – a community center, a house, a building – where youth naturally gather. Sometimes they are skill-based, providing training in activities that interest youth. Sometimes they are school-based, providing a class for learning life-skills or academic enrichment. Whatever the "hook" that draws youth to these places, what youth find are "hugs" – adults who care about them and their future, provide support to reach their goals, give them new experiences to broaden their horizons. They are places of "belonging" where youth and adults together form a community marked by mutual commitments and values. These values are clearly articulated and shared by the members of the community – values such as respect for others, listening to others, a commitment to education, and helping others. These are places of positivity and fun, where youth can engage in multiple relationships of mutual respect between youth and adults, and youth and youth. Youth voice is honored and cultivated. Often described as a "family" by both youth and adults, these organizations provide a support system for youth both in the form of material support (food, money, scholarships) and emotional support and guidance.

Why this matters

Throughout the literature, values driven communities and programs have been described as effective in promoting positive youth development among adolescents. Studies show that values driven programs produce more positive results for youth than less organized afterschool programs and are successful in fostering the social and personal development of youth[17]. A meta-analytic review of effective afterschool programs described four values that served as moderators for the success of the program and made them more successful. They must be "sequenced, active, focused, and explicit" [17]. Furthermore, large-scale program evaluation results suggest that shared characteristics or values are present among the most successful after-school programs for youth. This research suggests that programs with the most success in positive youth development were committed to providing opportunities for enrichment, skills enhancement, intentional relationship building, leadership development, and professional development[6]. These value driven programs were found to be more successful in meeting their goals, and more efficient in particular areas of development for the youth.

The research supports the importance of values driven programs because they impact youth development socially, relationally, and personally. Mentorship programs have been found to be more effective in fostering positive youth development when those mentorship relationships were guided by value expectations that heightened the quality of those relationships. Mentorship relationships guided by expectations of time and care promoted stronger relationship bonds with the youth, and had significant influences on the positive development of youth[15]. Personal development, empathy development, and the development of a sense of community are results of values driven afterschool programs as well. The values of community involvement, self-empowerment, and togetherness

significantly affected youth's perceived future community involvement as well as increased their empathy[32]. Hearing about and participating in the values of a program can give youth an experience of being empowered, and feeling connected to others, and provide an important framework for positive youth development.[14] Thus, research supports the idea that values driven programs are effective in promoting positive youth development, identity development, personal development, and social development.

The principle in the lived experience of the youth

INTERVIEWER: *What would you call [the organization] as a place and a place that you are a part of?*

PETER: *Family.*

INTERVIEWER: *Hmm, and was does that mean? That word family to you.*

PETER: *Because [the organization] is kind of like a close knit group, like they are open [to] others, they are open to everybody, it is a very accepting thing, but it is like family; once you are in, you are in. Like you can leave [the organization] and you can leave for ten years and you can leave for twenty years or something and you are still considered [part of the organization] family. …. you pretty much trust each other and no matter what there are always those people like…. Here [at the organization] that will be there for you. And something else that is really cool about them is, no matter who you are and no matter what walk of life you come from, no matter what, they always have somebody who has a story kind of like yours. Like has somebody who can help you out…. it makes me happy to hear their stories.*

— **PETER, AGE 18**

I lived in [all over the U.S] then I came back here, but throughout all my movements and environmental changes, I feel like (I) always missed an [organization like this] … the sense of a place where people come from different schools and different homes and different situations and life stories, how we all can come in this little building and all like love on each other, and not feel like–just leave all your worries at home. I feel like when you walk, when you first walk through the doors, especially in the summertime, and you get that "whoosh" of cold air…. It is like the air is like washing away all of the negativity and all of the anxiety that you may have, and

you come in and you are instantly greeted by [the receptionist's] beautiful smile and the coordinators at the front and they love on you and it just makes you feel like–you know? Because of [the organization] I had a better day, like if it was not for them, I feel like personally a lot of kids would not have gone as far as they would have gone, and would not have pushed to better themselves, educationally and self without [the organization's] help.

— **PERLIA, AGE 18**

I feel like it is almost like I am more uplifted. I have more fun in [the organization]. I have fun here, and I feel like that is also part of the goal for [the organization] is not only awareness, but to also have fun while being aware. And I feel the difference is that there are a lot more resources and connections to be made when you are in [the organization]. And that you can have access to.

— **AMY, AGE 16**

The principle as practiced by the caring adults

There is all of this community stuff that is happening around the food and then for the teens, usually when the food is out, they are doing a lot of talking. So it is an opportunity to share. They are not doing any of the preparing stuff; the staff is doing all of that, so the teens get to talk about their day–what is going right, what is going wrong, what they are up to, what they are looking forward to. By the time the food is done, then they can get into what is up for the day, so it is interesting, but yeah. Food always ends up being at the center of the activities here and even staff when we get together; food is there.

— **CARING ADULT TO AMY**

I would say in one word is family. Like this is a family atmosphere. Like I consider these guys my family …, the relationships I have built within the building, with the adults in the building will last the rest of my life. You know, and I think the kids see that, and I think it is compelling to the kids that they are able to see that and I think that is also part of the trust factor. They see that I am trusted by my co-workers, that I trust my co-workers, and so when it, let us say I am not available- they can easily go to one of my co-workers and so it is just a big family, that we are all in this together. That really helps the overall success of the [organization] .

— **CARING ADULT TO KARES**

One thing I got to mention about with [the organization] too, I think the value system, a lot of young men do not know what a value system is. So if you have a value system, you tend to make better choices. Without a value system, I do not think you will make the same decision. So once they learn about integrity, accountability and self-determination, [the values of the organization] I think their decision making process will work better for them.

— CARING ADULT TO T-MAC

[Things] like youth empowerment, and education in a safe space [are important] components of what we do. We try to make it a very comfortable and empowering environment with none of the outside world threats a lot of young people deal with in all different facets of their lives; their identity, their neighborhood,

their family, their school, their whatever. So that safe space is a core part of everything we focus very hard to make sure it is here.

— CARING ADULT TO WOP

I have a really awesome team. The [staff of the program] is, we just are all there for the same reason... And if they are not there, we can close the door and me and one of my coworkers can just, "Ugh, this is happening. What do I do?" And kind of decompress with each other. There is always someone there for me to sort of say, "Okay, you get this. You got this too. What do I need to do?" So I think having that support system that we provide is awesome and keeps, I think that is why a lot of us stay there for so long. There is not a lot of turnover in our [program].

— CARING ADULT TO ZARA

PRINCIPLE 2

PROVIDE TRUSTED, COMMITTED, CARING ADULTS WITH WHOM YOUTH CAN ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS

The practice

The relationships between the caring adults and youth of these communities are characterized by a mutuality–a give and take between youth and adult. Youth and adult enjoy each other. They have fun together. There is mutual respect, youth feel understood and valued by the adults, and the youth, in turn, respect and value the adults. A key to this respect is the trust the youth place in the adult–a trust is established though a long-term commitment by the adult to the youth's well-being. These adults do "whatever it takes" to help the youth by providing concrete help, emotional support, specific guidance and advocacy, and are willing to respond to the youth's needs 24/7. The youth feel safe with these adults and open up to them because they feel support without judgment. Nevertheless, these

adults have high expectations for the youth and hold them accountable for their behavior and goals. These adults are described by such labels as mentor, teacher, case manager, role model, and friend, but most often described in more intimate, familial terms like a second mother or father, or like an older sister or brother.

Why this matters

The research is clear about the positive effects of the presence of a non-parental, caring adult–a mentor–in the lives of youth. Relationships with consistent, caring, non-parental adults provide youth with a secondary attachment figure–a person of constant care and support –which allow youth to increase in both social and cognitive capacities[43].

This relationship of trust and consistency allows improvements in other relationships (home and school) and contributes to overall feelings of self-worth, perceived scholastic competence, better grades, helps youth orient to a positive future, and to reach desired goals[20,43,45]. Youth in relationships with mentors and other caring adults show increased psychological well-being as measured in self-esteem and life satisfaction, and a decrease in adverse behaviors such as gang membership, risk-taking behavior, pregnancy and physical fights. Having a mentor results in positive outcomes in high school completion rates, going to college or other post-secondary schooling, and increased hours per week working[20,45]. Relationships with mentors and other caring adults also help youth with motivation and goal setting, moving them toward a positive future[45]. In addition youth who are involved in mentor relationships show higher pro-social values and purpose[29].

In nearly all mentoring settings, the longer the relationship lasts, the greater the positive effects for youth[43]. Programs that use mentoring to target at-risk populations provide youth motivation for pro-social behavior and social responsibility, help youth manage the numerous social and relational challenges in their lives, and provide emotional support and advocacy for the youth. This motivation helps youth believe their lives matter—giving them a sense of making a difference in the world—by promoting a positive identity in such areas as self-efficacy and confidence[45,48]. Programs that support the relationship between the caring adult and youth produce stronger positive effects when they provide training for mentors, offer structured activities for mentors and youth, expect frequent contact with mentees, and monitor program implementation[43].

The principle in the lived experience of the youth

"I have a relationship with [my mentor] and our relationship is like is like best friends/mother daughter. We have that respect to where it is like I know the boundaries with [my mentor] and she knows the boundaries with me, and it is like it is not even a line that is going to get crossed because we are so here with each other, we are so eye to eye to where it is just like I know I would never disrespect [my mentor], and she would never do something

to disrespect me. ... And mother-wise she always knows what to say and how to make you feel better when you are down.
— **PERLIA, AGE 18**

I was mad. I was like, everything is bad right now. ... So I was like, "Okay, I am just going to leave." And I went to my grandma's house. I did not have a phone at the time, so no one was able to contact me. They thought I left and killed myself or something. They were worried. When [my mentor] talked to me it kind of made me feel better..... She called me at like 10PM.... she did not have to do that... She has her own daughter and her own family. She did not have to waste her time, well, not waste her time, but she did not have to spend all night trying to find me and trying to see if I am okay and talk to me about it and tell me we will talk about it in session with my chapter members... the fact that she took the responsibility and to see if I was okay, it showed me that, yeah, she is more than just a chapter leader, she is like a second mom.
— **DENISE, AGE 17**

"I would consider him as like another father to me. Yeah, because he helps me out when I need him and it is like, he is keeping me out of trouble....
INTERVIEWER: *So what does it mean to you that he is your second father? What does that term mean to you?*
T-MAC: *To me, it is like, once I first came, I always thought it was just like, 'Man, I do not think I can be doing good in the classes that I am in now.' And I will just fall off and just forget everything, but then again, once I stepped in here [the program], he started talking to me about what can happen, what is going to happen and I have just been thinking about everything and it just started changing my life around."*
— **T-MAC, AGE 18**

"The vast majority, maybe 98 percent of the seniors, or the people in this organization, graduate high school. [My mentors] would be like, "What do you mean you are not graduating?" ... If I ever come up to them and tell them that I am not graduating I cannot even tell them that. I probably would not make it out of the [building] and you know I cannot run; I just had surgery. There is no, "not graduating."
— **DENISE, AGE 18**

The principle as practiced by the caring adult

I think [it makes a difference to] her knowing that I am there for her no matter what she is going through was just crucial for her. It is like I am not going to judge you. I am here to support you. I am here to be there for you. I am your friend and genuinely I care about you and making sure that I express that I care about you was really what helped pull her through it ... just all of us reaching out to her and even people when they would see her when she would come in. Just going and giving her a hug because we all know that this is what she is going through. Just having that, that is where the community aspect would come in. She was like, "All of these people love and care about me. I just have to learn to love and care about myself" ...

— CARING ADULT TO KAYA

I could go and say [to the youth], "hey, what is going on with that?" Or "I do not think that that is a good idea." And if she does not take my advice, our relationship is good enough where she still would come around me, even if she did not take my advice, and I am not going to tell her, "I told you so." But when it happens she usually comes to me, ".... you told me! You told me!" And I will be like, "Well, I am not going to put it in your face that I told you, but I did kind of tell you." So, I think that is cool.

— CARING ADULT TO PERLIA

For instance, with all of my teens, especially now that I have a good cell phone, I will just randomly text them. Whether it is during the weekday, or weekend and just say, "Hey what is up, what are you up to? This is what I am doing, what are you doing?" Just to check in with them, so when they feel like, "I do not know if I should call [my mentor]," they know because I call them for random stuff and so they will know that on the other end, "Oh yeah, I can call her for that, or I can text her about this thing."

— CARING ADULT TO AMY

And that is the way we approach our kids. Like we want to dig into your life. We want to be a part of it. We want to know about you and how can we come along side you to make better choices and to make that change in your life and then in your family and then in your community.

— CARING ADULT TO HEIDI

In 2013 I was particularly hit hard because a young person that I was working very closely with for about eight months lost his life to gun violence. And that was the very first time that I experienced that. So it was very traumatic. And dealing with trauma and grieving was a really difficult experience, which I sought a lot of support here, and which [the organization] provided. But that ultimately did sort of put my work into perspective.

INTERVIEWER: *Sure. And what keeps you coming back then knowing, first of all, sort of facing that. What made you say, "I am going to hang in there."*

CARING ADULT: *It is the young people. Knowing that this work is not going to be sort of, the rewards that we reap, that I reap, are not going to be overnight, but I like to think of it as dropping a pebble in a pond and creating some ripple effects, to somewhere down the line my work with them has had some kind of impact that will affect them later on down the line. And also just being a consistent adult in these young peoples' life.*

— CARING ADULT TO MICHAEL

Training of caring adults

It was pretty extensive, there is sort of [the organization] way we do things, we have some standards that we hold ourselves to, that is kind of our mission statement if you will, they take you through a pretty intense standards class which teaches you the mission statement. There are also a lot of trainings on relationship building and different phases of the relationship. We talk about the three different phases of the relationships that we move in and out of with kids, you know, being a mentor, teacher, or a parent, the roles we use, and you are going to be moving in and out of each of those roles at any given time, with any given kid, we talked a lot about that. I also had biweekly one-on-one meetings with a training supervisor... so I would come sit with him for an hour, we would meet at lunch or whatever and just talk about how things were going, any challenges I was having. In addition to lots of role playing, they would put us in rooms and give us scenarios where maybe one person would be a kid, or a parent and a coordinator, and we would just have conversations, because this was something that you might have happen- just for practice. But ultimately at the end of the day [the organization] does a really good job of hiring the right people that are going to be able to handle that situation in the first place.

