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Disrupting Adultism: Practices That Enable or Constrain Intergroup Contact Between Youth and Adults

Abstract

Background: The systematic subordination of young people who have little access to goods, resources, and power to make decisions is called adultism (Dejong & Love, 2015). Adultism has three components: attitudinal, institutional, and internalized. Attitudinal adultism, which is the focus of this dissertation, relates to adult's negative attitudes and beliefs regarding young people. Adultism intersects with other forms of oppression in after-school programs and likely impacts outcomes. Youth participatory action research (YPAR) is an orientation to knowledge production in which youth are positioned as experts in their own lives and work collectively with adults to identify an issue, collect data, and produce a product intended to transform systems. While it has been argued that YPAR can contest adultism, this has not been studied.

Methods: Based upon ethnographic data collected at four after-school program sites and analyzed through critical discourse analysis, this dissertation describes the practices and interactions of adults who facilitated YPAR with middle school youth that either strengthened or constrained intergroup contact, a four-part theory associated with prejudice reduction. Using interview data, the adult facilitator of each YPAR group was rated on a continuum of attitudinal adultism, from low to high. Patterns of overlap between attitudinal adultism and intergroup contact were investigated.

Results: When adults let youth lead, engaged in dialogue, facilitated with intention, celebrated accomplishments, and engaged in work jointly with youth, they enabled power-sharing, cooperation, and communicated shared goals. When adults policed youth, lectured, did not describe things well, separated themselves from youth, and made negative comments, the conditions of intergroup contact were constrained. When organizational leadership helped youth with their project and celebrated youth's accomplishments, this led to a site culture that enabled positive intergroup contact; engaging in punitive discipline constrained contact and contributed to a negative site culture. There were patterns of overlap between attitudinal adultism and practices that facilitators engaged in with young people.

Conclusion: Adults who engage in YPAR can intentionally integrate the practices that enable power-sharing, shared goals, and cooperation. This dissertation study adds a nuanced understanding to the role of adults in enabling or constraining intergroup contact within YPAR.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Although youth make up a significant portion of our population, they are largely kept on the periphery of civic society and excluded from most meaningful roles in social and political life (Camino & Zeldin, 2002; McBride, 2008). The social and institutional segregation of people based on age limits opportunities for intergroup contact between youth and adults (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2006). Developmental scientists and social service scholars have called for more intentional interactions between youth and adults within and across contexts (e.g., neighborhoods, schools, communities), which they argue would benefit the development of young people (Lerner & Benson, 2003). However, despite almost three decades of implementation of positive youth development, the prevailing practice model for youth work, many contexts continue to lack positive norms and beliefs about young people (Gil Clary & Rhodes, 2006).

Adults, who often live separate from young people, may rely on media representations of adolescents to shape their attitudes and beliefs. Unfortunately, media portrayals of young people are overwhelming negative, particularly for youth of color

(Altikulaç et al., 2019; Hilfinger-Messias, Jennings, Fore, McLoughlin, & Parra-Medina, 2008; van de Werff, 2017). Adults make policy, programmatic, and practice decisions that govern young people's lives. Contexts may lack positive attitudes or beliefs regarding young people, in part because adults who are isolated from youth hold negative attitudes and beliefs, and thus create policies that are overly protective, restrictive, or exclusionary. These policies, in turn, shape the contexts within which youth and adult interactions occur. Youth, therefore, experience constrained opportunities for development.

This systemic marginalization of youth has come to be considered a social justice issue (Delgado & Staples, 2007). It is important, therefore, to attend to the negative attitudes and beliefs that adults hold about young people. When these attitudes are reinforced by our social institutions, is called adultism (Flasher, 1978). Adultism is the systematic subordination of young people (Dejong & Love, 2015). Adultism, like other forms of oppression, has three types: attitudinal, institutional, and internalized. Attitudinal adultism is the focus of this dissertation.

While adultism impacts young people in most contexts, it is likely to be most problematic in hierarchical, adult-ruled, and youth-dominated spaces such as schools and

after-school programs. Youth workers play an important role in the lives of young people. According to the Afterschool Alliance (2014) there are over 10.2 million children and teens in after-school programs; middle and high school students account for almost four million of that count. There are no reports on the size of the youth development workforce, but YMCA and 4-H programs alone employ over 25,000 professionals (Fusco, 2012a). Based on older estimates, there are over 17,000 youth-serving organizations across the United States (Borden & Perkins, 2006). The youth development workforce is therefore quite large, with influence over the lives of many, often marginalized young people. The potential impact of adultism on these youth—many of whom have already experienced other forms of oppression, such as racism, homophobia, sexism, classism and xenophobia—is significant.

Adults play a critical role in facilitating youth development within youth programs, but their negative attitudes may constrain a youth program's positive influence. Adultism constrains youth-adult relationships, which is seen as a key indicator of youth program effectiveness. In youth programs, when adults wield power, denounce young people's efforts, do not provide appropriate scaffolding, or question young people's credibility, youth may feel less confident, competent, motivated, and engaged.

In fact, in her dissertation study, DeJong (2014) found that youth internalized implicit messages they received from adults and gave up or trivialized their own experiences. Nonetheless, adultism has not been widely recognized or discussed in the mainstream youth work practice, social work, or education literature in the U.S. This dissertation seeks to contribute to our understanding of adultism.

Addressing Gaps in Existing Scholarship

This dissertation study addresses several gaps in the youth work practice literature and contributes to a more complete understanding of adultism and theory related to prejudice reduction. Most youth programs are guided by positive youth development (PYD), a theory and approach that

“engages youth along with their families, communities and/or governments so that youth are empowered to reach their full potential. PYD approaches build skills, assets and competencies; foster healthy relationships; strengthen the environment; and transform systems” (Hinson et al., 2016. p. 10).

While there has been a significant investment in understanding which program characteristics are critical to PYD program’s effectiveness (Durlak & DuPre, 2008), there has been much less attention on how the practices of adult facilitators influence outcomes. Importantly, lead scholars have noted that youth-adult partnerships, which is one bi-directional approach to PYD, have not been adopted widely because adults lack

the skills and pro-social norms regarding power-sharing with youth (Zeldin, Krauss, Collura, Lucchesi, & Suliaman, 2014). This study seeks to address this gap by discussing the practices and programmatic norms that are supportive of bi-directional youth-adult relationships within the context of youth participatory action research.

Within the broader field of youth engagement, there are many approaches to supporting positive youth development. Youth participatory action research (YPAR) is one approach that has been offered as a potential solution to youth subjugation (Bettencourt, 2018). In YPAR, young people partner with adults to conceptualize an issue of social inequity, collect information about that topic, and advance specific change-oriented agendas that may include revising policies, building new institutions, improving service delivery, or disrupting structures of power (Cammarota & Fine, 2010; Kennedy, Dechants, Bender, & Anyon, 2019; Schensul, 2014). Youth may engage in active resistance to the oppressive relationships, practices, and policies that have marginalized them. While this can be a novel opportunity for young people who have largely been excluded from social and political life (Delgado & Staples, 2007), having youth participate in data-driven social action may also combat adultism.

While there has been scholarship on the principles that undergird YPAR, which includes reflexivity around power dynamics (Kohfeldt, Chun, Grace, & Langhout, 2011), there is scant literature on how adults enact these principles of reflexivity, power-sharing, and inquiry in their work with youth. Some scholars have argued that power-sharing in youth work is not well understood (Blanchet-Cohen & Brunson, 2014). Additionally, while many YPAR studies report on the topics youth study, on the process young people engage in to enact change (Shamrova & Cummings, 2017), and in some cases the complexities and nuance of power-sharing (Askins & Pain, 2011; Torre, 2009), this is the first study to consider how adult practices either reinforce or disrupt collaboration between youth and adults. While Langhout and Thomas (2010) assert that successful YPAR efforts *require* a redefinition of youth and adult relationships, the ways in which this occurs has not been studied specifically. The principle of power-sharing is fundamental to participatory action research, yet, there has not been enough discussion of how adultism may cause adults to retain power during certain discussions or processes.

To date, there has been little empirical focus on understanding how adultism can be minimized, particularly via youth programs. However, a theory from justice-oriented prejudice-reduction work, called intergroup contact (Allport, 1954), asserts that there four

conditions that must be maintained in order for the in-group, in this case adults, to reduce their prejudice of the out-group, in this case, youth. In order for prejudice reduction to occur there must be: 1) equal status in the group, 2) shared goals, 3) intergroup cooperation, and 4) support through laws and customs. There is a large body of empirical literature on intergroup contact theory (ICT) (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), yet there are very few studies that have examined prejudice reduction in the context of youth and adult relationships. Despite the significant investment in intergroup contact across multiple disciplines, many studies use only quantitative methodologies, which often flatten the nuance of how the four conditions are enacted and maintained. Furthermore, while the epistemological orientation of YPAR aligns with the four intergroup conditions, this study seeks to examine the practices of adults that enable or constrain these conditions. This study, therefore, adds nuance to the ICT literature.

The methods used in this research add further dimension to understanding the complexity involved in youth work practice. The majority of studies that examine youth workers' practices include interviews or surveys collected from program staff. While these studies make important contributions, adults have been found to aggrandize youth's leadership roles (see Blanchet-Cohen & Brunson, 2014; Jones & Perkins, 2006; Walker

& Larson, 2006). This dissertation triangulates findings of adult interviews with observations of youth and adult interactions to present a more complete picture of adult's practices.

There are few training programs specifically designed for youth workers, despite the recent trend towards professionalization. Findings from this study may be integrated into existing training programs to further enable power-sharing, cooperation, and the creation and maintenance of shared goals. Recently, scholars in the field of youth engagement have advocated for the growth of a subfield that documents effective practice from a practitioner's perspective. In their call for research on effective practice, Larson, Walker, Rusk, and Diaz (2015) suggest that research be conducted on strategies that appear to be effective at addressing challenges across programs and contexts.

This research also fills a gap in our understanding of the training needs of social workers who intend to work with youth. Richards-Schuster and Pritzker (2015) argue that social work, as a profession, is well-positioned to facilitate youth engagement opportunities, given that social workers are often uniquely trained to employ empowerment-based approaches through authentic relationships that foster self-determination. While many Master of Social Work programs have a concentration related

to children, youth, and families, and while the values of social work position practitioners to provide clients with opportunities for agency and self-determination, there is a paucity of training programs designed to educate students regarding how to implement these core values with youth. Furthermore, even within the field of social work, adultism is not often recognized as an axis of oppression. This dissertation discusses adult practices that social workers can use to cultivate authentic relationships with and self-determination for youth.

The Present Study

My study is informed by critical discourse analysis and ICT. Drawing on critical discourse analysis approaches, I examined the practices of adult facilitators that enabled or constrained their ability to consciously share power, cooperate, and/or work towards a shared goal with young people in the context of YPAR. I assessed the presence of support through laws and customs by examining interactions with and perceptions of program staff. Finally, I explored the relationship between these intergroup contact conditions and attitudinal adultism. Attitudinal adultism refers to the shared negative attitudes or beliefs adults hold about teens.

The following research questions drove this inquiry:

1. What practices or interactions occurred during a YPAR program that either strengthened or constrained intergroup contact between youth and adults?
2. Does the presence and magnitude of constraining or enabling conditions relate to attitudinal adultism among facilitators?

There were two types of qualitative data collected during the 2016-2017 academic year that helped me answer my research questions: observations and interviews. Six participant observers took field notes of youth and adult interactions that occurred within YPAR at four sites of an after-school program called The Bridge Project: Mountain Vista, Riverwood, Rose Park, and North Kennedy. At each site, adult social work students facilitated a weekly semi-structured YPAR curriculum with middle-school-aged youth of color. Observers recorded practices of the adult facilitators and interactions between the youth and adults. At the end of the program year, I conducted interviews with the adult facilitators and site supervisors.

All data were broken into smaller exchanges using techniques from critical discourse analysis. Multiple rounds of coding resulted in a multi-level coding scheme

informed by ICT. A common set of practices emerged from the data that either constrained or enabled the four intergroup contact conditions.

To explore relationships between ICT conditions and attitudinal adultism, first I developed site summaries of the presence of enabling practices and interactions. Then, I inductively created indicators to assess attitudinal adultism and applied those indicators to the adult facilitator post-program interviews. These indicators aligned with the definition of attitudinal adultism: pronoun use, adjectives used to describe middle school students, perceptions of being an ally, and perceived personal and professional growth as a result of working with youth. After rating each site according to these four indicators, I created an overall site characterization on attitudinal adultism. Then, I compared the site summaries with the presence of enabling practices and interactions and the attitudinal adultism characterizations. I also looked for patterns between high and low attitudinal adultism and enabling and constraining practices associated with the four intergroup contact conditions.

Summary of Findings

Out of the four ICT conditions, practices related to equal status was coded most often, followed by shared goals and cooperation, which were coded almost half as often.

Constraining practices were coded half as often as enabling practices for three out of the four ICT conditions: equal status, cooperation, and shared goals. The fourth ICT condition, support through laws and customs, had the lowest coding frequency.

I operationalized equal status as practices and interactions that seemed to indicate that adults were actively and intentionally transferring power to young people. This behavior included adults supporting the opportunity for equal participation in activities, encouraging youth to offer opinions, inviting youth to make decisions, and facilitating access to resources. There were two prominent codes associated with enabling equal status: letting youth lead and make decisions, and dialogue and open-ended questions. The two codes associated with constraining equal status were: adults policing youths' conversations or behavior, and asking closed-ended questions or lecturing.

Shared goals was defined as the group working towards a goal-oriented endpoint, a joint effort with evidence of friendliness and caring. For YPAR, there were many goals: having fun, getting youth more engaged in activities, youth acquiring new knowledge and skills, and the creation of a shared product. The two primary codes associated with enabling shared goals were: intentional facilitation and celebrating big and small

accomplishments. The two main codes associated with constraining shared goals were: incomplete instruction and disengaging with youth or the project.

Cooperation was defined as interdependent effort that exposed group members to each other's skills. Cooperation in the context of YPAR meant that adults were participating in the activities alongside the youth, providing their own expertise, and intentionally integrating all youth into the sessions. The most common practice that enabled cooperation was joint work. The two primary practices that constrained cooperation were: obvious separation of youth and adults and adults making negative comments.

Finally, the fourth condition, support through laws and customs, was operationalized as the relationship between and participation of site supervisors and other paid staff with the YPAR groups, and with the facilitator. The presence of enabling practices, interactions, or responses was considered supportive of a site culture that facilitates other ICT conditions. Conversely, the presence of constraining practices, interactions, or responses was suggestive of a site culture that inhibited intergroup contact.

In creating the site summaries, I found that the presence of enabling ICT practices existed along a continuum of low to high. North Kennedy had the highest number of enabling practices for many of the ICT conditions and I gave it a “high” rating. Mountain Vista and Rose Park had fewer enabling practices associated with ICT and I gave it a “medium” rating. Riverwood had the fewest enabling practices for all of the ICT elements and I characterized it as “low.”

Using four inductively derived indicators of attitudinal adultism, I coded the interviews I conducted with facilitators. The facilitator at Mountain Vista demonstrated more features of attitudinal adultism than other facilitators, whereas the North Kennedy facilitator’s responses were much less indicative of adultism. The facilitators at Rose Park and Riverwood each had some features of adultism. I therefore developed the characterizations of attitudinal adultism relationally; Mountain Vista received a rating of “high” adultism, Rose Park and Riverwood “medium,” and North Kennedy “low.”

Using these site characterizations, I assessed the relationship between enabling practices of ICT and attitudinal adultism. While there did not seem to be a direct relationship between attitudinal adultism and practices within ICT, there did seem to be some notable patterns of overlap, particularly for North Kennedy. At sites with higher

attitudinal adultism ratings, there were more instances of policing youth behavior and lecturing. Furthermore, having a higher rating of attitudinal adultism was inversely associated with being inclusive. Lower levels of adultism were correlated with creating dialogue and asking open-ended questions, but this trend did not hold across other levels of adultism.

Summary of Discussion and Implications

The findings of this dissertation have implications for youth work practice, social work education, and intergroup contact theory. This dissertation responds to the call for more scholarship into the practice of youth work from the adult's perspective (Larson et al., 2015b). Across sites, facilitators engaged in practices that enabled the four ICT conditions far more often than they engaged in practices that constrained it. The practices that I found to enable equal status, cooperation, and shared goals could be taught to youth work practitioners and social workers to strengthen program outcomes. While there has been some attention on adultism and youth's experiences of it, this is the first study that has attempted to catalogue indicators of adultism. My dissertation data suggests that when adults exhibit indicators of attitudinal adultism they tend to engage in practices that constrain intergroup contact and maintain power hierarchies between youth and adults.

For youth programs specifically, these data demonstrates that site leadership can enable ICT by minimizing use of punitive discipline and increasing the presence of supportive adults who honor youth's contributions. Furthermore, organizational policies can make explicit the value of youth engagement and implement practices of restorative discipline. Excerpts from field notes from this dissertation containing these practices can be used as examples of what these practices look like.

Findings from this dissertation study can be used to address the limited number of existing education programs and to justify more training within education and social service fields. By acknowledging adultism as an axis of oppression and examining how intergroup contact between youth and adults can be powerful, social workers can bring youth from the margins into the center and achieve positive youth development.

While ICT has been used to understand prejudice reduction, this is the first study to explore all four ICT conditions within youth-adult relationships. Given that many of the ICT studies use primarily quantitative methods, this qualitative study adds nuance to this literature regarding practices that enable or constrain the ICT conditions. These conditions are well-aligned with the values of positive youth development and YPAR.

How This Dissertation Is Organized

Chapter 2 provides a discussion of the cultural construction of adolescence, followed by how adultism can be understood through an existing oppression framework called the “five faces of oppression” (Young, 2009). In chapter 3, I describe intergroup contact theory and align the four contact conditions with the core elements of youth participatory action research. The methods used in this study are detailed in chapter 4, and include information about critical discourse analysis, rich site descriptions, and steps taken for data analysis. In chapter 5, I present my findings. First, I describe the common practices or interactions that either supported or constrained each of the four ICT conditions. I then describe patterns among these conditions across the four after-school program sites. Next, I describe ratings for attitudinal adultism indicators using interview data from the four facilitators. I also compare characterizations of both adultism and ICT to consider relationships between different codes. In chapter 6, I discuss these findings in relation to the broader literature, the limitations of this research, and the implications of these findings to youth work practice, social work education, and ICT theory.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter starts with a brief history of the cultural construction of adolescence. The cultural, social, and political construction of adolescence has been fueled, in part, by shifting attitudes and beliefs that young people need our protection. The protective exclusion of adolescents has led to their relative isolation from adults which feeds a cycle of oppression. The systematic subordination of adolescents is called adultism and is a pervasive problem (DeJong & Love, 2015). Adultism constrains the experiences of young people and, in turn, limits the youthful resources that might play a role in the positive transformation of society. My dissertation continues with a discussion of adultism as it is understood in relation to experiences of violence, exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, and cultural imperialism. I provide a brief review of the potential impacts of adultism. I then describe previous empirical research on the presence of adultism within youth programming and in social work.

Brief History of the Cultural Construction of Adolescence

In the United States, age has largely been constructed as a binary: child and adult; despite the recognition that adolescence is a distinct developmental period. It is only recently that, in the United States, youth have been defined as a distinct category, as individuals between the ages of 10 to 24 (Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, 2013). This term encompasses what, in the US, is typically viewed as two age periods: adolescence and young adulthood. It is important to acknowledge that young people are not a single homogenous group. Throughout this dissertation, I have adopted the terms “youth” and “young people,” interchangeably, and use them to represent people who are in early and middle adolescence, approximately ages 10-17. I have chosen this age range because individuals in this age range have similar laws governing them and similar developmental experiences compared to younger or older age groups. In the US, adolescents aged 10-17 are approximately 13 percent of the total population (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], 2016). In 2014, more than half of US adolescents were White (54%), 22.8% were Hispanic, 14.0% were Black, 4.1% were Asian, and 3.4% are multi-racial. Multi-racial and Hispanic youth represent a rapidly

growing segment of the U.S. population. Eighteen percent of adolescents were reported as living in poverty (HHS, 2016).

While there is increasing recognition of the unique perspectives and contributions of many young people, these emergent dialogues must contend with centuries of engrained narratives regarding children, which include all people under 18, being subservient, weak, and in need of protection. The dominant narratives of adolescents as “risky” or “hormonal” are residual messages from turn of the century adolescent psychology. Founding fathers and early psychologists created the rhetoric that fueled the social and economic segregation of youth. In his Federalist Paper number 62, written in 1788, James Madison provided an explanation for the 35-year-old age requirement for serving on the Senate,

the senatorial trust, which, requiring greater extent of information and stability of character, requires at the same time that the senator should have reached a period of life most likely to supply these advantages; and which, participating immediately in transactions with foreign nations, ought to be exercised by none who are not thoroughly weaned from the prepossessions and habits incident to foreign birth and education. (Jay, Goldman, Hamilton, & Madison, 2008, p. 159)

This statement has been the standard by which many adults make decisions regarding youth’s readiness and capacity for political participation. Early in the 20th century, Granville Stanley Hall, one of the early child psychologists, theorized our

psychological understandings of adolescence that became the foundation on which many adolescent risk and protection theories have originated. Hall's work was said to be largely non-empirical and based off of a small number of rural White males (Kett, 2003). Hall placed a significant emphasis on the physical maturational process of males in their teens and argued for a relaxation of work-related responsibilities. He also felt that that high schools should be places where young people could be conditioned for patriotism, authority, and military obedience (Hall, 1916). Hall's work influenced the commonly held beliefs regarding adolescence as a time of storm and stress, and the notion that adolescent boys are deviant (Arnett, 2006). Beyond Hall's work, the early 20th century was a time of great debate for how best to manage children and adolescents. The Boy Scouts program was created as a way to tame savage boys into productive members of society (Baxter, 2008). Jane Addams and others led the child protection movement to prohibit the labor exploitation of children, require adequate socialization through compulsory schooling, and provide welfare benefits to dependent children (Margolin, 1978). Reformers positioned children as dependent in order to advocate for their protection (Woolard & Scott 2009). While this greatly improved the lives of many children, labor laws restricted young people's access to income work-related skill

development, and opportunities for youth to practice adult-like roles (Margolin, 1978). It also resulted in separation of youth from most adults in the workplace. In many societies, the start of employment signaled the start of adulthood. However, young people's removal from the workforce forced a new view of adolescence as a distinct period characterized almost exclusively by compulsory schooling.

While at the start of the 20th century adolescence was a topic of considerable concern; these debates largely took a backseat to other movements until the late 1960s. During the Second World War, Franklin D Roosevelt lowered the age for the military draft from 21 to 18. In 1948, Georgia was the first state to lower the voting age to 18. During the Vietnam War, soldiers were troubled by the discrepancy between the voting age, set at 21, and the military enrollment age of 18. In the late 1960s, a strong youth movement challenged the existing statute, which was set at 21 in the founding of the country (Margolin, 1978). Youth rights advocates argued that if a person is old enough to go to war, then they are old enough to vote (Aloi, 2004). While the voting act provision passed in 1965, a supreme court challenge delayed implementation. Yet, in 1971, the 26th amendment was ratified (Aloi, 2004). During the 1950s, scientific "grand" life course theories of Piaget and Erickson focused on temporal developmental milestones

(Steinberg & Lerner, 2004). Two 1950's "social commentary" films, *Rebel Without a Cause*, and *Blackboard Jungle* seem to embody the negative tone associated with adolescence during this period (Brumberg, 1997). Both films include themes that teenagers are moody, rebellious, anti-social, and violent. The 1970s and 1990s, developmental science contributed to understandings of adolescence in relationship to the life span (Steinberg & Lerner, 2004).

Internationally, conversations were emerging related to the right youth have to be heard on matters that impact their lives. Since the early 1900's, a youth rights framework was discussed, starting with the International Save the Children Union in 1923, to the first international declaration of children's rights in the 1950s (Checkoway, 2011). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC), formed out of the Declaration of Children's Rights, was first signed in 1989. The CRC has 54 articles that describe certain rights children should have. Articles 12, 13 and 15 relate specifically to youth having authority and agency. Article 12 assures youth's right to have their ideas and thoughts be given due weight in decision-making particularly in judicially-related issues. Article 13 sets forth youth's freedom of expression and the ability to seek, receive, and impart information. Article 15 relates to youth's right to assemble (UN General

Assembly, 1989). The United States is the only UN member state that has not ratified this treaty (Mehta, 2015). In Europe, where the CRC has been signed and ratified, there has been much more attention to children's participation as a right. In fact, youth have gained rights in education, health care, and to have a place at the table in governmental bodies (Lundy, 2012; Shevlin & Rose, 2008). In nations that have ratified the CRC, there is more recognition of children's rights. Youth in these countries are more often involved in decision-making.

Adolescence Today

Despite the recognition that youth have a critical role to play in their own development, parental not youth rights are the legal standard in the United States. For example, in the Colorado Revised Statutes, states, "Parents have a fundamental right and responsibility to make decisions concerning the care, custody, and control of their children" (Legislative declaration-definitions-children, 2003). Without a mandate for inclusion, or legal recognition of rights, Richards-Schuster and Pritzker (2015) have found that those who work to elevate youth's voice in the United States are often left to advocate for youth's inclusion in decisions that impact them instead of working from a rights-based perspective.

The emergence of positive youth development (PYD) in the late 1990s has resulted in a renewed interest in adolescence. Steinberg and Lerner (2004) argue that we are in our third phase of the study of adolescence, one that is focused on using available scientific literature to facilitate the integration and improvement of policies and practices that support youth's positive development. A working definition of PYD comes from the USAID's YouthPower Learning Initiative, which states,

PYD engages youth along with their families, communities and/or governments so that youth are empowered to reach their full potential. PYD approaches build skills, assets and competencies; foster healthy relationships; strengthen the environment; and transform systems (Hinson et al., 2016 p. 10).

Researchers, governmental organizations, and social service agencies promote a shared commitment to the science and practice of PYD approaches. However, in the early 2000s, several scholars critiqued PYD, arguing that being prepared was not equal to being engaged (Villareul, Perkins, Borden, & Keith, 2003), it focuses too heavily on temporal progress or linear development, justifies social control while simultaneously denying one's existence and the personal costs of growing up (Burman, 2016), that it homogenizes youth, and that it does not account for the structural inequalities that systematically limit young people's access to thriving (Fox & Fine, 2013; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002).

Despite these critiques, PYD is the dominant theory and approach governing policies, programs, and practices for young people in the United States. While PYD requires that environments are intentionally shaped to favor the developing young person (Lerner & Benson, 2003), in many contexts adult's negative attitudes about youth feed norms related to protective isolation of young people despite almost three decades of implementation of PYD (Flasher, 1978). Contexts may lack pro-social norms regarding young people, in part, because adults, who hold negative attitudes and beliefs about young people, have created policies that are overly protective, restrictive, and exclusionary. The systematic subordination of young people as a targeted group with little access to the goods and resources and power has been termed adultism (Flasher, 1978).

Adultism

Adultism was coined in 1978 but has been used little in the scholarly literature in the United States. It has been identified as distinct from ageism: which is more focused on oppression of older adults (DeJong & Love, 2010). Adultism specifically addresses the ways in which adults treat youth (DeJong & Love, 2010). Adultism has also been referred to as childism (Young-Bruehl, 2012) or adultcentricism (Petr, 1992).

Few scholars in the youth development field have included this axis of oppression into literature reviews that foreground the discussion of youth programming. Yet, adultism is often described in the results and discussion sections in youth engagement-related manuscripts, either by name or description, relating to the limitations adults put on youth or their project (see Behrens & Evans, 2002; Conner, Ober, & Brown, 2016).

Like other “isms,” adultism has three conditions: attitudinal, internalized, and institutional (Flasher, 1978). Attitudinal adultism refers to the shared negative attitudes or beliefs adults hold about teens. These attitudes have been inscribed into our language, and physically manifest in our relationships with young people. A statement such as “you are not old enough to understand” (Delgado & Staples, 2007, p. 32) is an example of attitudinal adultism. Internalized adultism refers to the ways in which young people reproduce and internalize the prejudices of youthful inferiority. An example of internalized adultism is youth perceiving that they are helpless or must rely on adults to make their decisions (Bell, 1995). Finally, institutional adultism includes the practices, policies, or laws that normalize and legitimize the marginalization of children and youth (Flasher, 1978). Age-based policies regarding voting and political representation may

result in youth feeling powerless over many of the decisions that impact their lives (DeJong & Love, 2015; Godwin, 2011).

There is a difference between adultism and age-differentiated engagement.

Adultism grows out of stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination based on actual or perceived age, whereas age-differentiated engagement refers to holding appropriate expectations and understanding the actual capacities of a person based off of their age, behavior, and demonstrated competency (Pasupathi & Löckenhoff, 2002). Adultism does not suggest that age is a completely irrelevant social identity, but rather that actual or perceived age is often used to restrict access to mobility or employment without a deeper understanding of the competencies and capacities that each young person possesses. I argue that social workers can seek to understand the unique capacity of their young clients.

The three forms of adultism result in protective exclusion and social isolation of youth, which, in turn, results in multiple forms of oppression including powerlessness, marginalization, cultural imperialism, exploitation, and sometimes violence (DeJong & Love, 2015; Young, 2009). While adultism is alluded to in the youth program literature, and occasionally discussed in social justice pedagogy, it rarely is discussed in mainstream

social work literature as an axis of oppression. This trend may reflect the profession's long history with child protection.

Adultism has emerged out of the cultural, social, and political construction of childhood. It is hard to illustrate the impacts of adultism because it has not been widely studied as a form of oppression; yet, theoretically, adultism operates like and with other systems of oppression. DeJong and Love (2015) used Young's Five Faces of Oppression (2009) to describe how youth oppression fits existing definitions. I build upon this existing work. Importantly, Young (2009) describes the characteristics of a social group as,

a collective of persons differentiated from at least one other group by cultural forms, practices, or way of life. Members of a group have a specific affinity with one another because of their similar experience (or way of life), which prompts them to associate with one another more than with those not identified with the group (p. 37).

Using this definition, it is easy to see the ways in which youth share cultural practices, and are more likely to associate with one another, than those in another (older) group. Young (2009) describes that a social group is not inherently oppressed, and that the group must experience at least one of the five forms of oppression: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, or violence. Expanding upon the work of DeJong and Love (2015), I examine each of these forms of oppression below and

provide evidence to justify how these forms of oppression, are indeed, experienced by or operating in the lives of young people.

Exploitation

Young (2009) defines exploitation as “a steady process of the transfer of the results of the labor of one social group to benefit another” (p. 39). There are three primary ways in which youth are exploited, they are: 1) taxed without representation, 2) routinely asked to participate in unpaid labor in the form of internships, and 3) researched without their consent.

Youth are taxed without representation, a fundamental concern that fueled the American Revolution. Youth who work may pay federal and state income tax and young consumers pay sales taxes. At the federal level, in 2018, single dependents making more than \$12,000 must pay income taxes. In Colorado, all individuals earning an income must pay 4.63% tax on their adjusted gross earnings. Youth spending in 2018 was \$75 billion dollars (Thomas, 2019). Using the annual average combined city, county, and state sales tax rate of eight percent, teens would have contributed \$6 Billion in state sales tax revenue on purchases. Yet, in Colorado and across the US, youth, under 18 years of age, cannot vote, nor can they run for elected office. For example, in Colorado you have to be

a registered voter to run for any school board, and relatedly, you must be at least 18 to become a registered voter. While older young people are legally allowed to run for elected office, young people make up only an insignificant sum of local, state, and federal elected officials. According to the National Conference on State Legislatures, the average age of a state elected official was 56 (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015). Only three percent of people aged 18 to 34 serve on the state legislature (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015). While data are not available nationally to explore the age composition of school board members, one survey representing 67 districts reported that young people ages 20 to 29, make up a paltry 1% of district school board members in the United States (Council of the Great City Schools, 2009). The composition of school boards is much older: 11% of school board members were 30-39, 30% of school board members were 40-49, 33% were 50 to 59, and 25% were 60 or older (Council of the Great City Schools, 2009). Young people contribute meaningful sums of money to the operation of our government yet cannot run for elected office nor can they choose who will represent their interests. Even when young people are legally permitted to run, they are not regularly elected.

Another area of exploitation is unpaid internships. Gardner (2011) estimates that 70-75% of young people in college participate in an internship, and at least 40% of those internships are unpaid. Young women, low-income students, and people of color are significantly more likely to be in an unpaid internship compared to their White, male, higher income peers (Kamenetz, 2006). It is estimated that unpaid interns contribute \$124 million dollars to the welfare of corporate America annually (Kamenetz, 2006). The unpaid labor exploitation of at least 50,000 young people is a demonstration of the intersections of sexism, racism, and adultism.

Finally, researchers have historically exploited young people. As Fox and Fine (2013) write, “there is no other group that has been systematically researched and written about without their consent, wisdom, outrage or their right to re-present” (p. 321). Much of the literature about adolescents has been collected and published without their express consent. Data is collected in schools using passive consent methods, which do not require the active permission on the part of young people. Young people rarely benefit from their participation in this research and are often reduced to a set of risk profiles (Wong, Zimmerman, & Parker, 2010). Relatedly, Fielding (2004) asks, “How confident are we that our research does not redescribe and reconfigure students in ways that bind them

more securely into the fabric of the status quo?” (p. 302). Young people’s money, labor, or participation in research has been used to support our economy and scholarship.

Marginalization

Young’s (2009) definition of marginalization is “a whole category of people expelled from useful participation in social life and thus potentially subjected to severe material deprivation and even extermination” (p. 41). Young people are marginalized because their societal roles are constrained primarily to that of consumer or student (Lesko, 2001). Youth are marginalized by a lack employment opportunity, living in poverty, and dying by suicide at the highest rate in over a decade.

The first way in which youth are marginalized is through lack of employment opportunities. Current rates of youth employment are at the lowest point in two decades. Eighteen percent of high school students work, but according to Child Trends, this number is down significantly from 35.5% in 1999 (Child Trends, 2018). In fact, labor force participation rates fell more for teens than for any other group (Ross & Svajlenka, 2015). When young people do work, they most often are in manual labor type jobs (Godwin, 2011). There are laws that restrict young people from working certain hours and in certain job-types, which increases their dependency on the will of others (Godwin,

2011). Youth employment used to be one form of meaningful engagement that involved opportunities to build confidence and competence.