— CARING ADULT TO KARES

HELP YOUTH DEVELOP THEIR IDENTITY AND SENSE OF AGENCY

The practice

These organizations guide the youth they serve in the important adolescent process of identity formation by helping them search for their place in the world, what their unique contribution will be, where they belong in the social structures around them, and what their passions and interests are. They provide opportunities for youth to discover their talents, express their creativity, explore their strengths, come to terms with their limitations, and work toward self-improvement. They learn what it means to be a man, or a woman, and about their cultural identity and history, and how that fits into their self-concept. They are given opportunities to act on their convictions, to express their thoughts, and to develop a sense of agency – that they can make a difference in the world. Finally, by absorbing the values of the community that surrounds them, and through the modeling and direct teaching of adults with whom they are in relationship, they learn what is a person of good character and are encouraged to form their own sense of what it means to be a good person and to act according to those convictions.

Why this matters

Research indicates that resolving questions of identity during adolescence has important implications for well-being and behavior[13,23,44]. Erik Erikson (1968) notably described identity formation as the core developmental task of adolescence[21]. Adolescents use various strategies to resolve or avoid these questions of identity, and exploration is the chief way identity is most often formed in western contexts[44]. There are also many possible domains of identity that adolescents explore, including geographic or place identity, environmental identity and connection to nature, or spiritual identity[28], in addition to more traditional identity domains such as career choice, religious beliefs, and relationship preferences[44]. Identity achievement is characterized by both exploration followed by high commitment[35].

Personal identity exploration is strongly associated with both adaptive and maladaptive functioning depending on the style[44]. There appear to be three identity styles related to positive youth development (PYD) in adolescents: information-oriented, normative, and diffuse-avoidant styles[5]. Adolescents with information oriented and normative styles report high levels of optimism, self-esteem, and perception of psychological well-being. Adolescents with an information-oriented style reported high levels of the 5 C's of PYD (competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring) and civic engagement; adolescents with a normative style reported moderate to high scores on the 5 C's of PYD but low rates of civic engagement; and diffuse-avoidant respondents scored low both on the 5 C's and on civic engagement[13].

Research shows that adolescent and emerging adult involvement in communities and religious organizations can facilitate identity formation[23,28,42]. Adolescents and emerging adults involved more in structured, normed communities (such as religious or community involvement) tend to experience greater maturity than those who are less involved. Identity and community involvement have bidirectional effects – that is - involvement not only fosters identity formation, but identity formation then, in turn, predicts later involvement[23].

Ethnic identity is another important domain for adolescents, particularly in an increasingly multicultural society, as it reflects the individuals' sense of belonging and commitment to a social group. The intra-personal process of ethnic identity development can serve as both a protective and promotive factor for youth of color: the associated sense of self-worth, connectedness, and belonging can potentially buffer adolescents against stress, health risk behaviors, and other negative outcomes[28,42,44,51]. Among U.S. and East African youth and emerging adults, ethnic identity and self-efficacy are related to positive intercultural attitudes and may prompt civic engagement[28]. Ethnic identity in adolescence increases over time and is significantly related to indicators of competence and well-being, including factors such as social connectedness, social competence (social acceptance and close friendships), coping, and self-worth[42]. Additionally, as young persons transition out of high school, youth with higher levels of ethnic identity scored higher on measures of social connectedness, coping, indicators of social competence, and self-worth, suggesting that when youth spend time with family and peers that share a particular ethnic group this reinforces a youth's sense of identity and therefore belonging to a particular community[42]. Similarly, ethnic identity is consistently related to positive youth development in 14 and 15-year-old Black and Latino male youth; PYD is positively related to concurrent involvement in pro-social activities, negatively related to criminal and externalizing behaviors, and related to lower levels of internalizing symptoms due to discrimination[51]. Since ethnic identity may minimize the likelihood of negative mental health symptoms among ethnic minority male teens, integration of culturally relevant factors with positive youth development is crucial.

The principle in the lived experience of the youth

INTERVIEWER: *What do you personally get out of it? What resonates and what really helps you in your participation?*

DELINA: *It helps me feel stronger like I can do this. My first year in this program, I was really shy and I would step back a lot and then around my second year, the girls actually starting seeing me as a leader and I started leading a lot of things without realizing it.*

Slowly, I started getting out of my shell and nowadays I am the one that is always raising my hand in class. It really gave me that extra confidence I needed to actually try and succeed in life.
— **DELINA, AGE 17**

I have tried to change my whole personality, especially this year in trying to make myself a better person. This year, they tried to be mean to me and I shut it down really quick. I was like, "I did not do anything to you. There was no need for it." I think I have gotten into their heads. Like, "Wow, she is a really cool person, maybe I should talk to her." In a nice way. So I felt like [the organization] has also helped me with that kind of stuff.
— **IYANNA, AGE 13**

[The program] helps you- I want to give the definition; it guides young people to become women/men, brother/sisters and leaders and I think it is important. Not everybody learns how to be a woman. It is a process and to be assisted by two people who you think are great role models helps you in that process. I feel like I am more mature than many girls in my school and leadership. I feel like you have to know if you are destined to be a leader or not and some people are discouraged because, "Oh, I am a minority in this country. Who am I to lead anyone?" This program reminds you. They teach you about your history and it is like, you know you can be a leader and sister.... That is why I think it is important because people need to have that support and not everybody has that support and that is why not everyone is successful fully in life.
— **DENISE, AGE 18**

The principle as practiced by the caring adult

We bring a lot of articles, we bring a lot movies and things that talk about self-hatred, things that talk about skin color, things that talk about being an African American, being a girl of color. ... And having to defy what you hear out in the street, where people who you walk by think that that is okay... to call a girl [the "b" word]. Well, we say otherwise. How do I get Denise to think differently? How do I really see how to really break it down and you have to break it down and you have to be as honest as possible ... and sharing of your personal life story history. [Her other mentor] and I do that really, really well with our young girls; we keep it real...
— **CARING ADULT TO DENISE**

[One] of the things that he is struggling with is a sense of belonging. Who am I? What is my self-worth? Who do I got that I can count on? The other thing is insecurity as a result of struggling with his identity, self-identity. There are self-esteem issues as a result of not having a place to live, having to wear multiple clothing items over and over again. ... There is a sense of hopelessness that he has at times that things will never change and I am not going to get to go to college and I am not going to get to be somebody. And that is huge! That to me is even more important at times than making sure that he turns in his homework on time. A lot of our conversations involve me highlighting the good things that he is doing. ..., but for me with him, I want to make sure that he knows that, like I said, I am not going to go anywhere. That I will be here and there to ride out the waves and if we have to swim together and peddle and swim however sort of metaphor you want to use; we will get that together. To make sure that he understands that despite all of the challenges that he is facing, he does have a place of belonging here in the .... Community.

— CARING ADULT TO JORDAN

I like to start our students first identifying who they are, knowing their own identity. Because I feel that the community that we are involved in is broken. And kids are, they believe what they are told. So if somebody is telling them something negative, that is who they think they are. So I like to work with them first, and help them figure out kind of what their goals are. "Who am I?" "Who is Heidi?" And then what I like to do after that is I like to help them figure out, "ok, well what can I do for my family now? How can I take what I am learning here and apply in my personal life with my family and then into my school and then into my community?" So it is kind of like those steps I like to take with them.

— CARING ADULT TO HEIDI
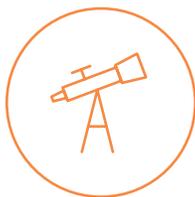
PRINCIPLE 4

ORIENT YOUTH TOWARD A PURPOSEFUL FUTURE

The practice

These organizations set the sights of the youth whom they serve on a purposeful future, where they will be able to give back to their community and society through the achievement of their dreams and goals. Like a tether, they tie the youth's dreamed-of future to their present actions, and use that to draw them forward through the inevitable challenges and impediments to achieving that future. In this way they teach the youth how to set and achieve goals, how to plan and execute a path toward a future, how to adjust and overcome obstacles that threaten the realization of the plan. The programs give the youth specific training in skills and aptitudes they might need to achieve their dreams and goals. They give the youth vocational experiences such as internships and job training. They hold post-secondary education as an expected and reachable attainment, and help youth with the means necessary to get there. The caring adults in these organizations help the youth see that future as possible.

Why this matters

Throughout the literature, research supports the principle that youth who are oriented towards a positive future have higher chances of experiencing thriving within their lives. This principle of a purposeful future has been found to develop in youth over time, crucial to identity development, and a valuable protective factor. For example, a study of

the development of noble purposes in youth over time suggests that youth develop noble purposes for their lives during a process of "initiating, sustaining and escalating commitment" to their purposes (p. 26)[9]. This study demonstrated that there is a significant link in purpose development, social support, mentor influence, and identity development within youth. Results of a study that followed an adolescent group for five years reported that orientation towards a purposeful future and using their skills for that purpose was what created passion in the lives of these youth[9].

The literature suggests that an orientation towards a purposeful future is important for youth identity development, but it is also an orientation that youth desire for themselves. In one study, thirty-six percent of adolescents said that they would like to have a career that helps people but is also congruent with their personal talents[34]. These results suggested that orientation towards a purposeful future is a principle that is developed over time[9]. Moreover, it is clear that intentional activities and social discussions are crucial in developing an orientation towards a purposeful future. In a study on intentional activity involvement, adolescent activities were found to be a mediating factor for adolescent future aspirations on future educational attainment. Adolescent aspirations and expectations for their future lives and identities predicted adult educational attainment up to eight years later[4].

Orientation towards a purposeful future is a formative and inspiring factor in youths' lives, and the research continues to support this principle by suggesting that a purposeful future can also act as a protective factor in the lives of at-risk youth. In multiple countries, having a purpose to one's life mitigated the effects of poverty on antisocial behaviors for youth who were experiencing poverty. Purpose was observed as a resiliency factor because youth affected by poverty, who also had developed a sense of purpose, partook in less antisocial behaviors such as bullying, disobedience, and substance use[34]. A similar longitudinal study in New Zealand found that a future orientation leads to better overall health and well being of youth. The findings of this study demonstrated that youth who have

a future orientation reported a significant decrease in maladaptive coping behaviors, such as sleep loss, self-harm activities, and substance abuse. Furthermore, youth with orientations towards their futures reported more positive well-being and increased use of adaptive coping skills[11]. Throughout the research, orientation towards a purposeful future is a principle that is important for youths to develop because it involved in identity formation, resiliency, and the overall health and well-being of youth today.

The principle in the lived experience of the youth

"What does [the organization] or my mentor help me do to prepare for being an adult? ... Lots of things. I learned from [my mentor], how to figure out how I am going to pay for everything that I need to pay for, but also be able to live instead of just survive. You can live, not just survive. She talked to me about how important it is that I stay focused. And if I stay focused I can do what I want to do. ... Like on my goal, which I have on my wall. I painted it on my wall. My mom got mad. It is, "You will be a doctor..." so I see it every day that I wake up and every day before I go to sleep. Every time I walk into a room, it is just right there."
— KAYA, AGE 17

"... you said how does [my mentor] coach me and all of that stuff? My dream is to go to the NBA, and the only way you can go to the NBA is if you get things done and you cannot go to the NBA without education. That is what motivates me to do my homework."
— JORDAN, AGE 11

INTERVIEWER: *I am curious, what if you do not get in the NBA, or maybe you decide at some point, 'Well, NBA just is not for me. ... You still have a visionary goal, but you know, it is another goal, it is a different goal .. if that happened, what would you think?*
T-MAC: *Well, if that happened I can always feel free to move on to my next one. Why stay stuck on something if I know I cannot, might not make it, but if I know I cannot and I keep getting shot down, I will move on to my next one. And once that one starts, I will start a new life all from there.*
INTERVIEWER: *Yeah, and have you learned anything from [the organization] that helps you in that process that you just described?*
T-MAC: *Staying focused. Staying focused.*
— T-MAC, AGE 18

INTERVIEWER: *So what are some of the things that the adults here tell you are important?*

WOP: *College. They cannot emphasize that enough. They always emphasize that, like even if you are not eligible for a four year, they still let you know that you can go to a community college and still have a chance. They emphasize that to the t. Like there is no, if you tell them you are not going to college, nope, they are going to make you go to college and they are going to want you to take college as an option seriously.*

— WOP, AGE 17

INTERVIEWER: *So you used the word hope, can you tell me more what that means? How does [the organization] give you hope?*

PERLIA: *They give me hope because, they give me hope to not be a statistic, you know? I am African American, I am a woman, my mom was killed, you know, because of gang violence. ... Statistically saying, I am not supposed to be here. ... And [the organization] gave me that hope that, no matter what happened to you, you still have time to do what you want. Like your past does not define who you are. So even though, you know, I live with my grandmother and my three brothers and the struggle and not having a job and a house, and it is like they still give you that hope to where the little tunnel, it is like a little light and [the organization] is like "You can do it!" you know, "Prove all of them wrong." Put in the work, because it counts at the end. You may not want to do it now, but it truly does count at the end. And do not let the things that happened to you in your past bring you down.*

— PERLIA, AGE 18

The principle as practiced by the caring adult
It has given him, I guess in so many words, lack of a better term, it has given him a reason to sort of go through it and wake up in the morning. We have given him a sense of purpose around here, and we have certainly seen the growth of that. I would have to say that, yeah, I have to say that what [the organization] has done for him is more so just given him a place to have him be himself and come out of his shell.