The lack of employment opportunities may also contribute to higher rates of poverty for young people. According to the National Children's Poverty Center (2017), children are overrepresented among the poor. Over 21% of children live in families whose incomes lie below the federal threshold for poverty, a family of four making less than \$23,000. Almost half (43% of young people) live in families who are considered low income, making less than \$43,000 for a family of four. According to the Annie E Casey Foundation, Hispanic, Black, and American Indian youth are almost twice as likely to live in poverty than White or Asian young people (Kids Count Data Center, 2018). Without access to employment opportunities, particularly those designed to foster development, youth remain at the margins.

Another way youth have been marginalized is through extermination. For the first time in almost two decades, mortality rates for people ages 10-19 are increasing, according to a recent analysis by the Centers for Disease Control (Curtin, Heron, Miniño, & Warner, 2018). The overall death rate for youth increased 12% between 2013 and 2016 due to increases in injury deaths such as suicide, homicide, and unintentional injuries.

The sharpest increases were for suicide, which has increased 56% between 2007 and 2016. The homicide rate for this age group increased 27% between 2014 and 2016 (Curtin et al., 2018). These troubling increases in death rates add dimension to the understanding of how this group is marginalized and how this marginalization contributes to mortality.

Powerlessness

Young (2009) describes powerlessness as those who “lack authority or power even in this mediated sense, those over whom power is exercised without their exercising it; the powerless are situated so that they must take orders and rarely have the right to give them” (p. 43). Young people often lack the authority to make decisions about where they live, with whom they live, where to go to school, what subjects to study, what to eat, what to wear, and with whom they may socialize (Aberson, 2015). My daughter, age 5, regularly describes feeling powerless, her regular retort to my instructions is, “I can’t wait until I am an adult so that I can make all the decisions.” My child, despite my best efforts, recognizes the relative powerlessness of children.

In one recent study of adolescent thriving among 15-year olds, 33% of youth report that they have been involved civically, and only 22% of youth feel they have the

confidence, skills, and opportunities to voice their opinions and influence the things that matter to them (Scales, Roehikepartain, & Benson, 2009). An international survey conducted by the Inter-agency Network for Youth Development spanning more than 186 countries, found that a majority of 13,000 respondents felt there were limited opportunities for youth to participate in decision-making processes (United Nations, 2013).

Particularly disconcerting, youth of color, youth from low-income households, and youth with other marginalized identities are least likely to be involved civically (Fox et al., 2010). This troubling fact is situated in a two primary factors: criminalization and inadequacy of current decision-making opportunities. The exclusion of many youth of color was fostered through segregation policies such as zero tolerance policies (Gordon, 2016). Young people of color are more likely to be suspended and expelled from school (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). Students who are suspended are less likely to engage in civic participation as adults (Kupchik & Catlaw, 2015). These policies have had significant effects on youth participation, particularly for youth of color.

Illustrating these societal trends in a personal narrative, bell hooks describes how she was made to feel powerless as a child,

It must have seemed to them that a monster had appeared in their midst in the shape of a child—a demonic little figure who threatened to subvert and undermine all that they were seeking to build. No wonder then that their response was to repress, contain, and punish (hooks, 1991, p. 2).

She describes the ways that adults fear the limitless thinking of youth who have not yet become complacent in accepting unjust social practices (hooks, 1991). In this respect, it is clear that youth meet the definition of a group who are made to be relatively powerless.

Cultural Imperialism

Cultural imperialism is defined by Young (2009) as “dominant meanings of a society render the particular perspective of one group invisible at the same time as they stereotype ones’ group and mark it as Other” (p. 44). Cultural imperialism is a form of oppression faced by young people in three primary ways: first, adults hold predominately negative attitudes and beliefs about youth; second, the media misinterprets brain science and perpetuates negative stereotypes; and third, the literature on youth development has focused on “becoming,” seeing adolescence as an in between space, a transitional object. While these are the actual experiences of young people, youthfulness and youth culture are commodified and valued.

There is very little recent data about adult's perceptions of teenagers, however, an older Gallup poll showed that adult's described youth primarily as "selfish" and "materialistic" (Bostrom, 2000). Another study found that adults viewed youth as "immature, impulsive, self-centered, naïve, reckless, and silly" (Watts & Flanagan, 2007, p. 782). In a study of 700 adults by Zeldin & Topitzes (2002), adults expressed only marginal confidence in civic capabilities of youth. One young person describes how adult's negative attitudes and expectations translate into adult behavior, she explains, "because they expect one of us to do something bad they don't trust us and some teachers have control over us and treat us very badly" (Choudhury, McKinney, & Merten, 2012, p. 569). Negative beliefs about adolescents reinforce the practice of exclusion and are justified by the media.

Misrepresentations of studies associated with youth's cognitive neurobiology have been used to mark them as "other". The dominant narrative surrounding brain science for adolescents is that it is a time of "storm and stress" (Casey et al., 2010) and that the brain is "under development" until a person reaches 25. These themes mirror that of Hall the early 20th century psychologist. Parenting practices and protective legislation then interpret these deficit-based messages. Parents often serve as "external frontal lobes"

to protect adolescents' brain, justifying external decision-makers authority over adolescents (van de Werff, 2017). Unfortunately, adolescent cognitive neuroscience, still relatively new, and is often incorrectly translated by media and laypeople, says Altikulac and colleagues (2019). Cognitive neuroscience, despite its complex and provisional nature, tends to be presented in the media in ways that affirm the stereotypical portrait of teenagers as risk-takers, moody, and impulsive (Choudhury et al., 2012). The misuse of adolescent brain development science reinforces negative associations of adolescence, obfuscating the positive attributes such as their eagerness to learn. The media's representation of neuroscience "perpetuates rather than challenges existing policy measures, the status quo or modes of understanding of self, others, and society" (van de Werff, 2017, p. 227). Other scholarship has documented the ways that neuroscience data, which makes group-level assertions about brain structure, has been applied, inappropriately, to specific criminal justice cases (Bonnie & Scott, 2013). The inaccurate appropriation of brain science may further justify stereotypes of young people.

Instead of a deficit view, psychologist Dan Siegel, in this book *Brainstorm: the power and purpose of the teenage brain*, suggests we see an adolescent's brain through an asset lens. He describes that the connecting of cortical regions and the imbalance

between the frontal lobe and the limbic system, means that young people experience their lives deeply and passionately (Siegel, 2015). Shifts in the dopamine system mean that young people are willing to take risks and be courageous. This courage allows them to try new things, and to creatively challenge the status quo. As young people differentiate themselves from their parents and among their peers, they turn to the social world to develop their identity. Dan Siegel (2015) argues that deficit narratives impede our ability to authentically connect with adolescents.

While results of the studies of adolescent's brains are often misrepresented in the media, television programs also have been found to portray youth in stereotypical and negative ways. This is important because people often rely on media to shape their perceptions of reality. Youth are portrayed as a drain on the economy and other resources (Kim & Sherman, 2006). Media, which plays a prominent role in young people's lives (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010), portrays female teenagers as obsessed with social hierarchies and male teenagers as violent (predominately young men of color) or adventurous (White males) (Gerding & Signorielli, 2014). This is troubling since youth are particularly sensitive to media portrayals (Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). In other media studies, even when adults were confronted with stories of teens

contributing positively to society, adults' comments centered on how these stories were of "exceptional" youth only (Gilliam & Bales, 2001).

Finally, even positive theoretical expectations of youth focus on what needs to be developed. Becoming a productive or successful adult is emphasized as a primary goal of adolescence. This point is illustrated by the Office of Adolescent Health mission, which is, "leading the nation to ensure that America's adolescents thrive and *become healthy, productive adults*" (italics added) (The Office of Adolescent Health, n.d.). The focus on ensuring productive adulthood, as a prominent aim of youth programs, results in an overemphasis on the future while neglecting the unique capabilities that exist in the present. Youth experience the "youth are our future" rhetoric to mean that they presently have no inherent value (DeJong, 2014). Elizabeth Bishop (2015) challenges the future oriented view of young people, she says "the power of young people not as 'kids' to be controlled and 'children' to be quieted, but as growing adults who possess the capacity to be leaders in the present" (p. 2). By being marked as other, either by the media, neuroscience, or other professionals, youth are made to be largely invisible.

While youth are marked as other, being "youthful" is seen as desirable and used by the beauty, clothing, and fitness industry to sell products and services. Youthfulness is

made into an abstraction and is sold as a commodity to be consumed by all (Slater, 2012).

Sara Heiss (2011) argues that images of the body often present idealized version of feminine beauty—thin, tall, long legged, and always young. The “fountain of youth” signifies the ways in which people desire to reverse or halt time’s effect on the body.

Beyond the commodification of youthfulness, youth culture has been made profitable. In her book *Chasing youth culture and getting it right* (2011), Tina Wells tells businesses how to market to and profit from the \$43 billion-dollar youth market. While youth have been marked as other, youth are also commodified.

Violence

The final form of oppression described by Young is violence. Young (2009) describes violence as “members of some groups must live with the knowledge that they must fear unprovoked attacks on their person or property, which have no motive but to damage, humiliate, or destroy a person” (p. 46). Violence operates in many contexts for youth; they experience violence from family members, at school, and within the community. DeJong and Love (2015) argue that familial violence occurs so often for youth, that there is an entire system of service agencies created to protect them. Adults wield power over children by silencing and threatening them; this power differential

prevents children from reporting incidences of abuse or neglect. Violence against children also intersects with other forms of oppression. Young people of color are more likely to be in the child welfare system and are more likely to be in out of home placements for longer periods than their White peers (Magruder & Shaw, 2008). Youth are not afforded bodily autonomy and violence against youth is trivialized with names like “smacking” or “spanking.” Violence against children, in some respect, is upheld by federal law, Indeed, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed, in the 1977 case of *Ingraham v. Wright*, adults’ authority to use ‘reasonable force’ against children (Young-Bruehl, 2012).

Violence experienced by children in their homes is compounded by other forms of violence that they experience at school and within the broader community. Age-based laws allow police to enact violence on young people. In Colorado, youth under 18 years old can be cited and fined for possessing tobacco products (CRS 25-14-301). Laws, such as this tobacco possession ordinance, allow police to have broad authority to label and target youth who they perceive to be troublemakers (Godwin, 2011). Unfortunately, tobacco possession laws have been unequally enforced and a study has found higher rates of citations for Hispanic and African American youth (Gottlieb et al., 2004). Curfew

laws, enforced by police, are also unnecessarily discriminatory. Young people can be ticketed for doing the same things that other adults do at any hour (Godwin, 2011). These laws were designed to help protect young people from getting into trouble, but for most, it may result in extra police intervention, particularly for youth of color (Bessant, 2004; Godwin, 2011). In her dissertation study of youth's perspectives of their status based on age, DeJong (2014) found that youth felt that adults expected them to do bad things if not supervised, which resulted in adults limiting where youth could go and whom they could be with.

Young people are also policed in schools. As part of the “no tolerance” policy implementation, young people, especially young boys of color, can be arrested in school for non-violent offenses and subsequently, are more likely to have a police record (Eckholm, 2013). Policing in schools is predominately experienced by youth of color. In fact, a report of policing in schools found that 82% of students in New York City schools with metal detectors were Black or Brown (Ofer, 2011). Other reports show that the increased police presence has not increased school safety (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). Regardless of the intent, these policies and police-related encounters lead to accumulations of vulnerabilities and are likely to

negatively impact a young person's confidence and feelings of connection to their environments and institutions.

Adultism in Youth Programs

Adultism is evident in youth programs and impedes program outcomes. Over ten million young people participate in after-school programs (After School Alliance, 2014).

Adultism impedes outcomes by setting youth up for failure and limiting the potential of youth voice. These factors all contribute to strained youth-adult relationships, which are central to the effectiveness of youth development programs (Bowers, Johnson, Warren, Tirrell, & Lerner, 2015; Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010), educational reforms (Mitra, 2009), and social work interventions (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2017).

Adults play a critical role in facilitating youth development programs, but their positive influence can be constrained by negative attitudes towards young people. For example, many adults only have marginal confidence in youth's civic capabilities (Zeldin, 2002). When adults hold these beliefs, they are more likely to make decisions for youth, instead of involving them in decision-making (Bell, 1995). In turn, adults may fail

to provide youth adequate support within programs, unintentionally co-opt programming, or ask youth to sanction deficit policies (Conner et al., 2016).

There is evidence that adults in youth programs consciously or unconsciously set youth up for failure. While adults often turn over the “reins” of project selection, management, and implementation, they often do so without providing appropriate scaffolding and support (Mitra, Lewis, & Sanders, 2013). When youth are given large, seemingly insurmountable tasks that are inconsistent with their experience or capacity, such as setting up a government-based youth commission or changing school laws, with little guidance or support or funding, they often fall short of adult’s expectations (Conner et al., 2016; Ozer, Ritterman, & Wanis, 2010). This “romantic” view of youth engagement only perpetuates the cycle of adultism because adults experience youth as ineffective or incapable. Romanticizing youth’s ideas and contributions is often condescending and just as problematic (Nieto, 1994).

On the other hand, well-meaning adults can co-opt youth councils with programming activities that lack depth, such as bake sales and coat drives. Unfortunately, this decorative programming detracts youth’s attention and energy away from real systemic change (Conner et al., 2016; Matthews & Limb, 2003; McGinley & Grieve,

2010). Youth often feel obliged to accept adult's requests for organizing this type of programming, which again, leads to a cycle of youth decision-making ineffectiveness. In Europe, where youth councils are more common, one study found that while most youth still felt like their work organizing decorative programming was meaningful, adult leaders recognized that they offered a confined sets of responsibilities, and while critical of this, most adults preferred this because it was within their comfort zone and within their job responsibilities (Nir & Perry-Hazan, 2016). Seeing youth as event planners instead of critical change-makers limits the potential new ways adults experience young people and perpetuates the cycle of adultism.

In educational settings including schools and after-school programs, there is evidence that adultism has limited the potential for youth voice. Youth voice is defined as encompassing a range of activities, "from the most basic level of youth sharing their opinions of problems and potential solutions, to young people collaborating with adults to address problems in their schools, to youth taking the lead on seeking change" (Mitra et al., p. 178). In an ethnographic study of a youth participatory action research project, the university-based researchers observed that the teacher-facilitators exhibited adultism by suppressing discussions of racism and rejecting youth's desire to make changes to the

school schedule (Phillips, Berg, Rodriguez, & Morgan, 2010). The examples illustrate the impacts of attitudinal adultism, in which adults limited the topics youth worked on, doubted their intentions, and ended their research project. Adults in these studies did not realize they were being “adultist” and therefore associated the projects’ failures to the youth. This has been referred to as “Type III error,” where a program is abandoned due to lack of results, without accounting for the impact of other factors (e.g., the adult) (Wade, 2001). Indeed, older research has documented that, when youth programs and organizations fail, it is often as a result of adult issues (e.g. absence of leader or lack of adult support) (Stephens, 1983).

While adultism has been documented among youth program adult facilitators, adult decision-makers also hold adultist views that constrain youth’s effectiveness as leaders. As Conner (2016) has reported, adult community members who have interacted with youth organizing groups have “double standards” regarding youth’s advocacy efforts (p 412). If they are too articulate, youth are perceived as pawns of adult activists; if youth are ill-prepared, they are infantilized. Bertrand (2016) similarly found that adult decision-makers were “impressed” by youth’s presentations, but adults surprised reaction to youthful articulateness overshadowed youth’s requests for structural change.

Adultism in Social Work

Agency and self-determination are at the center of youth liberation movement.

Agency and self-determination are core values of the social work profession (NASW, 2017). Yet, social workers were on the forefront of child protection, not necessarily youth liberation, as Young-Bruehl (2012) points out. In fact, the majority of social work texts related to diversity and justice do not include concepts related to youth oppression or adultism. *Teachings for diversity and social justice*, by Adams and Bell (2016), is a notable exception. There are few MSW programs that offer specific coursework in positive youth development or youth engagement more specifically. The Youth and Community Program at the University of Michigan is one such program, but these types of opportunities are limited. In their review of the social work literature, Pritzker and Richards-Schuster (2016) note that studies that position youth as assets comprise a paltry .20% of the articles published in social work-specific journals from 2004 to 2014. In another article focused on the state of the social work youth engagement literature, Richards-Schuster and Pritzker (2015) found that in the United States scholars make a case for youth involvement, while scholarship outside of the U.S. has focused on the quality and depth of participation of young people. While the social work grand

challenge, “ensuring the healthy development of all youth” emphasizes the needs and issues experienced by young people, an explicit discussion of youth participation or engagement is not included in the working papers published in the area to date. The omission of youth as partners in the design, delivery, and study of interventions seems stark given the values of social work.

Internalization of Adultism

All five forms of oppression: exploitation, powerlessness, marginalization, cultural imperialism, and violence operate in young people’s lives. This oppression is often internalized and cause youth to question their own legitimacy, doubt their abilities, and maintain a culture of silence (Checkoway, 1996). In a qualitative study that examined how youth represent, resist, and reconstruct social images of teenagers, one sixteen year old African male described his experience with adults: “A lot of times, people see that you are a teenager . . . and that because you are a teenager even if you have a good idea, you couldn’t have come up with this, cause your only a teenager. You are only in high school. What could you know” (Hilfinger-Messias et al., 2008, p. 164). The teens in this study described how the media contributes to negative perceptions of adolescents; a teen “Samuel” explained “there’s lots of things in papers and things about youth doing things

that's really not too good. We don't hear too much of youth doing good things" (p. 168).

Feelings of inadequacy are compounded by the media's predominately negative portrayals (Choudhury et al., 2012).

In youth programs, when adults retain power, denounce their efforts, romanticize their involvement, or question their credibility, youth may feel less confident, competent, motivated, and less engaged. When adults are discouraging, distrustful or controlling, there is often unnecessary conflict, and it impedes the young person's abilities to learn and practice new knowledge and skills (Tate & Copas, 2003). In another project where youth were researching student's experiences with school disengagement, the youth described how the school administration prohibited them from distributing their survey. In this case, the youth described giving up on their research project due to the barriers that they had experienced (White, Shoffner, Johnson, Knowles, & Mills, 2012). This internalized oppression can also lead youth to doubt themselves and one another, limit their participation, and even dismiss other youth's opinions or capacities as well (Conner et al., 2016). For example, in a youth commission that was codified in statute, youth commissioners attributed the lack of success of their commission to the fact that it was run by youth (Conner et al., 2016). Youth in this study also developed a dependence on

the adult facilitator and replicated patterns of power and privilege creating intergroup hierarchies predominately based on age.

Attitudinal and internalized adultism can also lead to the reproduction of the status quo. Adults can reinforce power hierarchies or persuade youth to unintentionally support deficit-based policies. Taft (2014), for instance, found in her study of the Peruvian movement of working children that both adults and children tended to reproduce deeply patterned behaviors that gave adults greater decision-making power than youth. Often, youth councils, which are sometimes statutorily codified, invite youth to comment on policies created and introduced by adults. These policies are typically intended to reduce risky behavior by youth (e.g., tobacco or alcohol possession, or curfew) (Conner et al., 2016). Yet youth are often pressured, due their relationships with the council or adults who had selected them to participate, to approbate adult-initiated policies without opportunity to critically question the larger systemic forces that create conditions for youth risk-taking or to offer their own policy solutions. Youth councils have been criticized by activist youth of color as reproducing the status quo and replicating unequal balances of power (Taft & Gordon, 2013). When youth are

encouraged to buy-into deficit-based policies, they may unintentionally reinforce adultist narratives.

When age is used as a tool to mark youth as “other” it can have significant and lasting impacts. In her dissertation study that examined the ways in which youth perceived age as status, DeJong (2014) found youth internalized adultism by experiencing pressure, trivializing their difficulties, and perceived themselves as lazy. When adults focused only on a young person’s future; youth felt extreme pressure to manifest success. Youth trivialized their own experiences because they received feedback from adults that their experiences were not important. Furthermore, youth often internalized the belief that they were lazy or not good enough. The youth in DeJong’s study described “giving up” to deal with adult’s negative attitudes or “just moving on” when adults would not listen to youth’s perspective or ideas.

The way that adolescent brain science has been communicated has contributed to deficit views and lack of trust for young people which is then internalized. In a laboratory study, adolescents exhibited negative behaviors after they were presented with negatively valanced neuroscience-based messages regarding their own brains. However, researchers also found that the inverse was true, that when adolescents were presented with positive

associations, they were more likely to use positive strategies to cope with failure (Altikulaç et al., 2019). Hughes (2009) supports this finding and points out that the expectation of adolescent's behavior is predictive of their actual behavior. Altikulaç et al. (2019) argue that there should be more careful framing of neuroscience messages because negatively framed findings can influence behavior. While brain science messages can harm young people, young people themselves do see the inherent inadequacies. In a study that asked young people their perceptions of neuroscience messages surrounding the teenage brain, youth reported that they saw the messages as inadequate in explaining or understanding their behavior (Choudhury et al., 2012).

Throughout this chapter, I have described how youth experience multiple 'faces' of oppression including violence, exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, and cultural imperialism. While adultism is a problem for society as a whole, it is particularly problematic in spaces intended to promote youth development or protect children, such as youth programs or in social work. Experiences of adultism are internalized by young people and lead them to feel lazy, dumb, or less confident. Adultism is but one form of oppression experienced by youth and is compounded by other experiences of sexism, racism, classism, and cisgenderism (Travis & Leech, 2014). Multiple intersecting

identities influence a young person's opportunities for thriving. Therefore, it is important to understand approaches that can contest or disrupt adultism. I propose that youth participatory action research is an approach that enables positive intergroup contact between youth and adults and has the potential to impact attitudinal adultism. Intergroup contact theory and youth participatory action research are both described in more detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORY

To date, there has been little empirical focus on understanding how adultism can be minimized, particularly via youth programs. However, intergroup contact theory from justice-oriented prejudice-reduction work, may provide an avenue to study how attitudinal adultism can be reduced. Youth participatory action research (YPAR) is one positive youth development approach that is, in theory, primed for reducing adultism, supporting youth voice, and creating equity between youth and adults. Bettencourt (2018) argues that YPAR provides a contact zone to contest oppression, particularly adultism. I start this chapter with a description intergroup contact theory and the four conditions that must be present for prejudice reduction to occur. Then, I describe how YPAR creates the conditions for positive intergroup contact to occur between youth and adults.

Intergroup Contact Theory

Reducing intergroup tensions has been a part of social psychology research since the 1940s. An early quasi-experimental study found that White women who were randomized to live with Black neighbors, held their neighbors in higher esteem and were

more in favor of integrated housing than White women who lived in segregated housing (Deutsch, 1951). Building on this research, Gordon Allport introduced a social theory suggesting that optimal contact could reduce prejudice if it included four conditions between in-group members (those who typically have more power) and out-group members (those considered in the minority). Intergroup contact theory (ICT) asserts that in-group members, in this case adults, will reduce prejudice and bias of out-group members, youth, if four conditions are met: 1) equal status in the group, 2) shared goals, 3) intergroup cooperation, and 4) support through laws and customs (Allport, 1954). These contact conditions do not exist in isolation, but instead are interrelated and interdependent.

Intergroup contact is intended to reduce prejudice. Prejudice, defined by Allport (1954), refers to outgroup's "antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalizations" of the ingroup (p. 9). While this definition was used as the foundation for future work, scholars have critiqued Allport's definition because it lacked the recognition of context and role incongruence (Eagly & Diekmann, 2005). Pettigrew, a thought leader regarding intergroup contact, has extended Allport's definition. Pettigrew explains that "prejudice will be activated when outgroups threaten the status quo by

assuming non-traditional roles that violate group stereotypes” (2015, p. 829). Attitudinal adultism is aligned, in part, with this expanded definition of prejudice. Hostile attitudes towards young people rely upon inflexible generalizations, misunderstanding of neuroscience, media’s negative portrayals, and are activated especially when youth take on roles that are seemingly incongruent with their perceived roles as student or consumer. Discrimination is understood as individual actions and societal systems that restrict resources of a group and reproduce inequities in social outcomes (Pettigrew, 2015). However, while ingroup members that have prejudice of an outgroup are more likely to practice discrimination, discrimination most often arises from the societal norms that people unintentionally conform to without explicit awareness that they are doing so (Pettigrew, 2015). Therefore, while adults may be prejudiced against young people, societal norms regarding young people contribute to discrimination.

With these foundational understandings of prejudice and discrimination, I now turn to describe each of the four intergroup contact conditions, which have been found to reduce prejudice. The first condition of intergroup contact theory is that the in-group and out-group have equal status within the context of the group. Equal status may be inconsistent with the status of individuals or different identity groups outside of the

contact interaction (Pettigrew, 2015). Equal status within intergenerational groups means that each person contributes their unique strengths depending on the situation, not necessarily that every decision or action includes both parties (Wong et al., 2010). Equal status also means having equal opportunities to participate in activities, offer opinions, make decisions, and access available resources (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011).

The second condition of ICT is that a group hold or create shared goals. Shared goals mean that the group is working towards a goal-oriented endpoint, accomplishing the goal adds additional connection. The common goal is a joint effort and there is evidence of friendliness and caring (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). The goal must be one that can only be accomplished if both groups contribute uniquely to it.

The third condition is cooperation. Cooperation is defined as an interdependent relationship between two or more parties in which individuals or groups must coordinate actions and promote mutually beneficial outcomes (Dovidio & Banfield, 2015).

Cooperation is said to occur when groups meet regularly and have some level of affective ties with one another (Levine & Moreland, 1994). Cooperation is in contrast to competition (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). Intergroup cooperation requires interdependent effort and exposes group members to each other's qualities and skills (Pettigrew, 1998).

Cooperation occurs when individuals who may represent two disparate groups identify as one single superordinate identity (Dovidio & Banfield, 2015). The creation of a collective identity is, therefore, important to cooperation. However, this is not to say that individuals or groups must lose their identity with their respective groups outside of the contact situation. In fact, some research asserts that maintaining separate group identities while engaging cooperatively blurs the line between the in-group and out-group (Dovidio & Banfield, 2015).

The final condition for intergroup contact to transform prejudice is the support from authorities, laws or customs, herein called “support through laws and customs”. Support through laws and customs refers to the ways in which the environment and authorities therein sanction or have positive norms around the interdependent engagement of the in-group and out-group (Pettigrew, 1998). While there is very little work to explicate what is meant by support through laws and customs for intergroup contact within youth programs specifically, I have applied characteristics from the study of neighborhoods that are illustrative of this concept (see Merrilees et al., 2018). In neighborhoods, higher quality contact over extended periods was important to attenuating racial bias that has been found to increase during adolescence. Therefore, youth program

norms that are associated with high quality and quantity egalitarian contact that limits in-group and out-group comparisons or hierarchies are those that may be more likely to contribute to positive intergroup contact. Importantly, other research has found that intergroup contact that is characterized by animosity and threat increases negative attitudes and maintains prejudice (Aberson, 2015).

Intergroup contact theory originally focused on the short-term impact of reduced prejudice on individuals who were involved in the interaction. Other research has extended the effects of contact to prejudice reduction of entire groups of people (Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011). There is now substantial and conclusive evidence that contact must include these four conditions in order to lead to prejudice reduction. In a meta-analysis of 515 studies with over 250,000 individuals, intergroup contact was related negatively and significantly to prejudice. Furthermore, optimal contact, in which all four of Allport's conditions were satisfied, was associated with significantly greater reductions in prejudice than studies in which all four features of contact were not reported (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). This study found that the effect of intergroup contact was particularly strong when "choice" was controlled for. When participants were randomly assigned to either treatment (contact) or control (non-

contact), thereby limiting the option of choosing to engage with a group, prejudice reduction was statistically higher than groups that chose to be engaged in contact. This meta-analysis tested intergroup contact with both individuals from different racial groups and with other identities (e.g., people with mental illness, disability, lesbian, gay or bisexual) and contact was found to work equally well for reduced prejudice in these different samples. Youth samples were included in this meta-analysis, but only in the context of youth to youth contact for racial/ethnic prejudice reduction.

Contact effects for children have been found to be similar to that of other groups (Tropp & Al Ramiah, 2017). However, there has been relatively little empirical work that examines intergroup relations between youth and adults. One study applied parts of the ICT to youth-adult partnerships (Jones & Perkins, 2006). In this multi-site study using interviews and surveys with 108 adults and youth in 12 programs, groups first identified themselves as youth-led, adult-led, or a youth-adult partnership, then rated their perception of youth involvement, adult involvement and youth-adult interaction. Not surprisingly, youth who were in youth-led groups perceived there to be higher youth involvement. In contrast, adults in youth-adult partnerships believed that they had achieved equal status with youth, but the youth in these interactions did not necessarily

agree. While this study is grounded in ICT, there were not specific measures to assess prejudice reduction. The measures associated with this study were primarily used to classify programs into three different models: youth-led, adult-led or youth-adult interaction, and did not assess contact conditions specifically. Furthermore, this work did not examine micro-practices or interactions that were attributed to any of the contact conditions. This research highlights the potential discrepancies between youth and adult perceptions of intergroup cooperation and equal status, and the need for outside observations of such dynamics. The authors of this study call for future research that explores how youth-adult partnerships navigate shared decision-making power over time, and how this may relate to changing negative perceptions adults have about young people (Jones & Perkins, 2006).

Youth Participatory Action Research

Youth participatory action research is one approach to youth engagement in which youth assume non-traditional roles that violate adult's stereotypes of youth as lazy, disengaged, or apathetic. Given that well-designed YPAR efforts are a collective activity in which youth and adults contribute their unique ideas and perspectives to identify and research a social issue, I suggest that YPAR is an approach uniquely designed to disrupt

attitudinal adultism (Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott, & Morrell, 2017). Intergroup contact theory is validated by a large body of empirical research and provides a critically oriented and novel framework for evaluating youth and adult interactions within YPAR. In this dissertation research study, I explore the practices of adult facilitators of YPAR and interactions with youth program participants that contribute to or hinder intergroup contact between youth and adults. I also explore the relationship between the four contact conditions and attitudinal adultism. Next, I describe youth participatory action research, then, I provide evidence for why YPAR may be uniquely aligned with reducing adult's prejudice of young people through intergroup contact.

YPAR involves critical scientific inquiry (qualitative and/or quantitative), where the approach, results, and implications challenge and extend the traditional research paradigm (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006; Schensul, Berg, Schensul, & Sydlo, 2004). YPAR is a collective activity that reflects multiple perspectives and values, including those of the youth investigators who are often members of the communities they study. The resulting knowledge gained from YPAR projects is active with the intention of supporting social change (Cammarota & Fine, 2010). YPAR has been conceptualized by Rodriguez and Brown (2009) as being guided by three key principles.

First, it is inquiry-based; topics of investigation are grounded in youths' life experiences and concerns. Second, it is participatory; youth are collaborators in the methodological and pedagogical process. Finally, it is transformative; the purpose of YPAR is to actively intervene to change knowledge and practices to improve lives of marginalized youth.

These principles are reflected in the key processes underlying YPAR, which include: iterative development of an integrated research and action agenda, training in and application of research and advocacy methods, practicing and discussing strategic thinking about how to create social change, building alliances with stakeholders; and, sharing power between youth and adults (Ozer & Douglas, 2015).

These YPAR principles are rooted in critical theory which YPAR grows out of work by Paulo Friere and Orlando Fals Borda which asserted oppressed people should be actors in analysis of structural contradictions, to the end of hopeful resistance and disruption of those conditions (Schensul, 2014). Through participation in YPAR, young people foster a meta-awareness of inequalities, systems, and worldviews (Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott, & Morrell, 2017). YPAR challenges the traditional top-down narrative of knowledge construction and validity by employing methods that engage youth and adults in a bottom-up process of co-examining the issues in their lives. Young

people collect data about relevant topics using diverse methods such as surveys, interviews, photography, and videography. In examining issues through research, YPAR pairs social action and reflection, with the aim of contributing to praxis or a critical consciousness among participants as well as systemic change (Friere, 1970). Youths' research findings are then used to agitate, disrupt, and correct social injustices with solutions developed for and by young people.

Theoretically, the guiding principles of YPAR align with the conditions of intergroup contact. The first YPAR principle, inquiry-based, positions youth as the experts in their own lives. Furthermore, youth and adults work in cooperation to conduct their investigation. The participatory principle of YPAR aligns with the equal status condition of intergroup contact. Adult's must intentionally transfer power to young people to ensure youth are authentic collaborators in the process. Finally, youth and adults share the transformative social change goal. By engaging jointly in transformative social change, youth and adults challenge social norms regarding young people which often results in more opportunities for youth voice in organizations (Kennedy et al., 2019).

YPAR has been proposed as a contact zone for positive intergroup contact between youth and adults. The term ‘contact zone’ was coined by Marie Louise Pratt in 1991. A contact zone refers to “to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power” (Pratt, 1991, p. 34). Torre et al. (2009) consider the ways in which participatory action research collectives are contact zones and argues that PAR creates a “politically and intellectually changed space where very differently positioned youth and adults are able to experience and analyze power inequities together” (p. 24). Of particular importance, YPAR must foreground “race, racism, gender, and other axes of social difference in research design, data collection, and analysis” (Akom, Cammarota, & Ginwright, 2008, p. 5).

Two recent reviews of PAR with youth have found that, as a result of engaging with youth, adults were more willing to: consider the needs and perspectives of youth, integrate inclusive and child-friendly practices into programming, and engage in organizational advocacy for related to the issues that young people raised (Kennedy et al., 2019; Shamrova & Cummings, 2017). While YPAR has been posited to provide the necessary conditions for the reduction of adultism (Bettencourt, 2018), there have been no studies to assess conditions within YPAR that disrupt adultism specifically.