— CARING ADULT TO MICHAEL

So [I say to the youth] ..., "Okay, [you want to] be a doctor." So that [score of] 65 we got on science last month, that cannot happen. So, really pushing the envelope and challenging them to really critically think about the decisions that they are going to make on being good and being bad. But then also holding them accountable, because I think that is really, really, important, like you do not get an excuse because ... We are always going to be here. But really thinking about what that means, be it right or be it wrong. One, we always got your back and we are always going to uplift you. And when you do make a mistake, we are going to help you get up. We are not going to get you up, but we are going to help you, you know?

— CARING ADULT TO DENISE

A lot of our youth, not even just Peter, think that the things that they go through, well, I will say this, that they are normal for them, but they start to realize why it is so hard and then when they start to see that they have options, they are like, "Oh man, it does not necessarily have to be this hard, or maybe it is like this for a moment, but I am going to school, I am doing this for a higher purpose, to develop myself to be somebody." And so I help Peter by seeing the goal. A lot of the times, our students have these blinders and they do not see the goal. They do not see the light at the end of the tunnel. So whatever you can clean their windshield off, or whatnot, you will be surprised how the light kind of kicks on. Until they realize that the five in the morning bus rides, working late at night, is going to pay off and it is getting them to believe that and they should!

— CARING ADULT TO PETER

I picked her up from school ... and she gets in the car and she goes, "... I know what I want to do with my life." I was like, "Oh! Really? What do you want to do?" She was like, "I either want to be a doctor or I want to be a veterinarian, but I know I want to help people or animals." From that moment on she just did this 180 degree turn where she brought her grades up, she did not fail any classes and took school seriously and really started doing the research of how to become a doctor. And so for her, her path is very, "Let us get you to college. ... Each thing is specific to each youth and so for her, that is what we are focusing on.

— CARING ADULT TO KAYA

EXPAND YOUTH'S WORLD THROUGH EXPOSURE TO NEW EXPERIENCES AND CONNECTING TO RESOURCES

The practice

Youth served by these organizations experience poverty not only in economic terms, but also in terms of social capital – that is – connections to people and experiences that can expand possibilities for the youth and engage them in a purposeful future. These organizations broker relationships with experts and other caring adults who can help the youth advance their interests. These organizations expose youth to new experiences through field trips, travel to places beyond the city limits (including foreign countries), cultural events, sporting events, invited speakers, and a host of other means. The organizations seek out community partnerships to provide opportunities for youth through internships or other engagements. They look to access material support in their communities for youth and their families. These organizations also connect youth to scholarships and other help to pursue post-secondary degrees.

Why this matters

Social capital is essential to youth's successful development, especially youth who may live in disadvantaged or low-SES communities. Social capital can be located within various domains of family, friend, and non-familial adult relations[27,30]. A study of social capital in the four domains of family, school, peers, and neighborhood, found that different types of social capital interact with social contexts and gender differently, so strategies that aim to build social capital as part of risk reduction and positive youth development need to be culturally sensitive[37]. Youth find more satisfaction with life when youth form positive relationships in more than one domain (i.e. peer group) but

also engage in supportive relationships in other domains, such as home, school, and community, especially with caring adults[41].

Social capital can be accrued by youth in a variety of different ways. Organized youth programs can serve as a context for youth to connect to resource-bearing adults in the community, thus promoting the development of social capital for youth. These relationships provide youth with access to adult resources such as information, direct assistance, exposure to adult worlds, support, and encouragement, including connections to internships, other organizations, or career opportunities[27]. The support and encouragement from adults also helps youth learn to value adult appraisals of their efforts and then to use these appraisals to motivate continued hard work. This process is facilitated by linking youth to suitable adults, structuring youth-adult activities around common goals, and coaching youth on these interactions. Finally, relationships that youth have with community adults are often developed in stages, beginning with suspicion and distrust, moving to a stage of facilitated contact, and then moving to meaningful connection. Ultimately, through relationships with resource-rich adults, youth gain the knowledge, skills, and connections that helped them further their education and opened up career opportunities[27].

Organizations and communities can also help provide access to social capital. For example, religiously active youth report higher levels of social capital resources. There is evidence that the influence of adolescent religiousness on moral outcomes is mediated through social capital resources; social structures such as religious congregations

or organizations can facilitate social interaction, provide a trusting relational atmosphere, and promote a collective set of shared beliefs and values. In these organizations there is both a breadth of relational support (parents, friends, adults) but also a depth of support (not just time spent together, but building deep and trustworthy relationships characterized by mutually held values, beliefs, and goals) [30]. Organizations such as youth centers can help link to schools and other support agencies, including referrals to legal, health and counseling centers, and employment and training programs[7]. This can especially be the case if school situations are difficult, since education is often seen as necessary for youth to improve their situation and a strong sense of belonging and connectedness to school contributes to social and emotional well-being and academic growth in early adolescence[41]. However, since youth do not always feel a basic sense of belonging or engagement at school, outside engagement in other organizations can be a protective factor for these youth[7].

Opportunities available in communities and attitudes of youth toward the community predict activity involvement outside of school. Additionally, when youth have more activity involvement and a positive view of their community, they are more likely to have pro-social attitudes supportive of helping others[38]. Being connected to out-of-school organizations brings more ecological assets (school connectedness, perceived neighborhood support, perceived parental support, and positive peer relationships) which research shows significantly and positively predicted early adolescents' life satisfaction, especially as early adolescents' social circle widens beyond family and shifts focus to peer groups[41]. Friends and peers can also provide important practical support for youth by sharing their knowledge of community resources and systems, providing information and access to services, such as housing or job applications, understanding government income support payments, or food vouchers[7]. Supportive and positive relationships with peers, non-related adults in the community, and a strong sense of school belonging are significantly and positively related to life satisfaction, a critical aspect of happiness in early adolescence[41].

Social capital can also be a buffer against the adverse effects of disadvantage[7]. Many youth live in communities that may be nominally disadvantaged or under-resourced, but are still rich in social capital[26,27]. For example, urban males of color and low-income urban youth are most likely to be exposed to community violence, and children exposed to community violence are prone to a host of negative developmental outcomes such as dropping out of school or substance abuse[26]. Although many youth in such communities may be exposed to community violence, many of these youth also still manage to adapt and show great resilience even in the face of hardship through positive peers and supportive relationships with parents and other adults and the structured activities and the collective efficacy that comes from community involvement[27]. Positive assets in communities (educational, faith, and service institutions) affect resilience and mental health[26]. Specifically, baseline family support and family boundaries, friend support, neighborhood support, and collective efficacy have positive main effects for all youth. Having family support, positive peers, and meaningful opportunities for participation modify the effect of exposure to violence and increase the odds of behavioral adaptations over time. Making connections and promoting collaboration between public health, juvenile justice, nonprofits, including mentoring centers and community-based organizations, and schools help serve the multiple needs of high-risk youth and build on their strengths and skills[26].

The principle in the lived experience of the youth

[The organization] showed me that I am not just limited to math. … I thought math was going to be my life. Even though I still think math is going to be my life, but they open me to different things like art, culture and music, dance. We have done karate when I was younger. We have done capoeira; here and in Brazil. The studying abroad; we have done African drumming here. We learned about African history, Brazilian history, Dominican and Haitian history and I see that there is way more to life than just what I thought it was. I am not trying to go to college so strictly on one thing; I want to get a little taste of everything before I can decide what I am going to do for the rest of my life.

— **DENISE, AGE 18**

I feel like we are all trying to find our purpose. Do we want to go to college? Do we want to be a DJ? Do we want to do certain things? It is all about who you know. It is not what you know, it is who you know because if you know somebody who knows somebody who is a doctor, and you need a doctor shadow, that person can talk to that doctor for you and then you have a shadow, then you can shadow them. ... I actually have the doctor shadow coming up at [a local hospital] and I am super excited.

— KAYA, AGE 17

Taking my classes here was tight. I liked it a lot. I met a whole bunch of people. I got to network with people as well. I got to meet people who are already well-established for themselves, who are already like out there doing TED talks and stuff. ... once you are in [the organization] it is like you gain so much, a lot of more knowledge that you would not gain from just taking [the] classes. Like they will take the time to teach students about like health stuff, things about your own health that you need to worry about. Or things about college, or things about what to do when you are in the industry if you want to work in the industry, or like professionalism, like professional development and stuff when you are in the work world. Like they provide all of that to you, and they have so many other resources that you can utilize for yourself here too. It is like, kind of like an afterschool resource program plus [learning] cool stuff that you can do. It is tight.

— WOP, AGE 17

[The organization] is always looking for ways to keep up with [youth]. ... They are really trying to get [youth] out there in the world. They want [us] to branch out and try new things. It is always important to them that [we] take risks. So it is like, "You do not like cheese? Try goat cheese at least once, if you do not like it, it is okay. Just try it." It is always new experiences and they like to focus in on that. It is not just like, "Go try it if you want to, it is always like, "Go to the beach, get wet. Do not just go over there to tan." Interact with the world and see that it is not just that little town that you are close to. You can go and travel, like to Europe. You can go to Asia. It opens people's eyes.

— DELINA, AGE 18

The principle as practiced by the caring adults

I mean, I think it starts from the top down with great leadership, so that helps encourage the community. I think because we are a youth center, there is a lot of lighthearted and fun-ness too, with all of the heaviness that comes with it. We really are a house of everything. We do substance abuse, we do mental health counseling, we do housing, we do case management, we do education, we just do so much. So I think that that is a huge part as well.

— CARING ADULT TO ZARA

Her voice. It gives her a voice. I feel like she has a lot of opportunities to express herself, and be able to put herself on a platform where other people get to hear her, hear her ideas, and hear just what she has to say. She is a great person, she is a great student, and when she gets in front of people she is able to lead them because she is a great leader also. So it is like, ... she just has a lot of opportunities ... Where it just puts her in different positions where she is able to meet new people and maybe get hooked up in different aspects of jobs and all types of things. So [the organization] has pushed her to the forefront and able to speak in front of people and do whatever she feels she can.

— CARING ADULT TO PERLIA

Just having those conversations when things come up or things that I recognize as things to have a conversation about, or pairing her up with somebody who I know is on the other side of that or is also grappling with the same things; so whether that is a pair, or an alum. And when I do stuff like that with members, I do not always say, "And I am putting you two together because you have this in common." Sometimes it is just like, "Y'all should talk! Look at you all, you both have purple on today, oh my gosh! Go talk to each other." You know; and usually the alumni knows exactly, like "oh, she wants me to take this person and talk with them or whatever." So, being thoughtful about that, but then also I think having those open conversations with her and just reminding her that if something comes up she can let me know.

— CARING ADULT TO AMY

So, several ways that I like to look at how we are helping her, number one is giving her opportunities. So we put a bunch of opportunities in front of her, and then kind of nudge her towards them, kind of like "you should do this!"

I am constantly throwing stuff at her, like "You want to do this? You should check this out."

— CARING ADULT TO KARES

PRINCIPLES 6,7, & 8: PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN AND PRACTICE

These organizations are, above all, communities of learning and practice. They are intent on teaching youth skills that will help them in their future in three main areas: academic and critical thinking; life-skills and healthy habits; social-emotional and relationship skills. In each case there are instances of direct teaching, whether in a group setting or one-on-one, where there are opportunities to practice these skills and reflect on that practice. Each area is treated as a separate principle, though all three have learning and practice at their core.

PRINCIPLE 6

DEVELOP ACADEMIC AND CRITICAL THINKING ABILITIES

The practice

These organizations provide opportunities and support for youth to grow in academic and critical thinking skills. This can be through formal classroom offerings in such diverse subjects as math and science, social movements, cultural history, and many others. They offer specific support to youth in the form of tutoring, or connecting youth to tutors, advocating for youth with their teachers, encouraging and motivating them to attend school and classes. These organizations are intent on exposing youth, not only to new experiences, but new ideas – to expand their thinking. There are opportunities in small groups and one-on-one to do social analysis, to understand their neighborhood and surroundings, to examine how society works, to contemplate how gender, race, and class impact social justice. There are also opportunities to act on these ideas and to reflect on that action. Youth are coached on how to think critically about their situations and given guidance on how to effectively solve problems.

Why this matters

The benefits of critical-analytical thinking for adolescents are vast. Many researchers have noted the importance of critical thinking skills for academic success[36,40,47]. Critical thinking is thought to be a positive youth development construct due to its influence in adolescent development. Numerous studies demonstrate that adolescents who were equipped with critical thinking and creative thinking had better academic performance, health, cognitive development, psychosocial development, and identity development, and were less likely to engage in unhealthy or problem behavior[47]. Critical thinking is influential in academic performance, enabling students' autonomy in identifying their health needs and making healthy choices, increasing pragmatism about media messages and reducing internalization of distorted beauty standards messages, as well as developing healthy body image and preventing disordered eating patterns[47].

Additionally, research shows that learning how to apply critical thinking skills is correlated with positive outcomes in real life[36]. In other words, both critical thinking and creative thinking are thought of as "generic transferable life-skills" for adolescents who have to deal with many developmental stresses and challenges; educating students in critical thinking skills can help them negotiate the complexities of modern life both within and beyond school[36,47]. Overall, adolescents equipped with critical and creative thinking skills tend to have better learning, well-being, and positive development[47].

It is hard to deny that critical thinking skills are beneficial to youth, so the next question is what is the best way to teach these skills to youth? Many researchers have identified that school does not often provide opportunities for students to learn critical thinking skills since the focus of present education is frequently standardized testing and rote memorization, and often, even high school graduates are unprepared for college-level thinking[24,36,40]. Since society has quick access to large quantities of information and education emphasizes standardized tests that require detail-based learning, formal training can be used to help increase otherwise underdeveloped reasoning and critical thinking skills.