Furthermore, the practice of YPAR is highly contextualized by nature, and therefore there is no standard for “meaningful contact.” Contact is often “highly dependent on context and the detail and texture of what happens within spaces of encounter . . . what relations do the micro-practices and spaces of contact have to what happens next” (Askins & Pain, 2011, p. 816). The need to understand what happens within the messiness of contact has been recognized by PAR and YPAR scholars. In fact, this messiness has been understood as the “black box” of youth programs (Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010). Intergroup contact theory may provide the missing link to conceptualize what meaningful contact is within the context of YPAR. In the next section, I describe the methods used to assess the practices of adults that either enabled or constrained intergroup contact and whether there were relationships between these conditions and attitudinal adultism.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODS

This study used a qualitative case study approach. I examined both the practices of adult facilitators that either supported or constrained the four intergroup contact conditions and relationships to attitudinal adultism. I drew on field note data from participant observations of YPAR being implemented in four sites of a single after-school program. I complemented participant observations with interviews that I conducted with program facilitators and staff.

This research occurred with the approval of the University of Denver Institutional Review Board. Parents of youth participants provided consent for program observations. Program staff and adult facilitators provided consent prior to participating in interviews.

Research Context

The After-school Program

The Bridge Project (Bridge) is an after-school program situated in four publicly subsidized housing neighborhoods in Denver, Colorado. It is supported through a partnership between the University of Denver and Denver's Housing Authority and has

provided after-school educational programming to students in Kindergarten through 12th grade since 1991 (Jenson, Alter, Nicotera, Anthony, & Forrest-Bank, 2012).

Bridge programming focuses on academic support, social and emotional learning, developing youth voice and leadership, and college and career readiness (The Bridge Project, 2017).

There is a growing body of scholarship on the impact of Bridge programming on youth and families. A qualitative study using focus group data found that Bridge offers a safe place for youth to foster positive relationships with peers and adults, opportunities for skill-building and academic support, and is fun (Jenson et al., 2012). A very recent two-year longitudinal study found that Bridge youth attended more days of school, were suspended less, and had higher proficiency in all academic subjects than a comparison group (Jenson et al., 2018). While there is a relatively strong foundation of research on the positive outcomes for youth attending programming at Bridge, a focus on the adults that offer these programs and services has been lacking. My dissertation explicitly examines the role that adults play in programming.

The YPAR Program

The leadership programming under examination was a YPAR curriculum called Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL) (Anyon et al., 2007). Bridge began implementing this free and publicly available curriculum in 2013; this dissertation draws on data from the 2016-2017 program year. The YELL curriculum focuses on developing young people's leadership and decision-making skills. Adult facilitators guide youth participants as they gather information about pressing community issues, create a multi-media product about that issue, and share their product with the community. In YELL, young people make decisions both about day-to-day processes, such as norm-setting, and about project-level strategies, such as topic selection and data collection methods. The curriculum encourages a youth-adult partnership model in which adults work *with* rather than *for* youth participants (Anyon et al., 2007).

Studies of YELL in other communities indicate that the program promotes participatory behaviors, socio-political awareness, critical thinking, problem-solving behaviors, and public speaking skills (Anyon & Naughton, 2003; Conner & Strobel, 2007; Harden et al., 2015; Kirshner, 2008; Ozer & Douglas, 2013). Previous research on YELL at Bridge found that youth participants had higher ratings of youth voice and

support from adults than participants who did not engage in YELL (Anyon, Kennedy, Durbahn, & Jenson, 2018).

The original YELL curriculum of 55 lesson plans, ranging from 60 to 120 minutes, was revised to better align with the Bridge program model and consolidated into 21 sessions to be implemented once a week for 90 minutes. Of the 21 sessions, four sessions were dedicated to group formation and learning about inequities, three sessions were dedicated to choosing a topic, six sessions were related to researching a topic, and eight sessions were related to creating a product.

At each of the four sites, adult facilitators implemented the 21-week semi-structured YELL program and participated in a weekly critical reflection seminar led by the Youth Voice Coordinator. Facilitators implemented YELL as part of their required field placement. To strengthen fidelity to the program model and youth voice principles, facilitators participated in a weekly, hour-long coaching seminar for independent study credit. On average, adult facilitators spent 22 hours in these coaching sessions. I also provided intermittent as-needed coaching and support, particularly to the Youth Voice Coordinator.

Adult facilitators received a copy of the YELL curriculum right before the start of the program year. While adults had opportunities to ask questions about the program, there was no formal training on the curriculum or practices to support youth engagement.

The front matter of the curriculum provides some guidance related to the role of adults in

YELL:

Adults who implement this curriculum are allies who understand that youth bring relevant experience and expertise to the issues and activities at hand. Adults in YELL, therefore, take on three roles: facilitators, mentors, and partners. Adults guide and support youth in ways that help to draw out their experience and expertise. As a mentor, adults get to know participants on a personal level, learn their goals, and coach them in developing the skills and attitudes needed to fulfill those goals. Adults also model behaviors, approaches, and attitudes in every aspect of their work with youth. As a partner, adults are invested in the outcomes for youth and the program and use your strengths and capacities. (Anyon et al., 2007)

In the summer of 2016, I supported the creation of a leadership board called the Youth Action Board (YAB) at Bridge. The YAB was a higher-level leadership opportunity for two youth from each site who had completed at least one year of YELL. The YAB was responsible for improving programming at Bridge. YAB youth also assisted with facilitating YELL sessions.

Participants

Four site directors and four YELL facilitators participated in this research. All YELL facilitators were students in a social work program; three were Master of Social Work (MSW) students at the University of Denver and one was in a Bachelor of Social Work program at Metropolitan State University. Three of the facilitators identified as White and one identified as Latino. One facilitator was male, and the rest were female. Three site directors were female, two were Latino, and two were White.

In total, 77 youth attended YELL groups regularly across the four sites. The youth served by this program were racially diverse: 37% were Latino, 40% were Black (including African American and African refugees), 9% were Asian, 8% were multiracial, 5% were White, and 1% were Native American. The primary countries of origin for youth were Sudan, Congo, Kenya, Mexico, and Vietnam. Youth in All households in these neighborhoods were classified as “extremely poor,” with average annual incomes of less than \$8,490 per family of four.

Bridge Site Descriptions

In this section, I provide a profile of each of the four sites: Mountain Vista, Riverwood, Rose Park, and North Kennedy. Profiles include youth demographics, adult

facilitator role and demographics, site director involvement in YELL, participant observer role and involvement, and project dynamics. All of these factors contributed to the power dynamics within each site.

Mountain Vista

Mountain Vista serves over 150 students annually, most of whom identify as African refugees or African American. Anywhere between ten and twenty youth, a majority of whom were male and African-born, participated in YELL each week. The site director, Roman, was a Latino male who was new to Mountain Vista but had worked for Bridge for many years. Roman's involvement in YELL was limited.

Two first-year MSW students, Olivia and Brandon, were charged with facilitating YELL as part of their foundation year internship. Both identified as White; Olivia was female, and Brandon was male. Due to other commitments, Brandon was the facilitator of the YELL group from October to December, and Olivia became the sole facilitator of the group from January to May. Olivia had previous experience with younger children and was a former teacher, Peace Corps member, and camp counselor.

Two research assistants were assigned to record field notes at Mountain Vista. Participant observers were asked to support behavior management and engagement. Erin

was a first-year MSW student, whereas Chris had a bachelor's degree in psychology.

Erin, Chris, and I all identify as White. We observed eighteen YELL sessions consistently and the field notes were very detailed.

Several factors such as topic selection, youth participation, and a changing facilitator, may have influenced the dynamics we observed at Mountain Vista. Topic selection was contested, generally along the lines of gender, and led to the creation of two sub-groups that focused on different topics. One small group of four, mostly female youth, worked on homelessness. A larger and ever-changing group of male youth worked on a project related to Donald Trump's immigration policies. The group working on homelessness held a bake sale and raised \$250 for personal care kits that they distributed at a homeless shelter; they also created a digital story documenting their experience. The group working on Donald Trump's immigration policies collected photos, conducted interviews, and gathered images from the web to create a video about immigration. Both groups shared their products at an end-of-the-year celebration for YELL participants.

Riverwood

Riverwood serves approximately 130 students annually, many of whom are under ten years of age. Participants at Riverwood during my research period were primarily

Asian and Latinx. On average, 20 Asian, Latinx, and African students participated in the YELL program at Riverwood, a slight majority of whom were male. The site director, Hannah, has an MSW and this was her first year working at the site. Hannah identifies as White. However, she was not involved with the YELL program.

Like Mountain Vista, there were several transitions during the year with respect to the facilitators of YELL. The most consistent presence was Zach, a male, Latino who was a senior undergraduate social work student at the time. This was Zach's first experience facilitating groups and his first exposure to middle school-aged youth. In his interview with me, Zach shared that he was very apprehensive about this internship as he preferred to work with younger children on an individual basis. Zach had previously worked in a clinical mental health setting. From January to May, a Master of Counseling female student named Sara, who identifies as East Indian, supported Zach at Riverwood's YELL group.

Two participant observers, Darian and Dr. Schofield Clark, conducted the majority of the observations at Riverwood. Darian was a Master of Education student who identifies as male and African. Dr. Schofield-Clark is a faculty member in media, film and journalism at the University of Denver who identifies as female and White. I

supplemented these observations during the spring quarter (March through May).

Participant observers primarily engaged in activities alongside young people, deepened discussions with probing questions, and spoke with individual youth. Data collection and field note quality were inconsistent throughout the Fall quarter until January, when additional procedures were put into place (e.g., requiring field notes to be completed within 48 hours of the observation, and a senior researcher reviewing field notes to address ambiguities). Overall, we conducted 17 observations and interviews with Zach and Hannah at Riverwood.

Most participants at Riverwood chose depression/suicide as their topic. The youth selected statistics from national and Colorado datasets, chose photos, recorded their voices reading selected statistics, and produced a video that they shared at the end-of-the-year YELL celebration.

Rose Park

Approximately 50 predominantly Latinx and African youth participated in programming at Rose Park. A typical YELL session at this site included six participants, equally divided by gender, who reflected the racial composition of the site overall. The site director at Rose Park was named Claudia who identifies as Latina. She holds an

MSW and had three years of experience at the site. Claudia was active in helping youth in YELL with their research and supporting project facilitation.

Although the group at Rose Park started off with two facilitators, ultimately a woman named Elena became primarily responsible for the group. Elena was a second-year MSW student who had previously facilitated YELL at the site. Elena identifies as White and female. Anna served as the participant observer at Rose Park for the entire program year. She was a first-year MSW student who identifies as a White female. Anna participated in activities, particularly the check-ins, and aided the youth in their research. Overall, Anna observed twenty YELL sessions at Rose Park, however, field notes were shorter in length and less specific than those at Mountain Vista or North Kennedy.

In terms of their project, the most outspoken youth selected cyberbullying as their topic, conducting internet research and interviewing youth at other sites about their experiences with cyberbullying. They presented their work with a presentation and handout at the closing YELL celebration.

North Kennedy

North Kennedy serves an average of 50 youth per year who are predominantly Latinx and African. Six youth, evenly split by gender, regularly attended the YELL

sessions. The site director at North Kennedy was Kelly, a recent MSW graduate. Kelly identified as White. Her role with YELL was limited because she typically left the site before YELL programming began.

Joanna, a first-year MSW student who identifies as White and female, was the sole facilitator of YELL at North Kennedy. Sara, a second year Master of Counseling student who also worked at Riverwood, supported Joanna during the second half of the school year. From November to December, I served as the participant observer at North Kennedy, but from January to May, Madison, a first year MSW student, conducted the observations. We conducted a total of twenty observations from North Kennedy and the field notes were very detailed.

After significant debate, the youth at North Kennedy chose racism as their topic. Unlike other sites that worked almost exclusively on their topic each session, Joanna organized community events and activities for the youth to participate in and learn about their topic. As their final product, the youth planned and executed a “Know Your Rights” training for their community and created a video about racism that included photos from their event, facts about racism, and clips from a skit.

Data Collection

There were two types of data used in this dissertation, observations and interviews.

Observations

An interdisciplinary research team collected the field note data from November 2016 through April 2017. The team was comprised of students and faculty from the fields of education, social work, and media, film and journalism. Participant observers included both junior and senior scholars with varying degrees of research experience. One of the participant observers was a professor, one was a doctoral candidate, three were Master of Social Work students, one was a Master of Education student, and one was a volunteer with a bachelor's degree in science. We assigned one participant observer the sites with less than ten youth, and two to the larger sites with more than ten youth. At sites with two observers, when the youth would break up into groups, participant observers would follow different groups to provide a complete observation record.

After completion of the online required Health and Information Privacy course, all participant observers attended a four-hour training on our observation protocol. Participant observers were trained to record reported speech (quotes that are reported

directly), indirect reported speech (speech that is summarized or paraphrased), and non-verbal actions of participants and the facilitator (Wood & Kroger, 2000). Observers were also instructed to note down power dynamics, such as the facilitator's emphasis on behavior management versus engagement, day-to-day and project-level decision-making, and the physical arrangement of adults and youth. During the observer training, we discussed the importance of minimizing bias when taking field notes.

Each participant observer took field notes during YELL sessions by recording interactions between adult facilitators and youth members. These notes were transcribed into a complete field note no later than 48 hours after each session. At the two sites with two participant observers each, one research team member would provide the context for each session and their specific observations of youth-adult interactions. The second observer would then add further detail to these field notes based on his/her observation. Field notes were then reviewed and commented on by more senior members of the research team to ensure that the observer provided as complete a record as possible. These comments were resolved after participant observers added additional detail or removed inferences. During weekly research team meetings, we discussed how to address challenges such as youth distrust regarding the purpose of the field notes.

The first time each observer was at a site, they did not take field notes, but instead focused on relationship-building. Participant observers also had an explicit conversation with adult facilitators and youth about their role in the group. Participant observers served in various roles throughout the seven-month observation period, including as providers of disciplinary actions, support staff, and mentors.

Participant observations started in late October and early November, more than a month after the YELL sessions began, to allow each group to build cohesion. Most sessions associated with group norming and learning about inequities had been completed prior to the observation period. The majority of the observation period at the sites happened while youth were conducting research on their chosen issue and creating their product. At each site, the YELL groups were observed approximately 18 times. In total, the research team conducted over 150 hours of observations.

Interviews

To compliment, triangulate, and further contextualize intergroup contact, I conducted interviews with YELL facilitators and site directors at the end of the program year. Interviews with site leadership allowed me to explore the presence of the final ICT condition, support through laws and customs. I developed the interview guide as part of a

previous study on adult facilitators’ experiences implementing the YELL curriculum (Kennedy, 2018). I conducted all interviews either by phone or in person. A junior member of the research team transcribed the recorded conversations verbatim. Interviews ranged from 40 to 65 minutes in length. All participants responded to the same set of 15 questions, included in the appendix. The count of field notes and interviews are summarized in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Summary of data sources

	Participant Observations	Post Program Interviews
Rose Park	20	2
Mountain Vista	18	2
North Kennedy	20	2
Riverwood	17	2
Total	75	10

Table 4.2 summarizes the study participants—adults, Youth Action Board, and research team members—at each site. All names have been changed to protect the anonymity of participants.

Table 4.2: Summary of study participants by site

	Mountain Vista	Riverwood	Rose Park	North Kennedy
Adult facilitator	Oliva (Jan-May) Brandon (Sept-Dec)	Zach Sara (Jan-May)	Elena	Joanna Sara (Jan-May)
Site director	Roman	Hannah	Claudia	Kelly
YAB participants	Ellis & Artemis	Fatima	Rosa	Eri & Iselle
Research Team	Chris (all year) Heather (Jan-Mar)	Lynn (Oct-Mar) Darian (all year) Heather (Mar-May)	Anna (all year)	Heather (Oct-Dec) Madison (Jan-May)

Data Analysis

Analytic Framework

I analyzed field note and interview data using techniques from critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2003). CDA was ideal for this study because it allows for the interrogation of power within interpersonal exchanges (e.g., between adults and youth), both spoken and unspoken. CDA recognizes that these interactions are situated within particular social and political contexts (Graham, 2003). Discourse analysis positions research data as a discursive construction of and interaction between identities

and the self (Rogers, 2011). CDA involves invoking particular critical theories to further contextualize and interpret research data.

In this study, I used Norman Fairclough's interpretation of CDA that involves the interrogation of semiotic aspects of teaching and learning that either lead to social reproduction or transformation (Rogers, 2011). While discourse analysis does not offer a prescriptive set of procedures, coding typically happens when a text is broken down into units, or episodes, the smallest workable chunk of data (Wood & Kroger, 2000). The analytical and interpretive process includes data collection, transcription, initial reading, and multiple rounds of coding moving between segments, documents, and the greater corpus. In discourse analysis, the process of coding is a recursive dialectic between what is written and the social construction of meaning (Fairclough, 2003). I primarily used tools from CDA for breaking down exchanges and assessing power relations.

Analytic Process

I imported field note and interview data into Dedoose Version 7.6.17 (SocioCultural Research Consultants, LLC, 2017), a web-based platform for managing and analyzing qualitative and mixed methods research data. I selected Dedoose because it

allowed for coding at the document level which enabled me to compare sites, ICT conditions, and attitudinal adultism.