Many researchers tend to differentiate between implicit and explicit instruction[10,24,36,47]. There are three ways to teach critical thinking skills: direct teaching, an embedded approach, or an infusion approach[47]. Direct teaching is when thinking skills are taught explicitly to students in context-free situations, an embedded approach is when thinking skills are taught and practiced within a subject in the school formal curriculum (such as social studies or psychology), and an infusion approach means having the subject matters and thinking skills learned together across curriculum. Studies show that strong critical thinking outcomes result from experiential learning when appropriately scaffolded[24] and explicit instruction shows greater improvements in critical thinking skills relative to other students[36].

There is also a virtuous cycle between critical analytic thinking skills and other precursor skills such as language skills and socio-emotional skills. Having these precursor skills can then in turn promote critical analytic thinking and vice versa[40]. Cross-age peer and same-age peer discussions can help facilitate critical thinking skills, as talk can be a powerful mechanism in learning and conceptual change. As Murphy (2014) summarizes, "The common theme throughout our work is that providing children and adolescents with opportunities to engage in interesting and challenging conversations with others can foster critical analytic thinking skills in a variety of domains including reading, mathematics, and science" (p. 575)[40].

The principle in the lived experience of the youth

[The organization's] thing is trying to pull you out of your comfort zone, no matter what. They try to because that is the only way you can truly learn something. If you are not outside of your comfort zone, you do not really think about things in a different way, or you do not give yourself a chance to because you are always in that one crew and because you are always in that one group... You always have that, like, set thought process because everybody in your group has that same thought process and you never actually allow yourself to think about something from a different perspective.

— PETER, AGE 18

Because I had dropped out of school at the end of 10th grade because I had got pregnant and my daughter wound up having to stay in a hospital so I would come back and forth in the hospital so I did not have time to really stay in school. So the more she got well, I was like, "I have to do something to help my daughter." So I seen the GED sign outside of the door and I was like, "I think I should go in and try it out." So after I went in and tried it out, I liked it. So I just started going from there. I wound up passing the GED and moving on to the next level of things.

— ZARA, AGE 22

[At this organization] there are different perspectives on how you learn things and how you do things, so with writing and with reading, or history and those types of aspects, it comes from different origins I guess, so you, like close reading and stuff. You

learn what does this certain passage or song or whatever type of prose, what does it even mean and how does it sink in to the whole moral of whatever it is. … there is always some type of discussion that happens, whether it is planned or not. You know? Like it could be in SAT, we could be talking about a math problem, but then it will somewhere along the line just lead into politics or something. So I feel like there is always a discussion to be had in [the organization], whether you know it or not.

— AMY, AGE 16

The principle as practiced by the caring adults

Definitely teaching people to become critical thinkers, to become leaders in whatever space they might find them, to make sure that they have an understanding of their cultural relevance, like, you are a part of a historical community, a community of folks where fabulous things are happening every day that are worth study, right? … Teaching them about different concepts, again, to create safe communities so like, dissecting things like feminism, talking about patriarchy in a way that they can grab onto it and it does not seem like this cerebral conversation, but helping them to understand how it connects to their day-to-day.

— CARING ADULT TO DENISE

One thing we are working on is that sometimes being smart is not good enough to get a good grade, for example right now in her Spanish class- you could be the smartest person in the world, if you do not work at Spanish, you are not going to be able to comprehend it. You are not going to be able to just snap your fingers and be good at it. You have got to put a little effort into it. Smart is not good enough.

— CARING ADULT TO KARES

What is intentional for our sex-ed program is not the same as our STEM program, but what it does do is all of them will come in and say, "We are thinking about this age group, we are thinking about what is appropriate for them." We are also thinking about what is this girl's everyday context. If she is fifteen in [our city], there is a very specific way we are going to approach that conversation, whether we are talking about engineering or sex-ed and that is the intentional piece. It is really thinking about where they are and meeting them there, as opposed to saying, "This girl from [our city], we can talk to her the same way we can talk to a girl from [a suburb]." It is not the same. Or, "we can tell the third grader and ninth grader the same thing." It's not. That is what I mean by intentional.

— CARING ADULT TO DELINA

[T-Mac said to me] "Man, I do not even feel like getting in no altercation, man. So I just wanted to come down here basically to breathe." … A lot of the time, the kids do not do that, versus them running from, they will run <u>to</u> the fight versus running away from the fight. Just him saying, "Uh, I'm not gonna do that today" You know, I thought that was big. … I just reinforced that. I said, "Man, you did something really powerful." I said, "You walked away from a fight." And I said, "And that is what real men do. Everything is not a fight; we got to know when to fight and when not to fight. You felt like you knew the difference. You actually did critical thinking. You thought about your situation and you said, 'you know what, let me go seek [my mentor] and let me get away from it. Let me remove myself from that'" and I said, "That is so key."

— CARING ADULT TO T-MAC

TEACH LIFE-SKILLS AND HEALTHY HABITS

The practice

Through formal classroom offerings, small group settings, and one-on-one, youth involved with these organizations receive direct teaching, advice, and guidance regarding the skills they need to successfully navigate life, including how to be a leader, how to communicate well with others, how to be a part of a team, among other skills. These skills are also taught informally as youth confront situations in their lives that adults help them understand and effectively resolve. Adults also model these life-skills in their day-to-day interactions with youth, and the youth pay attention. There is also a concern in these organizations to teach healthy habits, including how to effectively deal with stress, good eating habits, healthy sexuality, avoiding pregnancy, drug use, and incarceration, among others. Respectful treatment of the opposite sex is also a topic that is taught and practiced.

Why this matters

The development of life-skills and healthy living habits are influential in positive youth development among adolescents. Both life-skills and healthy habits are often included in after-school programs promoting youth development, and within the literature they are often associated with positive developmental effects for youth. Learning these life-skills is associated with greater developmental adjustment in adolescents as they enter into adulthood, and these life-skills are found to be effectively developed through quality mentorship relationships.

Two studies surveying youth within the foster system support the effectiveness of life skill and healthy habit formation in youth transitioning to life after emancipation.

For example, one study that surveyed foster youth three months before and after their emancipation indicated that life-skills training was an important factor in helping youth adjust to the responsibilities of post emancipation life and demonstrated a relationship between life-skills training before leaving the foster system and greater abilities to balance every day life tasks such as opening a bank account, getting a drivers license or staying physically active[46]. A second study suggests that continual connection to a family as well as life-skills training benefited life-skills progression and the development of youth transitioning out of the foster care system[12]. These results demonstrate the importance of life-skills training and healthy habits on the positive development of youth.

The development of life-skills and healthy habits is often associated with mentorship programs and the quality of those programs. As an example, a study surveying adolescent girls indicated that girls with close mentor relationships experience more social acceptance, less body image problems, were less likely to use drugs, less likely to engage in sexual intercourse, and more likely to engage in physical activity. The mentors were a part of a community-based program to promote positive youth development and this community-based promotion of health has significant results for the adolescent girls who were involved[31].

Another study demonstrated that relationships with mentors were found to be strong predictors of life-skills mastery among youth[50]. In a national study about the effectiveness of the mentor relationship on youth health indicates that involvement in a mentorship relationship is associated with a significantly decreased likelihood of an adolescent being a gang member, hurting someone in

a fight, or engaging in risk taking behavior. Furthermore, having a mentor was significantly associated with a greater likelihood of physical activity as well as the use of birth control[16].

Overall the practice and development of life-skills that promote health are promoted in the literature as helpful to adolescent transition in adulthood. For these reasons, it is important to consider the efficacy of mentorships in association with the promotion of life-skills and healthy habit development among youth.

The principle in the lived experience of the youth

They treat us so like one day when we graduate high school, we are going to go off into the world, so they treat us—they teach us like how to go—they will tell us—there is an interview class, there is drivers ed, they teach us how you go off into the world and be acceptable... And still represent [the organization]. Just because you are not in the program anymore, you are still in [the organization]; you are still a family member, so they teach us how to—anything. Honestly like in girls group, they teach us 'how do you carry yourself as a woman' like going to interviews, what is appropriate to wear, going to anything, they teach us everything.
— KARES, AGE 15

[The organization's program] is like life preparedness, in a way. So at a point they are teaching us, they teach us how to prepare for the things to come in life and how to adjust to the life outside of high school. That is one thing they are teaching us, just taking accountability for our own actions, which hopefully will be a whole lot more than what I am doing now....
— PETER, AGE 18

INTERVIEWER: *[Is there] anybody who is not in [the program of the organization] compared to your life in [the program of the organization]?*
T-MAC: *I can say my father. If my father was in [the program of the organization] it would be great right now because it is a grown man [program] group right now. If he was in [the program of the organization] right now and he had known about it, I believe he would really be like changing his life around.*
INTERVIEWER: *And what would he be getting that would be*

important?
T-MAC: *More information, a lot of more information about what can and cannot be done.*
INTERVIEWER: *And what do they say about that? What can be done? What cannot be done?*
T-MAC: *Like, as far as saying, if you want to accomplish a lot of things, push yourself forward to doing it. If you want to be there, push yourself to being there. If it will not be done, you cannot just make a lot of reasons just saying you cannot do it. Tell them why you cannot do it. Speak the truth; speak whatever is on your mind.*
— T-MAC, AGE 18

[They teach you to know] how to code switch too, when you are in two different environments. Knowing how to act when you are with your friends at a party or something and then how to instantly uphold yourself when you are in a professional environment or a very elite environment or anything like that you know how to represent yourself very well. And kind of just like nowadays, people do not know how to use like technical things like computers and like iPhones and apps and all that stuff, so it is kind of like, in the working world today just having those hard skills kind of just places you, like you have an advantage with that.
— WOP, AGE 17

INTERVIEWER: *What does [the organization] offer young people?*
IYANNA: *It offers us comfort. It offers us college-bound stuff that we are going to need in life. It is going to offer us scholarships, of course. It is going to offer us things that are going to help us when we get older; things that are going to get us to the path of growing up.*
— IYANNA, AGE 13

The principle as practiced by the caring adult

And so I would hope that she has taken the life lessons that she has learned here and she is applying it to her life. But should she not, now what are you going to do? So this situation occurred, now let us talk about critical thinking, let us talk about critical decision-making, and when are you going to make those decisions that are not going to necessarily affect the rest of your life, whether that is pregnancy or whether that is disease, [but] it still could augment your life. Now what are you going to do?
— CARING ADULT TO DENISE

We are teaching character, leadership, and life-skills to these kids and a lot of them do not get that. You do not see that in school. It is almost like a hook, a fishing hook and you kind of hook them with these skills, these character skills and traits. And so after-school, I would say that is where the magic happens. You can follow up on these conversations.... There are some real needs of a role model in their life, somebody to show them leadership and what life means and what their purpose in life is.
— **CARING ADULT TO PETER**

If they ask me my opinion on things then I will give them my opinion, but I always try to help walk them through the thought process and come up with the decisions or conclusions on their own. I will just point out, "Well these are things that you will have to think about when the time comes." Plus it is kind of a life skill. She is going to have to figure that stuff out when I am not around.
— **CARING ADULT TO KAYA**

What I am trying to teach the youth in terms of professional development is this whole idea of code switching, sort of exploring appropriate workplace behaviors. How do we do that, but still being ourselves? How does it differ from being at school? You know, the whole thing when I am working with a young person that has never had a job before, I think communication is the biggest hurdle. Whether that is the proper eye contact, or body language, or handshakes, crafting a professional email, not texting during class. I think effective communication and code switching is the primary focus in the first three months. ... And making them competitive in the workforce. I think that to me is like my mission..
— **CARING ADULT TO MICHAEL**

PRINCIPLE 8

ADVANCE YOUTHS' SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND RELATIONSHIP SKILLS.

The practice

As with Principle 7: academic and life-skills, these organizations use a variety of means and settings to teach youth and help them practice social, emotional and relationships skills. Some organizations teach these skills directly in classrooms and small groups. However, these skills are most effectively learned and practiced through the modeling of adults and through the one-on-one guidance by the caring adults as youth try to manage their emotions in their day-to-day encounters. Specifically, adults help youth identify and label their emotions, regulate and manage them, and use their emotions toward positive ends. They also help youth get along with others through teaching and practicing relationship skills such as listening, understanding each other, and empathy.

Why this matters

Throughout the literature the principle of social, emotional, and relational growth is important to the task of positive youth development.

Self-regulation skills are often measured in after-school programs within activities that are geared towards positive youth development. For example, a recent study surveying 895 youth in 4H programs across the United States found that the more intentionally involved youth were with the program the more likely they were to report greater strengths in the self-regulation skills of selection, optimization, and compensation. The results of this longitudinal study suggest that the personal and emotional regulation skills developed throughout the program in

8th grade were predictive of positive youth development traits and contribution in the 10th grade survey. This study supports the importance of regulation skills with youth development because youth actively engaging those skills are likely to build on those skills and have greater motivations for contribution as they get older[39]. In addition, data from a meta-analysis of 73 after-school programs suggests that programs that used empirically based techniques to promote personal and social skills, such as leadership, self esteem, and self control, are often the most effective in promoting positive youth development[18].

There is increasing evidence of the importance of promoting emotional regulation and executive functioning through the use of interventions that bridge the gap between behavior and neuroscience. These types of interventions are important because research suggests that a child's relational experiences affect their brain's organization, structuralization, and development[22].

There is also research how one might promote emotional and relational skill development in youth. It has been argued that emotional and social skills are developed most effectively when youth are given the space to be active producers of their own development. Results of a study suggest that youth were able to learn anxiety and anger management skills most effectively when they could also see themselves as "agents of their own growth"[19].

Encouragement of personal agency as well as the strength and duration of program support were two factors found to be important in the development of the emotional and social skills related to positive youth development. A recent study on an after-school mentorship program demonstrated that a mentorship relationship is related to intentional self-regulation skills within youth involved in those relationships. The study found that the duration and closeness of the mentorship relationship was predictive of greater self-regulation skills among youth[8]. Overall the research would suggest that emotional and social growth are crucial factors to the task of positive youth development, and these areas of growth are best promoted through quality and durable relationships within youth development programs.

The principle in the lived experience of the youth

Like, I always have to be the person who has the last word type of guy. Like I have to have the last move, I have to be the last anything, basically. And [my mentor] challenged me to, ... next time something happens towards you, just let it go. Breathe deeply and just let it go. I was like, "Alright." And then he dropped me off that day. I want to say two days later, this dude, I do not know, I was asleep on the bus and my foot was out on the aisle..., and he thought I was saying something to him, like when he gets off the bus..., he spits on me, and immediately like I get up and I am getting my stuff off and I am about to go fight him. I am thinking like, he is about to be done. His life is over. And then for some reason; I do not know what it was, but it popped into my mind, the conversation we had, and ... I did not actually go and fight him.
— PETER, AGE 18

"First, she makes me talk out my feelings, like, "Okay, tell me what happened?" And she hears, she does not judge, she lets you hear your side of the story. She does not just take a side. She hears both sides and then puts her output and I am, and that is kind of okay. She lets you calm down. She is just like, "Look, okay, maybe, yeah it should have gone a different way." Or it is not that, she will just try to talk it out with you, or make you feel better and it is like, in a calming way. Some people would just be like, "You need to get over it, so stop," Like, no [she doesn't do that].
— JESSICA, AGE 17

If [there is] someone that like is trying to involve themselves with the wrong crowd and then I would tell them to sign up for [the program]. If there is somebody that is getting bullied, or anything, I will talk to them and tell them like, "Hey, a good place for you to go is [the program]. You can learn how to channel your anger and you will not have to lash out on everybody and you will be okay and I will look out for you." And like anybody else that is fine, that is doing well, I will tell them, like sign up for [the program] because you still learn valuable life lessons in here.
— KEVIN, AGE 15

The principle as practiced by the caring adults

She still has a little bit of temper tantrum in her. So we are working on that. She had one this morning, they had a PSAT

test this morning, she kind of was not doing so well on the test, and she kind of got [mad] and started, you know, so you just sort of talk to her in the heat of that moment and then, there again it goes back to the relationship that you have with them. You are able to talk to them in the heat of the moment, where as potentially maybe somebody else would not be able to, or she would just, you know, go down the— go the other way on that one.

— CARING ADULT TO KARES

Like I always tell these guys, I say, "Unfortunately, we all have to go through something called pain." I say, "but pain is either going to do two things, either it is going to heal us or it is going to put us in a deeper hurt." And I say, "The pain you are going through right now, I think it is going to heal you, but you have to ask for the help." And he say, "You know what ... , you right." He say, "Cause I go through so much stuff, but I feel like I am becoming stronger from it." And I say, "That is the beauty of pain. There is not healing without pain. "

— CARING ADULT TO T-MAC

And then when we feel as though there is someone, or in particular to Denise's case, if there is something that we really

think that we need to get deeper into then that is when we go into the one-on-ones. That is when we get to the real talk. It is like in here, like locking doors and like, we need to cry, let us cry. That is a good way to sometimes get at it. Just let them cry about what it is they are feeling like, and then really question them about, 'what is it that you want?'

— CARING ADULT TO DENISE

It is very hard, it takes an emotional toll in me as a person, and this weekend was a very tough weekend with one of my youth. This is a youth about two weeks ago was removed by DHS, foster care services, because there was a lot of issues at home with mom. That was tough. That was tough to know that, despite how chaotic his life is and was; now he has a new situation to deal with. And I grieve for my boys, my heart hurts for the situations that they are going. I do not think that there has been a moment where I have said, "This is too much, I do not want this anymore!" To me, this is a lot, I am also experiencing vicarious trauma, this is also affecting me, so I need to take care of myself as well, so then I can offer something to my boys. Because if I become emotionally unhealthy, then I am just like every other person in their lives.

— CARING ADULT TO JORDAN

PRINCIPLE 9

EMPOWER YOUTH TO ENGAGE IN THE BETTERMENT OF THEIR COMMUNITIES AND THE WORLD.

The practice

These organizations help youth take responsibility - not only for their own lives - but for the life of their communities, the larger society, and the world. It begins on a small scale by contributing to the vitality of the organization, serving the mission of these organizations to make their surrounding communities better. Often youth are engaged in formal peer mentoring, teaching younger students the values and skills they have learned from the organizations. There are opportunities to engage in community transformation through service activities, participation in social causes, and speaking out against injustices in their community. Youth are given opportunities to learn and practice that they can make a difference in

the world. Many of the youth of these organizations hold the aspiration of coming back to the organizations and becoming staff, or, at the minimum, mentoring the youth of these organizations by being role models for them when they have "made it." Most of these organizations have a number of staff that are former youth in the programs – a sign of "giving back" to the places that formed them.

Why this matters

Social responsibility and civic engagement are two common forms of outside-school involvement for youth. Social responsibility is defined as a set of values or personal commitments to improve one's community and society[52] (p. 130). Research shows that having social responsibility values predict many pro-social behaviors, including volunteering, political activism, environmental behaviors, and lower substance use, values that are thought to be formed during adolescence[1,52].

Civic engagement has short- and long-term benefits for both youth and for society, specifically in terms of psychological well-being, academic achievement, and contributions to the social and political fabric of the country[3]. Individuals benefit through mastery, confidence, and pro-social relationships, and communities benefit from youth who are engaged and active as citizens[49]. Additionally, research shows that civic engagement among high school and college students can promote experiences and behaviors that positively impact youth's personal development, social development, and their future occupational aspirations and accomplishments. A critical review of 44 studies of youth development programs found that civically engaged youth tend to have an increased sense of their own competencies, be more internally driven to get involved in pro-social activities, and have higher self-esteem. These youth also were more likely than the youth who were not civically engaged to have a higher internal locus of control and to show a higher level of comfort resolving social and interpersonal issues[53].

Ecological assets are a primary mechanism explaining change in social responsibility across adolescence;

social responsibility values likely develop out of routine conversations and interactions adolescents have between peers, family, and other key adults[52]. Multiple factors positively predict within-person change in adolescents' social responsibility values—family compassion messages and democratic climate, school solidarity, community connectedness, and trusted friendship—thus supporting the role of ecological assets in adolescents' social responsibility development. This is true even after accounting for other individual-level and demographic factors. In a series of qualitative interviews with high-school youth, four categories of motivations emerged: issues/causes, beliefs about civic action, self-goals, and response to an invitation. The first category of issues/causes captures specific civic issues or causes that youth related personally to and were passionate about, such as police brutality; this motivation was more prevalent from youth from lower SES schools. In the second category, beliefs, motivations were expressed as beliefs about the importance of civic action. The third category, self-goals, were motivations relating to some form of self-enhancement; this motivation was more prevalent from youth from higher-SES schools. The fourth category, response to an invitation, were motivations stemming from being invited into civic involvement by another individual or group; this motivation was the least common primary motivation for civic involvement, and it was more prevalent from higher SES schools[2].

Youth also experience a variety of barriers to civic involvement or participation in outside-school activities, especially among disadvantaged youth[1,2,3,49,52]. These fall into two categories: personal (lack interest, feel complacent, or describe ideological opposition to civic involvement), and systemic (lack of opportunities, resources, experience, or knowledge). Similarly, it is important to be aware of environmental challenges, especially for African American youth, and how structural barriers of socioeconomic inequality, differential access to resources, and institutionalization threaten empowering interpersonal connections and a sense of community[49]. However, the value of connection, one's sense of community, developmental experiences, pro-social, supportive relationships, and social networks are thus

crucial even and especially in the face of environmental challenges.

Multiple sources identify the need for skilled mentors and engaged adults to help overcome and counter these barriers, including negative environments of toxicity or apathy in order to help youth foster both social responsibility values and social engagement[1,2,3,52]. Providing additional opportunities for engagement may not be enough to engage young people in civic life. Instead, to engage youth effectively, opportunities should be provided to capitalize on existing youth motivations. What youth need to increase their civic involvement is "endorsement of general beliefs regarding civic involvement or for their passions to be stirred by personally interesting and meaningful issues" (p. 458)[2].

Skilled mentors can help aid youth in fostering these sparks of interest into meaningful action. Skilled adults at multiple levels (school, family, community) can help to provide youth with opportunities for civic engagement, assist youth in identifying and addressing issues of concern, provide youth with participatory experiences, and can provide youth with knowledge and guidance they might be lacking. For civic mobilization to occur, youth must be prepared to foster social and communal values rather than just personal and individualistic values, and adults and society must be able to aid youth through personal transformation, and help all youth (especially those in toxic or stressful environments) change their negative attitudes about themselves, their capabilities, and their role in the process of the betterment of their communities[3]. Similarly, adults need to make spaces available that youth already prioritize, such as communities and interest groups like teams, hobbies, interest groups, identity-based programs, or simply a youth-friendly space[49].

The principle in the lived experience of the youth

A lot of kids in [our city] that do not have knowledge of where they come from, they are kind of deprived and think they cannot go anywhere and they offer a lot of different things. [Youth lead a workshop] about African American rights, about youth and general rights to other youth. That strengthens not only them, but

the people they are teaching. You are opening the minds of the people learning and you are creating leadership skills for those running a workshop.... That is a good thing. But if you bring a whole bunch of kids together who know the right and the wrong and what they can do and what they cannot do, that sets up a strong generation as upcoming.
— DENISE, AGE 18

I feel like I can be a role model for other youth in the program, ... I feel like if I do good, I am not the best student in math, but I still get good grades and I still try. If somebody else is like, "You know what, I cannot do this." Then they look at me and they see that they have the same background and same, not ethnicity, but have the same mixes and same general issues that I have in life. They are like, "You know what, If she can do it, then so can I."
— KAYA, AGE 17

INTERVIEWER: *Like, what does it mean to be a part of [the organization]?*
PERLIA: *It means, to me, it means that you are a part of a legacy. You are part of something bigger than you. .... But when you do have the opportunity to join [the organization] it is something big. It is something that you want to take pride in. It is something that you would want to share with others I would say. Because not a lot of people have the opportunity, and then you do. So even if somebody can not necessarily get into [the organization] because they are not in the district, or their parents will not let them, or they can not find a ride there and back, it is like "Okay, well I am in the program, so I am going to go." and then, what I take from [the organization], I am going to give to you, even though you can not physically be there. I am going to pour into you, because they poured into me.*
— PERLIA, AGE 18

Sometime after college, I want to own my own dance studio, I want to own my house, ... And then I want to be able to give back to where I got–helped me get here. Like I want to be–I want to fund [the organization], I do not want to work at [the organization] when I get older because I feel like I spent enough time in this building, but you know, I want to be one of those, [that] teach at [the organization] maybe, [do] something beneficial...
— KARES, AGE 15

The principle as practiced by the caring adult

I know definitely I mentioned a little bit about he was able to kind of flip the script and instead of, you know, him being picked on, turning that around and just really wanting to help others now and serve them.

— **CARING ADULT TO PETER**

I think that is one of the key factors is shifting or changing or shaping the community. In order to help make a difference in youths' lives ... we have to make sure that we are, dare I say, hip and up with the latest trends. By having them in the community with us, it keeps us aware of everything that is going on outside of the community so we know where we need to tailor our activities or workshops and how we can make them better for the girls.

— **CARING ADULT TO IYANNA**

[We have a program where] they go back into the community and they teach lessons on things. I know last year they did a whole thing about domestic violence in youth relationships. That was a whole year project. They would go to schools and inform other teenagers about domestic violence. Each year they get to choose whatever that topic gets to be. They spent a whole year researching and figuring out how they are going to teach it a semester. The second semester they actually go to the schools and teach these things. There is space for them to do that. With high school programs, most of the time, we really like peer teaching so there is opportunity for leadership. There is an opportunity to be passionate about something and bring that back. We like them to [go] back out into the community and do things.

— **CARING ADULT TO DELINA**

And teaching them to be active, and I do not know how else I should put it. Not necessarily that they are going to be the ones in the streets organizing or leading the marchers, but that when it comes time to vote, that they are an informed voter. And if they are the one in the street organizing and having those confrontations, that they know that that is connected to a history of people doing those things. And whether it is voting or choosing to not vote; being very clear about how their choices connect to what their community looks like. If you choose [to] not vote, what is the impact on your community? If you choose to vote and you elect somebody in who is not about the community, what does that do? What does it do when you are silent in your community and you see something bad happening, or something happening that is tearing your community apart and you are silent; what does that do? Thinking and helping them to learn about activism at different levels.

— **CARING ADULT TO AMY**

CONCLUSION

This evaluation had two purposes:

1) To evaluate the fidelity between how organizations talk about their approach with youth, and the actual experience of the youth with the organization.

2) To better understand the dynamics of the caring adult/youth relationship within the context of organizations serving youth and to examine what specific behaviors and interactions with caring adults help youth to thrive.

Concerning the first, there is robust evidence, from both the qualitative, principle-focused evaluation and the quantitative Latent Semantic Analysis (Appendix C), for the fidelity between what these organizations intend to do with youth as articulated in the nine principles, and the actual experience of the youth in their recounting of their involvement with the organizations. These organizations clearly walk the talk.

This evaluation also addressed the second purpose. We have a better understanding of how a relationship with a caring adult within the context of a values-driven community helps disadvantaged youth to thrive. We have known for a long time—the research is very clear—that involvement with a non-parental, caring adult in adolescence reaps a multitude of benefits for the positive development of youth. What is less clear is how this relationship helps youth. We sometimes talk about this as the "black box" because the theory of change goes like this: input a caring adult into the life of a youth – something happens – youth have good outcomes (graduate high school, are more pro-social, make and achieve goals). This report affords a "peek" into the black box, and reveals some of the dynamic of the caring adult/youth relationship that leads to youth thriving.