Analysis for Research Question 1, the practices that either constrained or enabled the four ICT conditions, began with an initial reading of all documents. During the initial reading, I created excerpts of field note data by breaking down larger ninety-minute sessions into episodes—definable activity or tasks—and then into different exchanges (Graham, 2003). I retained excerpts for exchanges that reflected an intergroup contact condition.

Discourse analysis requires that the reader notice and record the emotions that emerge throughout the analysis process (Rogers, 2011). I used analytic memos during the initial reading phase to document how I interpreted the excerpts and why I read them in a particular way. At this stage, excerpts that seemed illustrative of ICT conditions were tagged with an analytic memo. My memos also captured the early differentiation of ICT conditions and possible definitions. All documents were part of the initial reading process. I assigned document-level descriptors to each field note for site and stage of the project (group norming, establishing a topic, researching the topic, creating a product, and other) to allow for comparisons within and across sites.

At the completion of initial reading, I reviewed my memos and associated excerpts. Drawing on language and definitions from the literature on ICT (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Pettigrew et al., 2011) along with reflections from my memos, I created a codebook that operationalized each condition (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: ICT conditions and definitions

ICT Element	Definition
Equal status	Indications that the adult actively and intentionally gives power to young people. Each person contributes his or her unique strengths depending on the situation. Youth have opportunities to offer opinions, make decisions and access resources.
Shared goals	The group is working towards a goal-oriented endpoint, where accomplishing the goal adds connection. Goals can also be demonstrations of compassion and efforts that involve having fun. The common goal is a joint effort, and there is evidence of friendliness and caring.
Cooperation	Interdependent effort that exposes group members to each other's qualities and skills. Cooperation instead of competition.
Support through laws and customs	The environment and authorities therein sanction or have positive norms around the interdependent engagement.

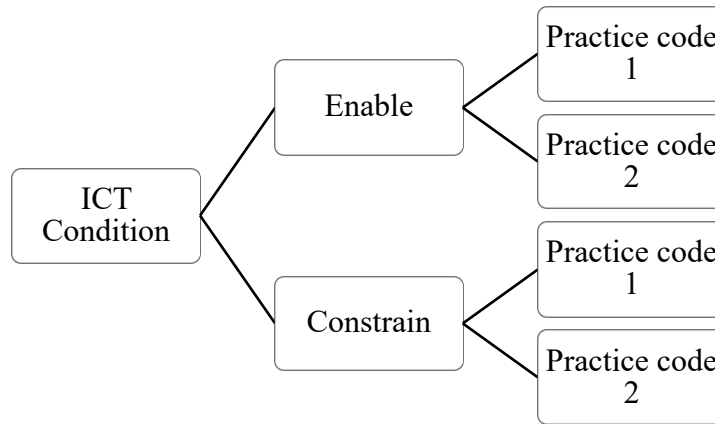
During the second round of coding, excerpts were assigned one of the four ICT conditions categories. Memos were used to reflect upon and document further distinctions between the four conditions. In addition, I tagged each memo with either “enable” or “constrain” to capture instances in which practices or interactions facilitated or limited ICT conditions. I documented my rationale and decision-making for assigning particular memo tags. These analytic memos were analyzed inductively to create

definitions of “enable” and “constrain” subcategories for each of the ICT conditions. The enable subcategory referred to a practice that contributed to a positive site culture; the constrain subcategory referred to practices that seemed to restrict the activity of one of the conditions. These subcategories were accompanied by examples from the text and added to the codebook.

During the third round of coding, I applied the enable and constrain subcategories to all of the field notes from Mountain Vista and Rose Park. I thematically analyzed the excerpts to identify common practices and interactions that facilitators engaged in that either enabled or constrained three of the primary ICT conditions (Joffe & Yardley, 2004). This expanded codebook was applied to all of the field note data in the fourth round of coding.

The full codebook that includes ICT categories (equal status, shared goals, cooperation, support through laws and customs), subcategories (enable or constrain), and the codes within each subcategory, along with definitions of those concepts was then applied to the full corpus of data (Appendix 2). During this final round of coding, codes were collapsed or expanded. Figure 4.1 illustrates the hierarchies of coding used.

Figure 4.1: Hierarchical ICT coding framework



The synthesis stage of data analysis involved triangulating the findings from field notes and interviews and exploring comparisons across sites. To accomplish this, I used the quantification tools in *Dedoose*. The automatic quantification of codes and visualization of data allowed for easier recognition of patterns, which is critical to the discourse analysis process (Wood & Kroger, 2000). Given the issues of field note quality for Riverwood and field note length for Rose Park, I used the normalize feature in *Dedoose* to adjust counts relative to the number of excerpts in each sub-group when making comparisons. The normalize feature accounts for variability in field note count and quality.

For my second research question, the relationships between intergroup contact and attitudinal adultism, I used the site summaries and interviews with site directors. First, drawing on ratings for each ICT conditions, I created a site characterization which

then served as a summary of positive intergroup contact. Using a scale from low to high, I assigned each site an overall indicator of the presence of three enabling intergroup contact conditions: equal status, shared goals, and cooperation. Sites with code occurrences at least one standard deviation below the mean code occurrence were labeled as “low.” Sites with code occurrences within one standard deviation of the mean were coded as “medium.” Finally, sites with code occurrences more than one standard deviation above the mean were coded as “high.”

I created a separate scale for support through laws and customs based on the site director’s involvement in YELL, their views surrounding young people and youth leadership, and the degree of youth involvement in decision-making at the site. This rating was based on non-nominal factors because the site director interviews could not be quantified in the same manner as code occurrences for field note data. Ratings of “low” for institutional support meant that the site director constrained intergroup contact more often than enabling it. Institutional support ratings of “medium” meant that a site director or other staff had mixed practices or responses. A rating of “high” meant that the site director enabled intergroup contact more often than they constrained it. This served as a

summary for positive intergroup contact that allowed me to investigate the relationships between the ICT conditions and attitudinal adultism.

Next, in order to assess attitudinal adultism, I began with an initial reading of all of the adult facilitator interviews with the definition in mind. Attitudinal adultism refers to the shared negative attitudes or beliefs adults hold about teens (DeJong & Love, 2015; Flasher, 1978). I selected attitudinal adultism for two reasons: first, it is most aligned with my definition of prejudice, and second, I did not have the data to assess internalized or institutional adultism. I used this initial reading to create a set of four indicators of attitudinal adultism: pronoun use, adjectives used to describe middle school students, perceptions of being an ally to young people, and perceived personal and professional growth as a result of working with YELL youth. These indicators were illustrative of adults' attitudes towards young people.

The first indicator, pronoun use, allowed me to understand the facilitator's perceived relationship to young people in their YELL group. The following interview questions were used to understand pronoun use:

- What were your goals for the youth in YELL?
- How did the youth change during the year?

- Do you feel like you reached your stated goals?
- What was your end project?
- What do you think about the impact of the project?
- Is there anything you would do differently?
- How did you feel at the celebration?

Adults used three pronouns to describe their relationship to their YELL group: they, we, and I. I conceptualized these three pronouns on a continuum. The pronoun “I” signaled that the facilitator took responsibility for the group’s decisions and actions. Using “I” was categorized as high adultism. The use of “they” or “the kids” signaled that the facilitator viewed themselves as separate from the group, and thus was indicative of higher attitudinal adultism. The “we” code signaled that the facilitator saw themselves as a member of the group, and therefore was indicative of lower levels of altitudinal adultism. I created codes for each pronoun and applied them to the interview transcripts whenever facilitators used this language.

The second indicator that I used to assess attitudinal adultism was the adjectives that adult facilitators used to describe middle school students. For this indicator, I analyzed participants’ responses to the following interview question: “Please name five

words that you associate with middle school students.” Words with a negative valence were indicative of attitudinal adultism. Adjectives that were descriptive of this developmental age (e.g., growing) were similarly viewed as indicative of adultist beliefs or attitudes. Developmental adjectives are most often paired with negative associations of adolescents. Positively-valenced adjectives signaled strengths-oriented beliefs or attitudes about the youth in the group.

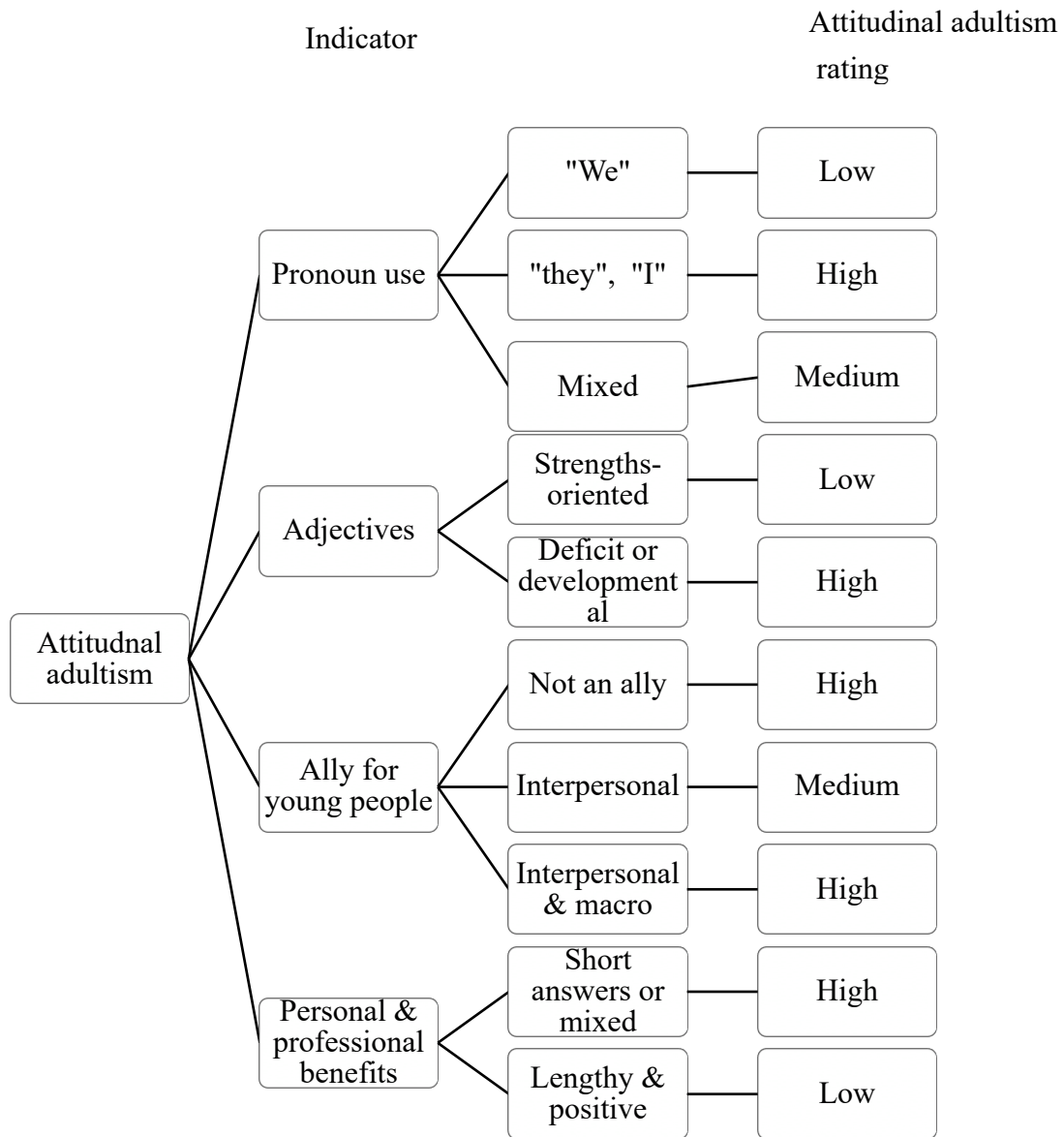
The third indicator of attitudinal adultism was the way that adults described being an ally to young people. An adult ally is a person who partners with youth, respects their ideas and abilities, and works to open up spaces for youth voice in predominately adult-dominated venues (Gordon, 2007; Gordon & Taft, 2011). Being an adult ally means you engage in lower levels of adultism. There was a single interview question for this indicator: “Do you consider yourself an ally for young people?” If so, what does that mean to you? A response that most signaled allyship included describing the intentional practices that an adult would engage in at the interpersonal and macro level. At the interpersonal level, responses that reflected low adultism included a proclamation that they, as an ally, would intentionally work to equalize power within rooms of young people. At the macro level, youth allyship meant that adults were willing to work within

systems to disrupt power hierarchies in order to make more opportunities for youth participation in decision-making. When adults did not describe themselves as an ally, and when adults did not describe both interpersonal and macro allyship, this was coded as indicative of attitudinal adultism. When adults described themselves as an ally and could describe both interpersonal and macro-level strategies for allyship, this was categorized as low adultism.

The final indicator that I used to explore attitudinal adultism was the depth of description regarding how adult facilitators had changed as a result of engaging with youth in YELL. A belief that youth have strengths and assets to offer adults may disrupt the notion that youth are the only beneficiaries of youth programs. The two interview questions associated with this indicator were: “How do you think you’ve benefitted from being involved in creating community change with youth?” and “Has what you’ve learned been integrated into your current work/practice? If so, please describe.” When adults provided rich examples of how they had changed, I categorized it as low attitudinal adultism. When adults could not describe how they had changed or provided brief responses, I applied the code for high attitudinal adultism. The coding tree below (Figure

4.2) illustrates how codes related to attitudinal adultism were related to the overall ratings of adultism.

Figure 4.2: Hierarchy of codes associated with attitudinal adultism



After creating ratings for each site based on the four indicators of attitudinal adultism, I created an overall site characterization in order to examine the relationship between ICT conditions and adultism. Given the dearth of tools or metrics to assess adultism, I established site ratings relationally. The facilitator who had the most ratings of “low” for attitudinal adultism was given a “low” characterization overall. The facilitators with mixed “low” and “high” ratings were given a “medium” rating overall. The facilitator with the most ratings of “high” for attitudinal adultism was given a “high” rating overall.

To examine the relationship between ICT conditions and adultism, I examined patterns related to how the ICT site characterization and the attitudinal adultism characterization related to one another. I first created a graph of attitudinal adultism and enabling ICT conditions. I then returned to *Dedoose* to see how differing levels of attitudinal adultism among facilitators overlapped with the presence of enabling and constraining practices at each site.

Positionality, Reflexivity, Epistemology, and Trustworthiness

Engaging in reflexivity, discussing my positionality, and considering epistemology are all important to ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research

(Creswell & Miller, 2000). From September 2015 through June 2019, I was deeply embedded at the research site. While this aligns with my community-engaged, activist scholar, and social constructivist epistemological orientation, it influenced this research in important ways.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity involves scrutinizing my role in this research to understand how I may have influenced it (Finlay, 2002; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Reflexivity is not a single activity, but rather a process (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). I worked with the Bridge Project for four years, from 2015-2019. During this time, I played many roles that went beyond those of a traditional researcher. I led the redesign of the YELL curriculum, organized coaching sessions with YELL facilitators, provided technical assistance to staff and interns, wrote grants, and designed a new youth leadership structure. During the 2016-2017 program year, I observed at three of the four sites: North Kennedy (November to December 2016), Mountain Vista (January to March 2017), and Riverwood (March to May 2017). As a result, my involvement had a significant influence on the observational data collected during this time.

I drew on these experiences when developing my interview questions and they also filtered my interpretation of the findings. In some instances, I had to bracket, or attempt to remove the influence of, my unrecorded interpersonal interactions with site staff (Tufford & Newman, 2012). This bracketing involved returning to the data to find evidence for some of the interpersonal dynamics I knew to be at play.

Throughout the dissertation research process, I also engaged in critical self-reflection about the relationship between my research and practice experiences. While personal experiences often drive social science inquiry (Finlay, 2002), I had to differentiate what I thought I knew from practice from what was present in my actual data. When I felt too close to the data, I would take a break and discuss my findings with others. At other times, I wrote memos that reflected discordance between my findings and what I believed to be true about youth work.

Positionality

Positionality is a process of reflexivity that involves acknowledging who we are as individuals and as members of groups in the research process (Chavez, 2008). This research study involved youth of color who live in public housing, adult social work students, research team members, and me. I identify as a White, middle-class, adult, and

female. My interpersonal interactions with youth laid bare our racial and class differences. During the Summer of 2016, I listened as young people recounted their experiences with the police after a video surfaced of a police officer shooting and killing an unarmed black man. The youth described the extra precautions they take in encounters with police. I reflected how I will never have to tell my children to fear the police. As a member of a predominately White research team, our identities brought power into the space that may have reinforced racial and age-based hierarchies between the youth and adults. Throughout this research, I engaged in reflection individually and we (as a research team) engaged in reflection collectively on power and how it operated. For example, we grappled with how to manage taking detailed field notes while still participating in activities. These moments of reflection resulted in us being more mindful of our interactions and adjusting our practices. As a result, we sat alongside youth, answered their questions about our backgrounds honestly, and acknowledged power differentials between researchers and facilitators.

Epistemology

Beyond recognizing my position within this research, in doing CDA-based research, I must recognize the various agents that constituted this research. In discourse

analysis, data analysis is an interplay between the actors, the data, and the researcher (Rogers, 2011). Inherently, this raises important issues related to power dynamics that are embedded within the research context. The power dynamics between different positions and levels of education among staff, research team members, and young people influenced the data. The social construction of verbal, non-verbal, and written communication occurred when adult facilitators interpreted lesson content, observers took field notes, and when I analyzed and made meaning from the field notes and interviews.