While any of the nine principles, when exercised in isolation, might lead to positive youth outcomes, it is the combination of the principles that prove to be the reason that these organizations are successful in helping youth to more fully realize their potential.

And of all the principles, the values-driven community may be the sine qua non – that which, where it absent, the others would not have as powerful an effect – even the relationship with the caring adult. Even having all of the other eight principles present, without the crucial context of the values driven community, the program would not yield as effective a result.

Like a catalyst brings together disparate elements into a cohesive whole, the values driven community provides that crucial ingredient to make these organizations so effective. The community provides the safe context in which these crucial relationships can develop naturally. It provides support and training for the adults to deal with these very fragile youth. It supplies the values and aspirations to which all participants in the community assent. These values not only shape the relationships within the community (youth/adult; youth/youth), they also shape the identity formation of the youth, shape the purpose and future of the youth, and are the connecting tissue between the youth and the wider world. It also supplies the content of the learning and practice that help the youth in his or her positive development.

We so often focus on the individual—the internal assets and strengths needed for a youth to develop—and we may even set our sights on a dyadic relationship between a youth and a caring adult, but we often miss the context within which all of this development takes place—the values driven community. More study is needed to discern the crucial role these small communities play in lifting disadvantaged youth to more fully reach their potential and to thrive. This report is but a small contribution to that effort.

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THE BROTHERHOOD SISTER SOL

brotherhood-sistersol.org

Mission statement

Brotherhood/SisterSol (BHSS) provides comprehensive, holistic and long-term support services to youth. BHSS programming focuses on issues such as leadership development, educational achievement, sexual responsibility, sexism and misogyny, social justice, and Pan-African and Latino history. Their Rites of Passage program is a 4-6 year experience, delivered through daily after-school programming and other activities offered year-round that empowers youth through discovery and discussion of history, culture, social problems, and the political forces surrounding them. BHSS is locally based with a national reach as they publish assorted curricula and collections of their members' writings; train educators from throughout the nation on their approach; and advise on educational policy across the country and in New York City.

Program summary

The Brotherhood/SisterSol (BHSS) is a primarily a site-based set of programs, at a scale where everyone pretty much knows one another. Some youth join after-school or summer programs in primary school and continue to come back. The majority of high school students join single gender Rites of Passage "chapters," groups of 12-15 youth with group mission statements, long-term, 4-6 year commitments and deep bonds, and 2 adult "chapter leaders" who stay with each group over time. Adult leaders tailor curriculum to the group, and mentor each youth informally outside the program. "There is no magic potion," says chapter leader and Associate Executive Director, Cidra Sabastien, "kids need love, attention, and guidance over a period of time."

Demographics

Total number of youth served in 2015	605
Breakdown of ethnicities of youth served	49% African American 45% Hispanic/Latino 6% Mixed Race/Other
Systems engaged youth served	0%
Graduation rates of youth in program vs. rate of comparable youth in local public schools	89% 51%

UpLift

COLORADO UPLIFT

coloradouplift.org

Mission statement

Colorado UpLift's vision is to break generational cycles of poverty and dysfunction and build the next generation of leaders, emphasizing staff-student relationships and student peer leadership leading to measurable impact and results. Colorado UpLift offers a comprehensive solution to the issues faced by urban youth, who participate in four components of programming – In School, After-school, Adventure and Post-Secondary.

Program summary

Colorado Uplift has an intentional many-to-many mentorship model, much like a tightly knit extended family. Youth get support from many directions, see lots of great role models over time, can form relationships with whomever they most relate to, and can shift to others when needed. "It's important to have a diverse staff team to be able to meet the different kids where they are," said classroom teacher, Jessica Tran. "We each attract the kind of kid that we were, and we are in this for the long haul." Colorado Uplift provides one-on-one, small group and classroom-style activities to provide different opportunities for kids to engage, and mentors look for any opportunity to teach or build connections. Vic Nellum, Area Director, says "Everything we do is to set up, follow up, or improve the relationship...the relationship drives the direction."

Demographics

Total number of youth served in 2015	5400
Breakdown of ethnicities of youth served	20% African American 70% Hispanic/Latino 1% Asian 8% White 1% Mixed Race/Other
Systems engaged youth served	0%
Graduation rates of program youth vs. rate of comparable youth in local public schools	99% 67%

FR1ENDS of the CH1LDREN

FRIENDS OF THE CHILDREN

friendsofthechildren.org

Mission statement

Friends of the Children is a nationwide organization that breaks the cycle of generational poverty through salaried, professional mentoring. Friends selects the highest risk children and commits to working with those children from kindergarten to graduation. Friends works through chapters and affiliates, and also shares their expertise with other organizations who want to use the Friends of the Children model.

Program summary

The 13-year relationship between a "Friend" and a youth is at the core of Friends of the Children's model. Highest-risk youth are identified in kindergarten, and the organization promises a one-on-one mentor through high school. Deep and enduring relationships are the backbone of their work, with a strong base of long-term community supporters, administrative staff who maintain alumni connections, and Friends who address the changing needs and moods of their kids as they grow up. "I'll be here as long as my girls need me," says Friend Natasha Durant, who will not consider a new role until her current girls have graduated. While deeply committed to each child and youth, the organization also takes a long-term view. Natasha says, "We have broken the generational cycle of poverty in my family."

Demographics

Total number of youth served in 2015	1020
Breakdown of ethnicities of youth served	50% African American 13% Hispanic/Latino 1% Asian 17% White 19% Mixed Race/Other
Systems engaged youth served	33% Foster Care 13% Homeless 4% Juvenile Justice
Graduation rate of program youth vs. rate of comparable youth in local public schools	85% 57%

girls inc.®

GIRLS INCORPORATED OF ALAMEDA COUNTY

girlsinc-alameda.org

Mission statement

Girls Inc. of Alameda County inspires 8,000+ underserved girls and their families to be STRONG through healthy living, SMART through academic achievement and BOLD through independence. The approach is comprehensive; the impact is transformational. Girls Inc.'s award-winning programming and continuous access to strong adult role models helps girls of all ages to achieve academic success, healthy positive lifestyles, and an expanded sense of what is possible.

Program summary

Girls, Inc. provides a place and classes where girls can go to gain skills and confidence in a comfortable and supportive environment. Students have both consistent relationships and progress through summer programming over the course of several years, and optional classes throughout the school year, where they can build STEM, life-skills and connections. Staff members are both teachers and mentors to their girls, adapting curriculum to the needs of students and encouraging them with supportive coaching. Team projects and question-based learning allow to girls to engage fully and own their progress. "There's a feeling of sisterhood here among the staff and girls," says teacher, Nicole Moralde.

Demographics

Total number of youth served in 2015	845
Breakdown of ethnicities of youth served	29% African American 55% Hispanic/Latino 12% Asian 1% White 3% Mixed Race/Other
Systems engaged youth served	0%
Graduation rate of program youth vs. rate of comparable youth in local public schools	100% 75%

LATIN AMERICAN YOUTH CENTER: PROMOTOR PATHWAYS PROGRAM

layc-dc.org

Mission statement

Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) empowers a diverse population of youth ages 11-24 to achieve a successful transition to adulthood through multi-cultural, comprehensive, and innovative programs that address youths' social, academic, and career needs. Promotores (case managers) provide intensive, 1:1 mentoring and case management (meeting 1-2 times weekly for 4-5 years) who build a relationship of trust before applying interventions or making referrals for specific services.

Program summary

Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) meets the diverse needs of underserved D.C. youth with a breadth of academic and residential programs, career preparation, counseling, and drop-in services. Their Promotor Pathway program matches adult mentors with the most vulnerable youth for long-term, intensive support, guidance, service coordination and friendship, meeting several time each week or as-needed. Promotores (mentors) follow the lead and needs of their youth, while providing options to learn good decision-making and encouragement for resilience and self-efficacy. It's about "discovering (in yourself that) you have more than you knew you came in with," says Marta Urquilla, board member and LAYC alumna. "How many other places can you go where you can really be whole?" she adds, reflecting the organization's deep respect for every staff member and youth."

Demographics

Total number of youth served in 2015	312
Breakdown of ethnicities of youth served	33% African American 62% Hispanic/Latino 5% Mixed Race/Other
Systems engaged youth served	1% Foster Care 51% Homeless 16% Juvenile Justice Sys.
Given the age range and the number of homeless and systems engaged youth metrics beyond high school graduation are needed. Some of them are listed here:	Of the 72 HS Youth, 51 are working on a GED and 21 have obtained HS or GED diploma. 44.3% eligible youth enrolled in post-secondary programs
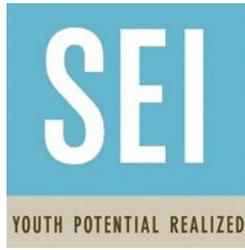
SELF ENHANCEMENT, INC.

selfenhancement.org

Mission statement

Self Enhancement, Inc. (SEI) is dedicated to guiding underserved youth to realize their full potential. Working with schools, families, and partner community organizations, SEI provides support, guidance and opportunities to achieve personal and academic success. SEI brings hope to individual young people and enhances the quality of community life.

Program summary

Self Enhancement, Inc. (SEI) is a cornerstone of the African American community in Portland, serving youth in local high schools and at their community center and middle school. Facing challenges of poverty, gentrification, and a legacy of race-related risks, SEI has created "a place of safety, where black kids can thrive and soar," according to Avel Gordy, former Oregon State Senator. SEI exposes youth to opportunities and high expectations through their coordinators, counselors and teachers, modeling strength of character and depth of relationships. "We put our last name on every kid," says founder and CEO, Tony Hobson, Sr., regarding their commitment to the success of every youth. Ms. Gordy agrees, observing "It's about seeing people, greeting people, honoring who people are in the world…it starts with "I see you, how are you?"

Demographics:

Total number of youth served in 2015	2566
Breakdown of ethnicities of youth served	53% African American 14% Hispanic/Latino 4% Asian 15% White 14% Mixed Race/Other
Systems engaged youth served	5% Foster Care
Graduation Rate of program youth vs. rate of comparable youth in local public schools	92% 57%

YOUTH GUIDANCE: BECOMING A MAN PROGRAM

youth-guidance.org/bam

Mission statement

Youth Guidance creates and implements school-based programs that enable at-risk children to overcome obstacles, focus on their education and, ultimately, to succeed in school and life. Youth Guidance's Becoming a Man (B.A.M.) program is a dropout and violence prevention program for at-risk male students in grades 7-12. The curriculum B.A.M. counselors utilize helps the youth with regulating and controlling their emotions, helps them reframe their situation so they can make better decisions to effect positive change in their lives, and gives them tools for coping with stress and challenge.

Program summary

The Becoming a Man (BAM) program with Youth Guidance embeds counselors within high schools, leading boys in 1-3 years of weekly discussion circles with a values-based curriculum. Focused on the highest-risk young men in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods, counselors such as Dan Heiniger lead discussions and curriculum, and offer "whatever support you need...you just need to ask," meaning everything from one-on-one counseling to advocacy with the principal to morning wake-up calls to get to school on time. Counselors are highly trained and passionate about their work, "gravitating to the toughest situations with optimism," says CEO, Michelle Morrison. Staff members model how to share challenging emotions and direct youth in conversation to open up. Tony DiVittorio, BAM Training Manager says that its first steps are "about the young man and his inner world, not about the outcomes which come later."

Demographics

Total number of youth served in 2015	2214
Breakdown of ethnicities of youth served	62% African American 35% Hispanic/Latino 1% Asian 1% White 1% Mixed Race/Other
Systems engaged youth served	1% Foster Care 11% Juvenile Justice Sys.
Graduation rate of program youth vs. rate of comparable youth in local public schools	96% 61%

YOUTH RADIO

youthradio.org

Mission statement

Driving Youth Radio's work is this vision: equal opportunity for all young people within a diverse media landscape, a technologically advanced marketplace, and economically vibrant communities. Youth Radio's mission is to secure those opportunities for youth contending with the biggest obstacles by launching them onto career and education pathways with a strong foundation of technical and professional skills. Youth Radio engages low-income youth in six months of intensive digital media and technology training. Graduates of the training are eligible for paid internships at Youth Radio, where they work alongside professional journalists, producers, and technologists to produce Peabody Award-winning media, develop technology, and teach their peers. All participants receive wraparound support services throughout their time at the organization.

Program summary

Through high-quality media training and internships, Youth Radio draws youth into their classes and community center and unearths academic, career and life-skills. Staff also provide holistic support services for youth such as access to food and healthcare, but proactively respond to kids' interests in new technologies and arts opportunities with the creation of new projects and classes. Erik Sakamoto, COO, aims to "let youth lead...show us the direction that they want to go," basing curriculum on a "collegial pedagogy" which teams youth and adults together with mutual responsibility for a project's output, and augmenting that with the adult's additional skill-building and support roles. Among the youth and adults, "it looks like lots of questions," says Lissa Stoep, Research Director and Senior Producer. "There is lots of mutual respect but slow movement towards decision-making" and building of skills and self-reliance for youth.

Demographics

Total number of youth served in 2015	313
Breakdown of ethnicities of youth served	51% African American 10% Hispanic/Latino 7% Asian 10% White 22% Mixed Race/Other
Systems engaged youth served	8% Foster Care 2% Homeless 15% Juvenile Justice Sys.
Graduation rate of program youth vs. rate of comparable youth in local public schools	95% 68%

PRINCIPLE-FOCUSED EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

We followed the method of a principle-focused evaluation as established by Michael Quinn Patton in his book *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (2015). Dr. Patton was a paid consultant on the evaluation and gave invaluable input at every stage. The evaluation and its protocols were subjected to review and approved for proper procedures for human subject research (IRB) by Hatchuel, Tabernik, and Associates of Berkeley, CA.

Participants

In order to insure the detection of the principle in the lived experience of the youth we asked each organization to nominate a youth from their program that 1) had been involved for some time and 2) had responded well to the programming of the organization and was doing well. The sampling of exemplar youth is crucial to the method.

Think of an experiment in which you want to test whether or not a cohort of farmers is sowing all nine seeds given to them to sow. You would want them sowing the seed in the best possible soil in order to discover which of the nine they are sowing (or if they are sowing all nine), eliminating the confound of a difference between soils. The exemplar youth are "good soil" that help eliminate variance between the organizations. All of these youth are among the best participants in these organizations in terms of positive outcomes. We also asked, as point of comparison, to interview a youth fairly new to the program. We were interested in which of the principles were most salient to the youth. The research question was: Which principle did all the youth talk about equally, and which principle did one group of youth talk about more than another?

The age range of all the youth interviewed (n=17, two per organization except for LAYC which had two "new youth" interviewed) was 11 – 22 with a mean age of 16.5. (st. dev. = 2.35). The "experienced" youth were older (17-22, *M*=

18.0, st. dev. = 1.69) compared to their "new" counterparts (11-18, *M*=15.34; st. dev. = 2.18). Of the "experienced" youth, 2 were male and 8 were female while the gender distribution of the "new" youth was 3 males and 6 females, which makes a total of 5 males and 14 females interviewed. The ethnicity of the interviewees was: 12 African-American, 4 Latino, 1 Asian (see chart below for gender by ethnicity by type of youth). The youth lived in a variety of home settings. 5 lived with a single parent, 3 with a relative other than a parent (grandmother, aunt, sister), 5 lived with a mother and step-father, and two lived with their birth parents, one was living alone with her children. All but one were living at or below poverty level.

	AA Boys	Asian Girls	AA Girls	Latino Girls	Total
Experienced	2	0	4	2	**8**
New	3	1	3	2	**9**
Total	5	1	7	4	**17**

No attempt was made to control for gender when asking the organizations for youth to interview since there was no theoretical expectation that gender would make any difference to the results. However our Latent Semantic Analysis (LSA, see Appendix C) uncovered a gender difference in the amount females talked about caring adults ($F(1,12)=18.4$, $p=.001$, $\eta^2=.605$) and expand experiences ($F(1,12)=8.04$, $p=.015$, $\eta^2=.401$). There were no significant differences for particular principles based upon type or age, but females generally used more language of principles than males.

Some small differences were discovered in the correlations of the principles with age. Age correlated positively with talk about the values-driven community, a purposeful future, identity, and expanding experiences. That is, older youth spoke more often about these things than younger youth. This corresponds to a large degree to the mixed-

methods analysis comparing experienced youth to their newer counterparts. Identity received an equal amount of code assignments between both types of youth (see details below in Appendix C).

The principle investigator (Peter Samuelson) conducted all the interviews. These were semi-structured interviews that generally followed a pre-determined protocol (see below) to insure that all meaningful categories in the youth's experience of the organization were covered. While all the categories of questions were covered, some of the specific questions laid out in the protocol may have been skipped or asked out of order, depending on the interview. Probes were used where needed. Informed consent was obtained from all participants and as well as the parents of those who were under 18. The interviews ranged between 35 and 75 minutes. Most interviews lasted about an hour.

In order to establish the validity of the code applications, we employed an outside evaluator to code 4 of the 16 interviews (.25) according to the nine principles and compared his application of the nine principles to those of the principle researcher, Peter Samuelson, who coded all of the interviews. We obtained an inter-rater reliability rate of .66 (as measured by a pooled Cohen's Kappa—as calculated by a software devised by Dedoose, Inc.). This software calculates the Cohen's Kappa Statistic, a commonly used and well-respected measure of inter-rater agreement, which compares the actual rate of agreement to what might be expected by chance. Dedoose uses a "pooled kappa" instead of averaging the Cohen's kappa statistic across the set of interviews (De Vries, Elliott, Kanouse, & Teleki, 2008), 'An inter-rater reliability of .66 is considered to be "good" agreement and well within the acceptable range.' (Cicchetti, 1994, Fleiss, 1971).

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Principle-Focused Interview Protocol

1) Reason for interview/ building rapport

   a. Who I am

      i. I am here to learn about what helps youth be successful—how to best support youth and help them do well. I have been told you are doing well and I want to know why.

   b. Many people want to support the work helping youth to do well in their lives.

      i. They have had success in their lives and sometimes don't understand why people need help or why kids sometimes get into trouble—they need your help to understand—need and want to hear your story.

      ii. Want you to take me as deeply into your life and your world as possible.

   c. Importance of telling a story

      i. Ask if youth know someone famous' story.
         • What about the story did they like?

      ii. Youth's story is important—"you are a story."
         • There are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions. What matters is that it is your story.

2) Understanding how interviewee was selected and confidentiality

   a. Youth was selected because he/she was doing well

   b. What youth says will be held in confidence. Tell youth:

      i. People will know what you said but they won't know it was you that said it.

      ii. Allow you to pick a name you want to go by—an alias.
         • We will change or leave out details that might identify you.

      iii. You can request to see what I write after it is done.

iv. You can stop the interview or ask me questions at any time.

v. I may talk to the staff about you, but I will not tell them what you say here. What you say here will not be shared with them.

vi. Sometimes in interviews like this problems come up. For example, if you are being hurt by someone, it would be my responsibility to get you help.

c. The purpose is to understand [youth]–not to decide anything about the program–whether or not it gets money and support. We want to understand your experience here at [Org].

Interview

General principles of the interview

✓ Ask the youth about his or her experience with the organization through open ended questions.

✓ Listen closely to the way the youth speaks of the experience and probe the meaning of the youth's own language.

✓ Use following protocol as a guideline – a semi-structured interview.

✓ Probe: On the basis of answers clarify what youth might mean by certain terms.

Present Program/Involvement

• How often to you come here? Every day? Couple times a week? Once a week?

• Tell me about a typical day here at [ORG] – (find out name youth uses for the organization)

• What activities do you do?

• Who is there?

• What is important to you about participating?

• What do you get out of it?

• You have kept coming back, what is it about being around this organization that has kept you coming back?

Past Involvement/Beginning

• Take me back to the beginning when you first started here

• How did you get involved?

• How did you hear about this place?

• What do you remember about what you were told this place was like or all about?

• What did you think the program was when you first heard about it?

• What did you first do?

• Who did your first meet?

• What stands out in your memory of your first time being around the program?

• What is the most interesting or exciting thing you have done here? What made it interesting to you?

• What did that experience give you that was important to you?

Caring Adult

• Tell me about an adult you have had the most interaction with?

• How did that relationship begin–how did you get to know this person–how did this person get to know you?

• How do you describe the relationship?

• What would you call this person–like–this person is my "_____"

• What does that term mean to you (reflect term back to youth)

• Imagine I am someone your age–I just moved here–how would you describe this person to me?

• Every relationship has some ups and downs. Tell me about an up time–if you can think of one - when you were especially happy or grateful that person was in your life.

• Tell me about a down time–if you can think of one–when it was harder to be around that person? What made you want to work through it and come back?

[Can I talk to this person about you? I will not share anything that we have said here. I will only talk to them about what they do with you and some of their thoughts about you.]

Critical Incident and How [Org] Helped

• Most of us run into problems sometime–are there examples of a problem or challenge you had to figure out–can you tell me about such a time?

• What was the result–what happened? Did it come out OK? If not–how did you deal with it?

Probe: if a caring adult is identified as providing help, probe the kind of help the caring adult provided
If not: probe: Did someone in particular help you? Who? How did they help? What did they do that made a difference?

Experience of Place as Community

- What language do you use for a place like this?

- Sometimes we call a place like this a community– How does this organization fit your idea of what a community is?

- What makes this place special?

- A community is like a group of people who have something in common.

- What are some of the things you have in common here?

- What kinds of things do people talk about here?

- What are some of the things adults here tell you are important?

- How do you feel when you are here?

- Why is this place important to you?

- What does it mean to you to be a part of what goes on here?

- How do you contribute to what goes on here?

- What difference does it make to this place to have you around?

- How do you share your thoughts and ideas here?

- If you were to talk to a friend about this place – what would you tell that friend this place is all about?

- How would describe [the program]to someone who doesn't know about it

- What is [Org] trying to do for young people?

- What does this [Org] offer young people?

Talk about Friends

- Tell me about a friend or someone you know who is not involved with [Org].

- How are things going for them?

- How would you compare your life to their life?
  Probes – explore differences if there are any – explore similarities if they are expressed.

Positive Youth Development

- Tell me about something you think you are really good at.

- Something you really love to do.

- How did you discover this?

- Where do you get a chance to do this and develop it – get better at it?
  Probe: if youth speaks of [Org] – how does [Org] help

Future Aspirations

- What does the next 3 months — i.e. summer fall winter–look like

- Next year you will be??? What are you expecting for that year? What do you hope happens? What do you want to accomplish?

- What does it mean for you to finish high school?

- What is it going to take for you to do this?

- How are you going to do it?

- What are the challenges to that?

- What would get in the way?

- What would help you?

- What do you think about life past high school? What do you hope to do? What have you learned here that will help you get there?

- Pick an age sometime in the future– past 4 years from now and tell me what you will be doing at that point. What would get in the way of you doing that? What would help you?
  Probe: If [org] is not in the future vision, probe how they might stay connected to [org].

LATENT SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF YOUTH INTERVIEWS

By Mark Graves, Ph.D. and Peter L. Samuelson, Ph. D

Method

Latent Semantic Analysis (LSA) (Landauer, McNamara, Dennis, & Kintsch, 2007) is a computational technique that calculates semantic similarity between texts. Two texts are translated into mathematical representations and compared to calculate a metric of their semantic similarity. Other researchers have demonstrated text may include natural language responses to interview prompts (Dam & Kaufmann, 2008; Reimer & Wade-Stein, 2004; Reimer et al., 2012), and we use LSA to compare the interview responses with descriptions of the nine principles.

LSA uses a "bag of words" transformation, so a document is defined as a collection of mappings from words to the number of times those words occur in the text (technically a sparse vector of all the words in the corpus). Arguably, throwing away all word order information and grammatical constructions are major limitations, but LSA does surprisingly well at identifying major semantic themes given that lack of syntax. The bag-of-words vector representations of the documents are then mathematically projected upon a previously constructed, high-dimension semantic space where words that are close in meaning have been mapped to locations near each other, resulting in a high-dimension vector representing the overall meaning of that document. The semantic space is created from a global cache of knowledge in English, in this case, an

11 million word collection of texts, novels, newspaper articles, and other documents from kindergarten through 1st year collegiate readers (Landauer et al., 2007, p. 69). Construction of the space uses LSA and singular value decomposition to transform the documents of the K-13 readers into a high-dimensional semantic space where vectors are assigned to texts as approximations of meaning. Because of the broad coverage of the documents used to create the space, target words/vectors are afforded meaning by association (within a document) with conceptually related words/vectors (i.e., near neighbors). After the space is constructed, then additional documents can be mapped (projected) onto the space to obtain their vector representation (as is done for the interview responses and principle descriptions). Similarity is calculated as the cosine angle between vectors with higher cosine values indicating greater similarity between texts.

We created probe documents for the nine principles from the language used in the organizations' own documents stating their purpose and methods of youth development (annual reports, web sites, letters of interest, etc). For statistical power, we collapsed the three "practice and learn" principles (Academic/Critical Thinking; Life-Skills/ Healthy Habits; Social/Emotional and Relationship Skills) into one probe document, yielding a total of seven. The seven probe documents were revised to use a first-person

perspective on the principle by the youth, e.g., "I have a caring adult…" instead of "The organization provides caring adults…." In addition, more informal and specific language was added to reflect descriptions youth would likely use in a conversation, e.g., "healthy food and snacks to eat" instead of the more general and formal "healthy eating and food practices." The resulting probe documents capture the same meaning as the original descriptions and avoid possibly introducing error caused by the differences between first-person conversation and more formal institutional descriptions.