Trustworthiness

Validity, or trustworthiness in qualitative research, is understood as employing a variety of tools and processes throughout the research process to ensure the credibility of the data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). These tools include research question selection, verification in data collection, member checking, memoing, triangulation, thick description, peer reviews, and audit trails (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I have used each of these tools to bolster confidence in my findings.

First, the research questions were amended to more closely align with the methods of data collection and analysis. Initially, I had four research questions:

- 1) Do youth-led action research programs create the conditions necessary for positive intergroup contact between youth and adults that could minimize attitudinal adultism?
- 2) Is attitudinal adultism minimized through facilitating youth participatory action research with diverse middle school students of color?
- 3) Does intergroup contact theory help explain how and to what degree adults minimize their adultism as a result of facilitating youth participatory action research?
- 4) What specific techniques did facilitators use to strengthen or constrain the four intergroup contact conditions?

Revising my research questions meant that my questions matched the type of data that I collected and analysis that I performed. My revised research questions are:

1. What practices or interactions occurred during a YPAR program that either strengthened or constrained intergroup contact between youth and adults?
2. Does the presence and magnitude of constraining or enabling conditions relate to attitudinal adultism among facilitators?

To verify the field note data, the senior researchers (Dr. Schofield Clark and I) read each of the observation records to ensure that participant observers provided an objective and descriptive account of the interactions. Writing and revisiting analytic memos was also an integral part of this research. I took analytic memos in *Dedoose* and in a notebook. These memos served as an audit trail for the major decisions I made. I discussed recurring issues from these memos during regular meetings with the chair of my dissertation committee and resolved them through consensus. When a choice was unclear, we returned to the literature when possible and appropriate.

I provided thick and rich descriptions of each of the sites to contextualize the study's findings. Furthermore, I have described in detail, the processes of data analysis in order to be transparent and enable replication. Another tool for ensuring trustworthiness of interpretation is member-checking. I involved research team members in discussing my understanding and interpretation of the findings. I presented my findings multiple times to our research team, made up of participant observers from 2016-2017, to check alignment with what they observed.

Triangulation occurred at multiple time points. First, I used the intergroup contact literature to validate the codebook definitions. Next, I triangulated the findings between

field notes and interviews. Finally, I looked for convergence with or divergence from my findings with the extant literature on youth development practices. In cases in which outliers were found, I revisited my data to confirm findings.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

The findings of this dissertation are organized in two main sections. In section one, I address my first research question by describing the practices and interactions that enabled or constrained each of the four ICT conditions. In section two, I report on the relationship between intergroup contact and attitudinal adultism. This includes a description of the enabling and constraining practices for each of the four intergroup contact conditions. I describe the site characterizations and the presence of the four attitudinal adultism indicators. I close section two by presenting notable patterns between attitudinal adultism and ICT conditions.

Section 1: ICT Conditions and Enabling and Constraining Practices Across Sites

In this section, I present the findings associated with the practices and interactions that enabled or constrained the ICT conditions, which were gleaned through observational field notes and interviews. Using multiple rounds of coding, I started with the four deductive ICT condition categories and then subcategorized excerpts as either “enable” or “constrain.” Finally, I inductively derived the prominent practices that

enabled or constrained each of the four intergroup contact conditions and applied these codes across field notes.

Out of the four ICT conditions, equal status was coded most often, followed by shared goals and cooperation, which were coded almost half as often. The subcategory of constrain was coded half as often as enable for three out of the four ICT conditions: equal status, cooperation, and shared goals. The fourth ICT condition, support through laws and customs, was coded the least frequently. Each of the ICT conditions are defined below along with the subcategories (enable and constrain) and codes related to practices and interactions associated with each ICT condition. I use multiple excerpts to contextualize the findings.

Equal Status

Equal status was the most frequently applied code among all of the four ICT conditions. Equal status was defined as instances in which adults were actively and intentionally transferring power to young people. This category was also used when adults supported the opportunity for equal participation in activities, encouraged youth to offer opinions, invited youth to make decisions, and facilitated access to resources.

Enabling practices and interactions. There were two prominent practices associated with enabling equal status: letting youth lead and make decisions and facilitating dialogue and using open-ended questions.

Allowing youth to lead and make decisions. This code was also applied when youth made decisions—whether through a vote or discussion—about the activities of the day, the project, or product. This also included times when youth wrote on the board. This practice facilitated the transfer of power from adults, who are often default decision-makers, to youth. This code was applied to 122 excerpts in 55 documents (field notes and interviews). The degree to which youth were encouraged to make decisions and lead was conceptualized as a continuum, from small task-specific decisions, to larger decisions related to activities, and finally to encouraging youth to lead sessions. Examples along this continuum are presented below.

One seemingly inconsequential way in which adults transferred power to youth was to invite them to write on the board as part of the activity. This practice was most common during the earlier sessions when youth were encouraged to write down group norms or potential topics. Often, adults gave youth the choice to write, as the following field note exemplifies, “Elena then suggested writing important criteria for a topic on the

board. She asked the group if they wanted her to write on the board ‘or one of you guys?’ KA eagerly volunteered” (Rose Park, November 30, 2016). Giving youth the option to write and then allowing them the freedom and responsibility to capture their peers’ ideas was one way adults allowed youth to have power.

Another way youth were encouraged to lead was through making decisions. Adults invited youth to make a variety of small decisions, such as what the snack would be or when to take a break, as well as larger decisions, such as the way they wanted their project to be shared. Youth were encouraged to make decisions in two related and complimentary ways: through voting and discussion.

Across sites, adults invited youth to vote on snacks that they might have or on field trips that they would like to take if they participated at a certain level. The following quote exemplifies how Elena at Rose Park engaged her students to decide which snack to have:

Elena then led the group into deciding what snacks they wanted. . . Everyone went around and said snacks or special treats they would like for YELL. Elena told the group that Katie would be going to get the snacks from Costco. Elena wrote down all of the requests youth had. (February 22, 2017)

Smaller opportunities to make decisions contributed to equal status.

Adult facilitators, sensing the energy in the room, checked in with youth and let them verbalize whether or not they needed a break, like in the following field note at Riverwood, “At this point, the room had started getting chaotic and Zach and Sara tried to talk to the youth to be more focused. Zach then asked, ‘do we need to have a break?’ The youths agreed and Zach asked them to take a five-minute break” (January 30, 2017). Asking youth if they needed a break was a small way to share power.

Adult facilitators across all four sites also invited youth to make larger, more substantive decisions related to the design of their final YELL product. At North Kennedy:

Joanna goes over the presentation styles of interviews, photovoice, and surveys. And gives examples of how they would be possible products to make. The kids are actually quiet and listening while Joanna explains. Joanna asks if the students have other ideas for types of products they could create that aren't listed on the whiteboard; Gamal wants to start voting already; Ender explains why he likes photovoice. Gamal puts tallies on the board; Joanna goes around the circle asking people for their votes. Joanna speaks up “can I say something? Iselle voted for

interviews but it looks like photovoice is going to win but we can interview people for part of our video so we can combine it” (February 1, 2017).

In this excerpt, Joanna mediated but did not unnecessarily insert herself into the discussion. She encouraged the youth to listen to one another and choose their end product.

When youth, particularly those in the YAB, were invited to facilitate activities or sessions, this was considered to be the highest degree of youth leading. At Riverwood, as youth entered the room, “Zach said that Sara or Fatima would lead the check in. Fatima asked to ‘get us started.’ She said that we would go around the circle and say our names and something we had done over Spring Break (because they hadn’t had YELL since break)” (April 10, 2017). Leading the check-in was a relatively simple way for youth voices to be centered.

At Mountain Vista, starting in January 2017, Olivia decided that Ellis and Artemis, who were both on the YAB, could take on more of a leadership role in planning and executing the YELL sessions. Both young people were slightly older and had participated in YELL for multiple years. Throughout the winter (from January to March), Ellis and Artemis took on a major role in facilitating sessions. They facilitated until each

group was actively leading separate projects. The confidence Ellis brought is exemplified in the following quote: “Ellis walked in and confidently took charge of leading the group, saying ‘All right, everyone sit down.’ He asks the group, in the warm up, ‘what was their favorite part of the movie they watched?’” (February 8, 2017). Ellis was invited by Olivia to start the group, lead activities, and lead entire sessions. While this degree of power sharing only occurred at Mountain Vista, allowing Ellis and Artemis to lead was a significant commitment to ensuring equal status.

Facilitating dialogue and using open-ended questions. The second most common practice associated with enabling equal status was when adults facilitated dialogue and asked open-ended questions. Dialogue occurred when multiple youth were able to provide their perspectives and ideas before an adult interjected. This code was applied to 95 excerpts in 40 documents. Often, in these types of discussions, adults, whether facilitators or research team members, started the conversation but then withheld their own comments and allowed the young people to respond. The following field note from Riverwood exemplifies one way this occurred:

Lynn asks if there are people in their school that they could talk to about depression and suicide. TU says that they have a school counselor; KD says her

school doesn't have one. Sara asks the students one by one if they have a counselor in their school. She then asks them if they would see a counselor if they have problems. FA says she wouldn't go to a counselor. TU agrees. Young people don't want the stigma, FA suggests. TU says he thinks the counselors at his school are "not professional." He then goes to mention that some young people cut themselves when they're depressed. Sara asks "if someone is cutting do they need to talk to someone?" Yes both TU and FA agree. "You have to go to the counselor if they see cuts," FA says, and TU agrees. NA is watching and listening; KA is still on her own on the computer. "Even if they're healed cuts?" Sara asks. She shows them a healed cut on her arm. TU says if there are a lot, of cuts, they'd talk (February 27, 2017).

Several youth were able to share their experiences while the adults, in this case Sara and Lynn, participated in the conversation, infrequently asking questions to probe for deeper reflection. Youth were not interrupted when they voiced confusion or spoke in a critical manner. Adults offered information, validation, and reassurance.

Constraining practices and interactions. While adults engaged in practices that enabled equal status twice as often as they engaged in practices that constrained it, there

were two primary codes associated with constraining equal status: adult policing youths' conversations or behavior and asking closed-ended questions or lecturing.

Policing youth's conversations, participation, and behavior. Policing was a way that adults reinforced traditional power hierarchies or exerted control over youth.

Excerpts in which adults stopped youth from having certain conversations, restricted how they moved within the space, limited restroom use, or openly discouraged conversation received this code. Fifty-four excerpts related to this code appeared in 31 documents.

In terms of adults limiting or restricting youth movement, use of the restroom was an ongoing power struggle at two sites, Mountain Vista and Riverwood. At Mountain Vista the large group size contributed to ongoing tensions between participation and power:

Olivia was trying to get everyone's attention she screamed "LISTEN UP!!" She then said that today she was being very lenient on the rules and that people kept leaving the classroom and they knew they aren't supposed to be doing that. She reminded them that they have to listen (March 1, 2017).

Policies related to use of the restroom and youth's ability to move throughout the site were often set by the site director but enforced by the adult facilitator. Sometimes these

rules were not necessarily written, but often a policy that responded to a behavioral issue that had happened previously.

Another way adults constrained equal status was to limit the ways youth could participate in a given activity. At Riverwood, when youth were assembling their quotes to accompany their pictures for their video project, Sara and I (the research team member) disagreed on how youth should select their quotes:

Then I [Heather] said “okay everyone go get your quote” but Sara stopped me and said that she wanted them to come up one-by-one and was calling names, she said she had to do this “because otherwise it will be chaos” as an observer, it was an interesting way in holding power perhaps. She continued to call students one-by-one (April 10, 2017).

The way that Sara controlled youth’s selection of quotes constrained their feeling that they had power over which quote to select. Youth were not invited to dialogue about their selections.

Policing also involved instances when adults interrupted dialogue that they perceived was tangential to the topic of discussion. In discussing the upcoming inauguration of President Donald Trump, youth were redirected:

At some point the conversation evolved after one youth asked “can we stand up to Trump?” The youth then started talking about protests in schools. Zach then pulled the conversation back since it didn't connect with the topic and said that next time, we would be doing more research on our topic and using the computers (Riverwood, January 9, 2017).

Adults redirecting conversations was a way of co-opting youth power within the group and constrained equal status.

Lecturing and closed-ended questions. The second most common way adults constrained equal status was to lecture, punctuate conversations with their own voice, or ask only closed-ended questions. This code was also applied when an adult asked a question with an obvious yes/no answer. This code was applied to 32 excerpts in 21 documents.

While facilitators often gave instructions so that youth could participate in an activity, excerpts under this code referred to times when a facilitator lectured youth, gave instructions without further explanation, or did not ask for youth feedback or ideas. Coded excerpts were those in which adults were the primary, and sometimes only, drivers

in a particular conversation, as evidenced in this excerpt from Rose Park in which Elena did most of the talking:

Elena then went into talking about the presentation. I [Elena] am going to screenshot the picture of each slide each of you will do, so you can use it to write down on a piece of paper what you want to say to practice. She told youth she would email them the screenshot. Elena explained that they can each pick what slide they would like to talk for. So the parts we have are... DJ will you write this on the board? DJ went to write these on the board (May 10, 2017).

Elena's directly told youth what to do instead of asking for their input on next steps and for this reason she constrained equal status, or the transfer of power from adults to youth.

Shared Goals

The definition of shared goals entailed the group working towards a goal-oriented endpoint. The common goal constitutes a joint effort and there is evidence of friendliness and caring. Many implicit and explicit shared goals were evident in the data: having fun, supporting youth engagement, youth acquiring new knowledge and skills, and creating a final product. The shared goals code was applied less frequently than equal status but was coded often across transcripts and over the seven-month observation period.

Enabling practices and interactions. The two primary codes associated with enabling shared goals were intentional facilitation and celebrating big and small accomplishments.

Intentional facilitation. Intentional facilitation was coded when adults described activities by clearly outlining the various steps involved; connected content (knowledge, skills, or activities) from previous sessions to the current session; shared the agenda for the day and connected the day's activities with the larger purpose of the project; and debriefed activities in a way that allowed youth to understand how the skills they were learning might be useful in the future. Fifty-nine excerpts associated with intentional facilitation were found in 44 documents. When adults were able to provide facilitation that was intentional, they contributed to the shared goals of YELL.

The most common way that adults enabled shared goals through intentional facilitation was to create and review an agenda for each YELL session. Agendas were often written on large post-it note paper and youth were invited to read the agenda at the start of the session. Elena, the facilitator at Rose Park, always provided the agenda for the day. Joanna at North Kennedy started creating and articulating the agenda for the session after receiving some coaching from me in December. Zach at Riverwood did not use an

agenda until I suggested that he do so in late March. Olivia at Mountain Vista used an agenda sporadically.

Another way that adults enabled shared goals through intentional facilitation was to provide clear activity instructions. For instance, at Riverwood, as youth were preparing to review their video in preparation for the public showing,

Zach told the group that they were going to watch the video and then say something they liked and something they wanted to change. A few students (the black boys) were talking and Zach said, ‘Who can describe what we are doing?’ and Ali said ‘we are providing feedback’ (May 10, 2017).

By being explicit about what he expected, Zach was able to set clear expectations. He also checked for understanding.

Intentionally debriefing an activity or experience, as Zach did, was a way for adults to support the shared goals of YELL. At Riverwood, during the creation of the project, Zach facilitated an activity where youth had to learn to “ask for help.” In the following activity, participants decided when they needed help getting out of an endless maze. The field note from Riverwood demonstrates intentional facilitation through debriefing:

Everyone gets back into the circle and Zach asked the youth what the significance of the activity was. One youth said, “you should finish what you started,” another youth said, ‘to make a fool of yourself,’ and then Obid said, ‘Miss Sara said, ‘until we need help.’ Naw asked, ‘why do I need help?’ Zach replied, ‘the longer you didn’t need help, the longer you stayed in the circle.’ Yessenia replied to the original question by saying, ‘it’s okay to seek for help.’ Zach then asked the youth how it felt with other people watching you in the maze. Someone said it felt stressful, another youth said it felt like a challenge, and another said someone was following them and that was uncomfortable. Zach then asked how the activity relates to mental health. Ali responded that people with mental health problems, ‘can ask for help like we did’ (May 1, 2017).

The activity provided youth with an experiential way to understand the importance of asking for help, which was related to their topic of suicide and depression. However, the debrief was also essential in deepening their understanding of and commitment to their shared goals of the project.

A final way in which adults were intentional in their facilitation was to create linkages between sessions. One way that this was done was to bring in artifacts created in previous sessions for reference, as was done at North Kennedy:

Joanna attempts to bring us back on topic by asking someone to raise their hand if they know what YELL stood for. The boys immediately just start talking over each other and trying to answer it by saying ‘Youth something leadership’ and they think everything is funny. . . . Joanna says that one of the responsibilities of YELL is to pick a topic and ‘you guys chose racism’ and she points to the paper on the wall from a previous session where they had written down why they wanted to talk about racism (January 11, 2017).

Asking youth to recall the meaning of YELL and link it to the topic they had chosen was an intentional practice that may have strengthened youth’s connections between different types of content.