Statistical Analysis

To examine differences between the use of the principles in the interview responses between their role as primary and secondary youth, a MANOVA of cosine similarity score for each principle was used. A MANOVA was also used to examine differences between sites. As the age and gender of the youth might influence their language outcome, a MANCOVA on role and gender was run covarying the age of the youth as well as a MANCOVA on site and gender covarying age. MANOVA on the principles with respect to site and role were run to look for interactions, but there were insufficient study participants to further analyze the interaction based upon gender and/or age.
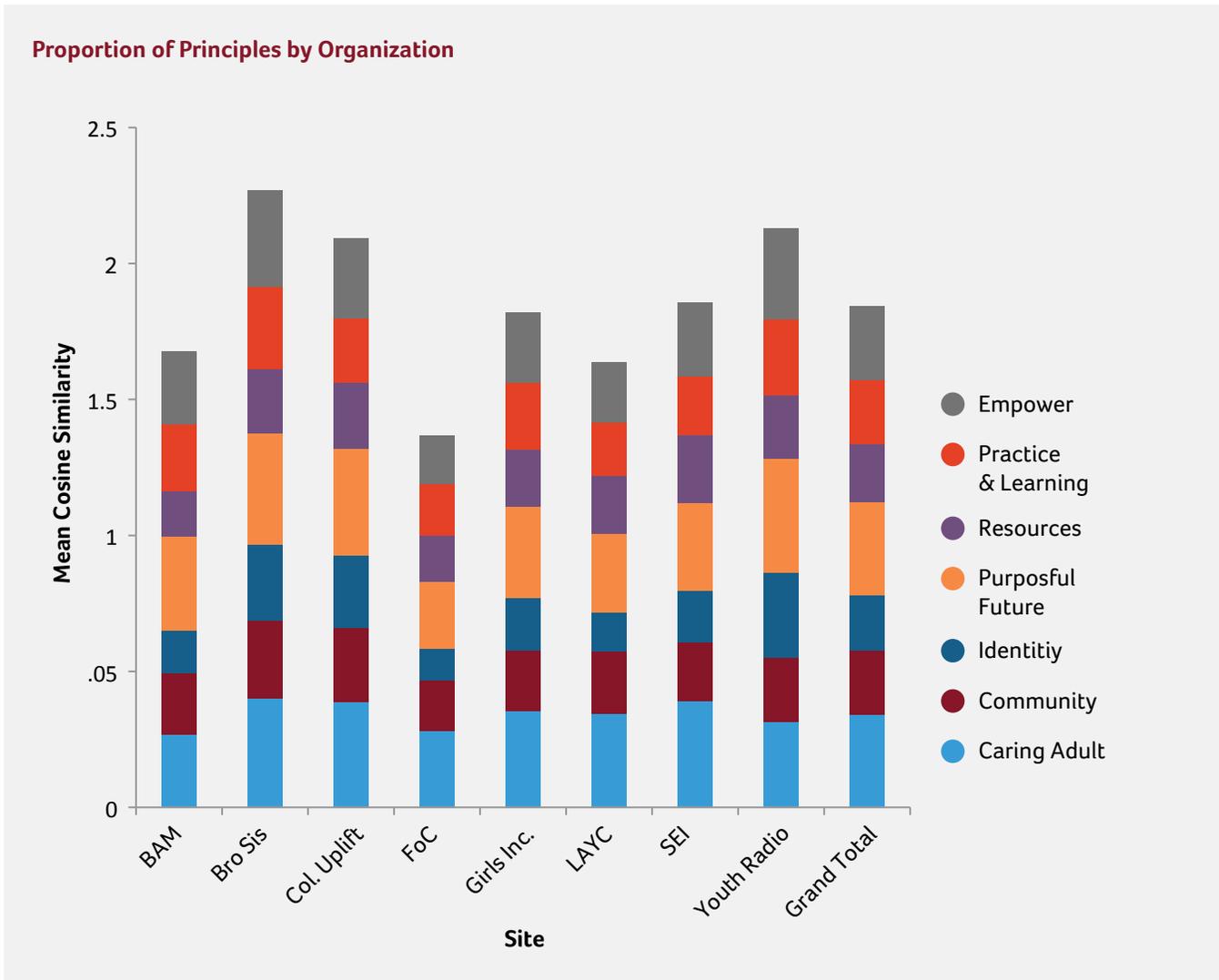
Results

A MANOVA on the seven probe documents of the nine principles by primary-vs.-secondary role of the youth found no significant differences suggesting there is no overall differences between the primary and secondary youth on how they use the principles nor differences on the individual principles. To examine the effect of gender and age, a MANCOVA on the principles by type of youth (experienced/new) and gender covarying age found significant differences for type of youth (Wilks Λ=.039, $F(7,6)$=20.9, p=.001, partial η^2=.961), gender (Wilks Λ=.156, $F(7,6)$=4.63, p=.04, partial η^2=.844), and the interaction

between type and gender (Wilks Λ=.046, $F(7,6)$=17.703, p=.001, partial η^2=.954). Followup ANOVA found females used significantly more language about Caring Adults ($F(1,12)$=18.4, p=.001, η^2=.605) and Expand Experiences ($F(1,12)$=8.04, p=.015, η^2=.401). There were no significant differences for particular principles based upon type or age, but females generally used more language of principles than males. The use of principles did vary by type, with the greatest increase in the language about Purposeful Future with increased tenure in the program, but there were not enough study participants to clarify the differences via MANOVA. This corresponds to the great frequency of codes corresponding to Purposeful Future in experienced youth verses youth new to the program (see comparison of the two types of youth above).

Pearson correlation of each principle with age for all youth found Community and Purposeful Future language correlated positively with age (Community r=.50, p=.04; Purposeful Future r=.51, p=.036; n=17). Looking at the correlation of each principle with age for primary youth only found no significant difference, while for the secondary youth, there were positive correlations with Identity, Purposeful Future, and Resource (Identity r=.707, p=.033; Purposeful Future r=.725, p=.027; Expand Experiences r=.669, p=.049; n=9). That is, of the youth who were new to the program, the older they were, the more they talked about these topics.

To examine differences on principles between sites, a MANOVA on principles with respect to eight sites found no significant overall differences between sites nor significant differences for any of the principles. Covarying age and adding gender as a factor also found no significant differences. A MANOVA on the principles with respect to site and role were run to look for interactions, but found no differences in principles based upon role, site, or their interaction. The presence of all the principles in each site is illustrated in the graph below.

Proportion of Principles by Organization

Figure: Stacked bar chart showing Mean Cosine Similarity by Site (BAM, Bro Sis, Col. Uplift, FoC, Girls Inc., LAYC, SEI, Youth Radio, Grand Total) with categories Empower, Practice & Learning, Resources, Purposful Future, Identitiy, Community, Caring Adult.

MIXED-METHOD COMPARISON OF NEW AND EXPERIENCED YOUTH

By simply counting the percentage of the codes assigned to each principle among all youth, we see that youth talked the most about the caring adults in their lives (19.2 % of all codes), the values-driven communities in which they interacted with these caring adults (16.5%), and their purposeful futures (13.9%, see graph below).

Percentage of total amount of codes assigned for all youth per principle
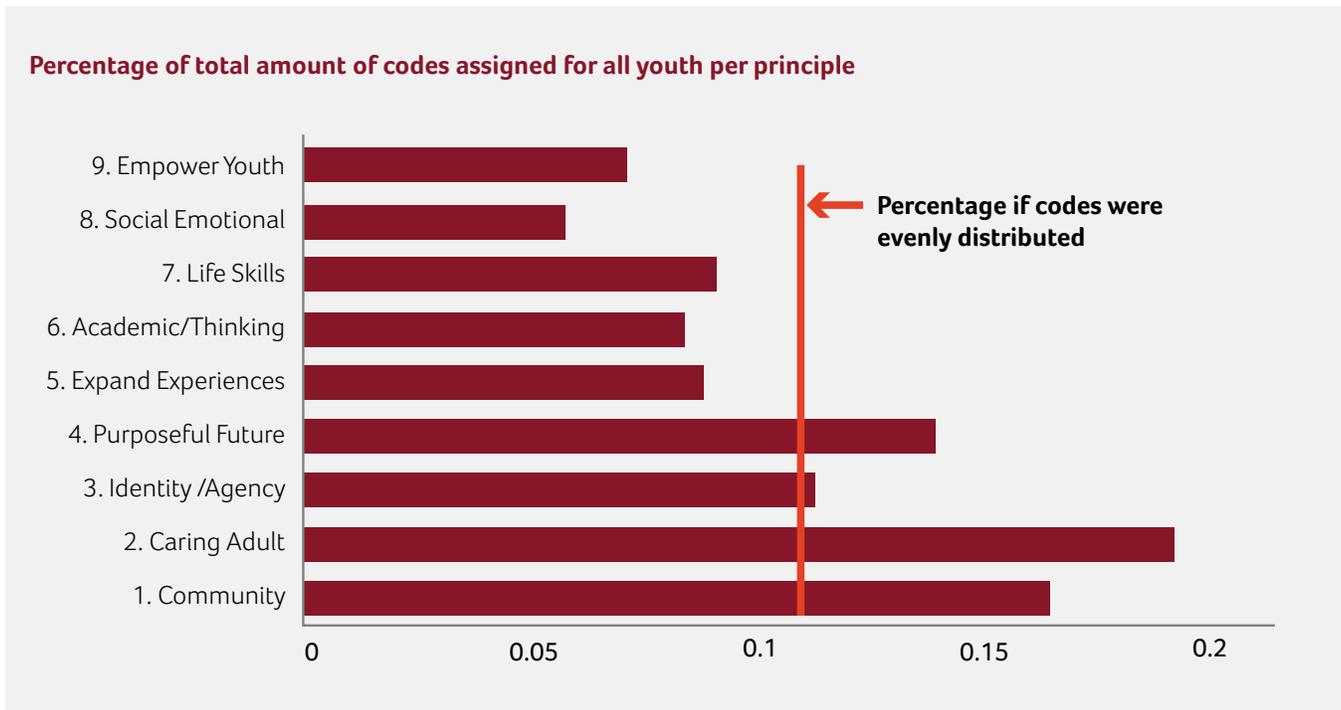
The software we used to analyze the interviews and to code them by the nine principles (Dedoose.com) allows us to compare the "experienced" youth (Youth 1) to those new to the program (Youth 2), and the frequency by which they talked about the nine principles. An analysis of the code applications by type of youth yields some interesting results.

Values-Driven Community

The more experienced youth had more to say about the organization as a values-driven community than newer youth by a 60/40% ratio. This is not surprising, given that they had more exposure to the organization's programming. Both groups of youth talked extensively about the community, garnering 16.5% of the codes.

Caring Adult

Both groups of youth spoke about their relationship with a caring adult in nearly equal measure (51/49%). Clearly, because the caring adult is at the center of the program for all the organizations, that relationship plays a big part in the

positive development of all youth who engage with them. The "caring adult" code had the largest percentage of the all the codes applied to the interviews (19.2%).

Identity and Agency

Both groups of youth spoke a nearly equal amount about identity formation and a sense of agency (52/48%). This is an important topic throughout adolescence and at the top of their minds. This code accounted for 11.3% of the codes, the fourth largest.

Purposeful Future

The more experienced youth had more to say about a purposeful future than their less experienced counterparts by a 60/40% ratio. As many of these experienced youth were about to graduate high school, their futures were more on their minds than those who had just come into the organizations. A purposeful future is on the minds of both groups as evidenced by the proportion of this code assigned to the interviews (13.9%).

Expand Experiences

The more experienced youth also spoke more of the organization's connection to resources and expanding their experiences by the largest ratio: 65/35%. By being involved with the organizations longer they had more chances to participate in internships, travel, and have new experiences than new youth. 8.8% of the codes were assigned to this principle.

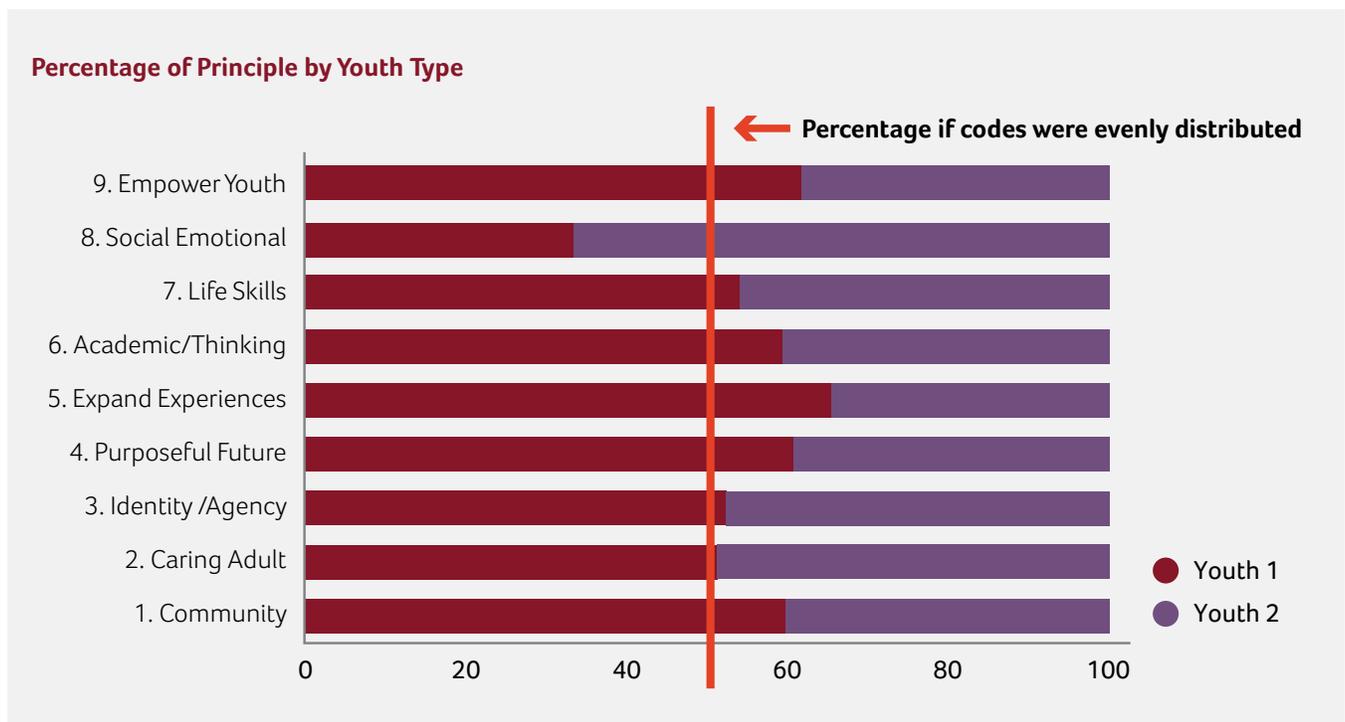**Academic/Critical Thinking and Life-Skills/Healthy Habits**

More experienced youth talked to a greater degree about learning and practicing academic and critical thinking skills than did newer youth (59/41%), while each group spoke of life-skills and healthy habits about the same (54/46%). The percentages of codes assigned for these two principles were 8.4% and 9% respectively.

Social Emotional/Relationship Skills:

Surprisingly, experienced youth spoke less frequently about guidance they received on social, emotional, and relationship skills than did newer youth by a ratio of 35/65%. Two of the new youth became engaged with their programs because of an identified need for anger management, which accounts for most of the difference. This principle was spoken of the least by all youth, only 5.6% of all coded phrases.

Empower/Engage Youth

By and large the more experienced youth spoke more about being engaged and empowered to effect community change by a 60/40% ratio. This was primarily explained by the chance these youth had to participate in peer mentorship, and/or by considering themselves role models for younger youth. Youth overall spoke of these opportunities about 7 % of the time.

Percentage of Principle by Youth Type

← **Percentage if codes were evenly distributed**

- Youth 1
- Youth 2

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