Celebrating big and small accomplishments. When adults recognized youth for being on task, congratulated them on a job well done, or told a young person that his/her/their idea was good, this was coded as celebrating small and big accomplishments. This practice related to shared goals because youth were recognized

for their contributions, there was evidence of caring, and it enhanced youth engagement.

This code was applied to 50 excerpts in 33 documents.

The Youth Voice Coordinator recommended that each facilitator create a system of recognizing good behavior. When an adult at the site (including research team members) saw a young person on task, an adult gave that young person a ticket. Young people wrote their names on the tickets and then placed them in a box for a raffle at the end of the session. Each site used some variation of this system of recognizing “good” behavior, with varying levels of consistency and success.

Rose Park facilitators were the first to create a system of honoring participation and engagement. At the end of the session, the facilitators asked the youth how many marbles, out of five, the youth perceived they had earned (November 14, 2016). Once youth received a certain number of marbles, they received a special snack or took a field trip. The marble system encouraged youth to be engaged in the session. North Kennedy started to implement a ticket system in January, while Olivia at Mountain Vista started using a ticket system in February, following the recommendation of the research team members who had seen the system work at other sites. Zach at Riverwood was the last to utilize the ticket system, which he started in early March. While rewards were given

inconsistently, youth were rewarded for their good behavior at Riverwood, North Kennedy, and Mountain Vista, although they did not decide on the prizes that they received.

Beyond the ticket system, Joanna at North Kennedy regularly recognized youth contributions to the group and intentionally debriefed activities and interactions to reflect on the work the youth had done. After the youth had passed out fliers door-to-door in their neighborhood about their “Know your Rights” presentation:

She [Joanna] asks again, ‘what did you think about passing out the flyers.’ Jess says, ‘it was awesome, but not many people opened their doors.’ Misty says, “it was kind of like nervous, they like, ‘yeah, I’ll take it.’ Joanna asks, ‘do you think anyone will come?’ Misty responds, ‘probably not.’ Joanna says, ‘but if 1 person comes and learns their rights it is a big deal for them. You all are doing something important’ (April 12, 2017).

Through intentional debriefing, Joanna created the time and space to honor youth’s unique contributions.

Specific compliments were also a way that facilitators reinforced good behavior and learning. At Rose Park, after youth had created questions for their interviews,

Elena then discussed how these are all really good questions because they are all open-ended questions. She explained that this meant none of these questions can be answered with a yes or no, except for the last questions, but this question could lead into more information (February 1, 2017).

Elena reinforced the lessons she had taught earlier in the session by giving youth a specific compliment related to their work.

Research team members played an important role in recognizing youth's accomplishments. At Riverwood, Lynn recognized one young person for his accomplishments and recommended he consider applying for the YAB:

Lynn sat with OB, who is in 7th grade. She told him he should think about YAB.

He says, 'Miss! You should look at me!' Lynn replies, 'I am looking, and I think you have leadership potential. That's why I think you should think about YAB'

(January 23, 2017).

Seeing the potential leadership contributions of youth was an important practice for enabling shared goals.

Constraining practices and interactions. While adults enabled shared goals twice as much as they engaged in practices that constrained it, there were two prominent

codes associated with constraining shared goals: incomplete instruction and disengaging with youth or project.

Incomplete instruction. This code was defined as the instances when facilitators did not describe an activity well and youth expressed confusion. It was also coded when facilitators did not connect current content with previous sessions. When adults provided incomplete instruction, they constrained youth's opportunities to attain new knowledge or skills. The code was applied to a total of 38 excerpts and 29 documents.

Facilitators often presented concepts or asked youth to participate in activities without an explanation of the specific steps necessary to complete the activity.

Facilitators also asked youth to complete activities between sessions, often without problem-solving any potential issues. An example of this type of incomplete instruction occurred at North Kennedy. As youth were preparing for the Photovoice, Joanna asked them to take photos between sessions:

It's almost time to go for the day and so as a wrap up, Joanna says 'can you guys take pictures' or bring in new pictures and they try to figure out how to take pictures by asking if they have a scanner or an email or if they can take pictures.

Joanna says she wants to create a folder for us all to take pictures' (February 15, 2017).

While the day's session introduced youth to the topic of photography and racism, Joanna did not directly connect the two or provide youth with the scaffolding they often need to be successful in completing the task. Joanna did not ask whether the youth had access to cameras and scanners, presumably on their phones, or if they knew how to upload documents to a shared folder. Not surprisingly, none of the youth had uploaded photos the following week. Joanna expressed some frustration about youth not following through with this activity, but she may not have understood that her lack of instruction was the main reason youth were not able to "comply."

Not providing an agenda for the day was another way facilitators provided incomplete instruction. When adults did not outline the activities for the day, they did not ensure the youth knew what was going to happen. At other times, adults strung activities together but did not describe why particular activities were structured in that way, or the overall intention for the day. While adults may have known the outline for the activities and the goals for a particular day, they did not always share that with the young people.

In instances in which no agenda was provided, youth did not know why they were doing particular activities. They had to draw their own conclusions about why something happened or how it might be used in the future. In one such instance at Riverwood, as part of their research process, Zach asked the youth to write down questions about their topic, suicide and depression:

Zach opened the session by discussing the topic that the youths chose to focus on: bullying, depression and suicide. Then he directed the youths to read out loud 2 questions they had been previously asked to come up with on the topic. The students went around in a circle, questions included: ‘what is the best solution?’, ‘Why do people commit suicide?’, ‘How many suicides a year?’ After the students read their questions, it was acknowledged by Zach, and then it was another student’s turn; Zach then collected the pieces of paper where the questions were written (December 12, 2016).

Youth participated in the activity, which was seemingly disconnected to the larger project goal. Zach, in other interactions with research team members, articulated that he was unsure of the goals of YELL.

Abrupt endings were another marker of incomplete instruction. Facilitators either allowed an activity to come to a natural close without a debrief or simply ran out of time to close the session. In one such instance, a session abruptly ended at Mountain Vista, which led to confusion on the part of the research team member: “The session seemed to be over at this point, but Olivia didn't announce this or try and recap the session, participation points, or talk about what would be done next session” (March 8, 2017).

Abrupt endings, without a discussion or recap, meant that youth did not have an opportunity to concretize learning, reflect on group process, or provide feedback. Given that acquiring knowledge and skills is an important part of YELL, incomplete instruction constrained shared goals.

Disengagement with youth or project. The second most common way in which facilitators constrained the shared goals of YELL was to appear disengaged with the youth and/or their action research project. Excerpts received this code when facilitators did not follow up when a young person shared something personal or difficult, when adults overtly disparaged youth’s work, or when adults described YELL as something to “get through.” This code was applied 14 times across 13 documents.

This code was also applied when a facilitator spoke disparagingly to a research team member about their group. In one such interaction, Lynn, meeting the facilitators at Riverwood for the first time, asked Zach about YELL. He stated that he was disinterested in working with youth in general: “Zach is not especially interested in youth (‘no offense,’ he said), and had a lot of experience working in mental health Colorado Springs” (October 31, 2016). This declaration was somewhat emblematic of Zach’s early attitudes toward the youth and likely influenced the way he interacted with them.

Research team members and facilitators alike seemed to perceive that certain activities were something to “get through” instead of something that would be enjoyable or beneficial for the youth. In one such instance at Mountain Vista, when youth were talking about pictures that depicted different social problems, such as misrepresentations of slavery in textbooks, they seemed disengaged. Instead of deepening their interest, the adult perceived and articulated that the activity was as a chore:

The table Erin was sitting at got a picture of a textbook with African Americans on the cover. The girls laughed and said that there was no point in talking about it. The girls were gossiping and to get them on track, Erin said ‘well, the faster we talk about this, the faster we can get to snack and free time.’ The girls agreed and

started talking on a surface level about the representation of African American, black, and minorities in school textbooks (November 16, 2016).

When adults treated activities as a burden instead of intentionally constructed activities and conversations, they weakened youth's interest in topics and missed opportunities to catalyze youth's passions for social justice issues. In another instance at Rose Park, Elena opened up the session by describing that it is "a little dry" but they will "have snacks in the end" (February 8, 2017). Presenting the session in this way set youth up to be disinterested and constrained opportunities for youth to experience the goals of YELL as fun and intentional.

Cooperation

Cooperation is defined as interdependent effort that exposes group members to each other's qualities and skills. Cooperation in the context of YELL meant that adults were participating in the activities alongside youth, providing expertise, and intentionally and thoughtfully integrating all youth into sessions.

Enabling practices and interactions. The most prominent interaction associated with cooperation was joint work. This code was applied when youth and adults worked, played, problem-solved, and cleaned together, or shared food. The joint work code was

also applied to interviews to examine the pronouns adult facilitators used in describing their group. In examining pronouns, I was better able to understand the extent to which adults perceived their work to be collaborative. In total, the joint work code was applied 124 times to 54 documents.

The most common way that joint work was observed was when adults participated in activities alongside young people. During sessions in the early part of YELL at Mountain Vista, the facilitator and research team member joined in a game with the youth:

The youth were separated into 2 teams and started to play the game. I chose to join the smaller of the 2 teams and Brandon joined the larger team. My team said they wanted to be Giants and RY asked me to give him a piggy back ride and climbed on my back for a few seconds, which was uncomfortable, so I had him get back down. We then started to play the game, many of the youth clearly did not understand the rules and began running around making the noises of their chosen creature. Brandon was huddling (planning what creature they wanted to be) and playing with the other group (November 16, 2016).

Spending time being silly with the youth was a way to lay a foundation for collaborative relationships.

Research team members were observed regularly working alongside youth throughout YELL. In fact, 55 of the excerpts coded under joint work were associated with a research team member. Research team members almost always participated in warm-up activities and sat alongside youth during their work sessions. In November and December, research team members played less of a role, but over time, Chris, Lynn, Anna, Madison, and I all ended up taking on responsibilities within the groups.

Chris and Anna were deeply embedded in Mountain Vista and Rose Park during the 2016-2017 YELL program year. Several fieldnotes document the ways Chris offered information to the youth to deepen or validate conversations about race or presidential politics. He also supported the groups when they were doing research or work on the computers. Anna's supportive presence was evident during sessions that involved small group work and at times when youth were working on computers. Lynn, Madison, and I were present less consistently and were supportive of different groups at different times. Lynn, in particular, helped the two youth groups at Mountain Vista complete their video projects. She supported youth in selecting photos for their videos, as evidenced by the

following fieldnote, “At this point, Lynn and Olivia were working with different boys from the immigration group to find photos for their presentation. Lynn explained that they were going to create a photovoice out of their interviews” (April 5, 2017). Lynn was seen as an expert in video production and used her skills and expertise to assist the group.

Adults, including research team members, contributed their knowledge and skills to help youth complete activities or work more efficiently. In one such instance, Darian, the participant observer at Riverwood, helped youth find photos to accompany their statistics for the video that they were creating:

TU went to Google and searched ‘African Americans and Latinos holding hands’ because he wanted his picture to reflect that fact that his statistics were talking about these groups. When he didn’t find a good picture, he searched “health professional helping African American.’ He browsed and didn’t like any of the pictures. Darian suggested to search ‘health equity’ and he was able to find a picture that he liked of different hands of different colors (April 17, 2017).

Darian did not offer his ideas to TU early in the search process, but only when TU was experiencing frustration. Darian’s timely suggestion to include “health equity” as a search term was offered just before this young person grew frustrated with the task.

Joanna at North Kennedy was observed working alongside youth on their project, offering constructive feedback or editing typos. Joanna's investment in the YELL final product was evident:

Joanna asks the kids what else we can do to make the presentation better and says the other thing that could make it better is to have someone read the slide that says 'we are all human... racism has got to go' aloud and asks the kids to raise their hands if they want to do it and offers that we can all read at once if we want. . .

Joanna helps Reena fix the typo in her name on the first slide (May 10, 2017).

Guiding youth and helping them to strengthen their product was one way Joanna contributed her unique knowledge and skills and engaged in joint work.

Pronoun use, particularly evident in the interviews I conducted, seemed to signal the degree to which adults perceived this to be joint work. Three different pronouns—"we", "they," and "I"—signaled different ways adults perceived their role in the project. In her interview, Joanna used the pronoun "we" often to refer to the group. For example, when I asked Joanna about their work that year, she described the process of their community outreach related to the imprisonment of Red Fawn, an aunt of one of the youth, who was protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline. Joanna explained, "She [Red

Fawn] gave *us* a bunch of like flyers that *we* could pass out to people about, kind of her sister's story and her, with her website on it. And if people wanted to donate they could. So then *we* passed out those in the community" (Joanna, Interview). The use of "we" and "us" here illustrated Joanna's belief in joint work and collaboration.

Notwithstanding this example, most facilitators articulated being more committed to youth leadership than to joint work. For example, Olivia at Mountain Vista, responding to what the "goals for the group" were, said,

I wanted them to feel like they could run the project themselves and be engaged in it, while I just kind of, helped encourage them or helped in any way I could assist?

So I think that was kind of my main goal was that, if I could leave the room, that they could still continue, with the project (Olivia, Interview).

At Rose Park, Elena also articulated a belief that this was the group's project, illustrated by her use of "they" in her interviews. When I asked her to describe the group and their project, she said, "So *they* did interviews on different, on middle school and high schoolers that have been cyberbullied. And then *they* found solutions for if you're getting cyberbullied and kind of did like a PSA" (Elena, Interview). The use of the pronoun "they" signaled the way she assessed levels of joint work.

In talking about completing the project, Zach used “I” phrases when talking about the YELL group. When I asked Zach about his goals for the group, he explained, “Really the main goal was to, throughout, choose a research topic, conduct gathering information and ultimately have a group presentation to present to various audiences at the end of the time, but I mean that was the overall goal” (Zach, Interview) Later in the interview, when I asked Zach what he perceived went well, he said he felt proud of sticking to the curriculum, staying on task, and making it fun: “But I think just really trying to [inhale] stick to the project, stay, try to stay on task and, you know, have it be interesting and as fun as it can be for them” (Zach, Interview). Unlike the facilitators at Mountain Vista and Rose Park, however, Zach did support the project in significant ways by uploading the photos and sitting with the youth as they recorded the audio. In contrast with other facilitators, Zach played a larger role in supporting the creation of the final product. While it may appear that this was joint work given his commitment to the finished product, the interview data demonstrate Zach perceived that the success of the end product was, in large part, his own responsibility instead of a joint goal.

Often, it was the seemingly insignificant things, such as cleaning up the space, that created an atmosphere of collaboration or not. At the final YELL celebration, all youth and many of the adults involved in YELL pitched in to clean up the space:

An adult comes up and says she knows all the kids here are super strong so she'd really appreciate if they'd help clean up and put away chairs and that the YELL kids especially would love to help clean up. From here the rest of the night is spent picking up. Students and adults all help out and there is some minor peppering of conversations throughout (May 17, 2017).

Preparing or cleaning up spaces together offered opportunities for youth to work alongside adults, have informal conversations, and nurture relationships.

Constraining practices and interactions. Practices that constrained cooperation were coded far less frequently than practices that enabled it. The two most prominent codes associated with constraining cooperation were: obvious separation of youth and adults, and adults making negative comments.

Obvious separation of youth and adults. This code was used when adults were observed talking only with other adults during breaks or throughout activities, or at times when youth were struggling with an activity and adults were unaware or unwilling to

support them. This code was applied to a total of 23 excerpts from 19 documents. The code of obvious separation of youth and adults was applied to excerpts mostly before the formal session started, during a warm-up, or closing. At Rose Park, the “Session ended with about 20 minutes to spare. Kids ate donuts. Kids chit chatted with each other while adults chit chatted with each other” (November 2, 2016). This divide constrained cooperation because adults missed opportunities to connect with and learn from youth.

However, in a few instances, adults came together to make decisions for youth during a session. At Riverwood, as youth were planning their statistics to accompany the photos they had selected for their video, the adults met to discuss how to get quality recordings: “At this time the adults started to chat about where the recordings would take place and discussed different options. No one asked the students, so they decided to be distracted by their phones and other stuff, making fun of each other or just checking out” (April 10, 2017). This excerpt illustrated a missed opportunity for adults to problem-solve with youth.

Negative or snarky comments. This code was used in instances when an adult responded to youth in a terse, negative, or pejorative way. Negative and snarky comments

were made in 21 different excerpts and 13 total documents. This code was mostly associated with Sara the University of Denver counseling student.

Sara supported two facilitators at North Kennedy and Riverwood from January to May, shared with research team members that she did not trust or like middle school students. This dislike translated into several negative interactions with youth. On two different occasions, once at each site, youth asked Sara about her race/ethnicity and she responded defensively:

Then Fatima asked Sara ‘are you Indian’ and then ‘do you speak Indian’ then Sara said ‘Indian is not a language’ and then Fatima asked her what language she spoke and then Sara returned ‘why are you assuming’ and then said ‘why? Why?’ this was said with a somewhat playful, somewhat angry tone (Riverwood, April 17, 2017).

While questions about one’s race can certainly be difficult, youth are often curious about the world of adults with whom they interact, and these types of inquiries are often a way for them to understand the world. This type of interaction not only constrained cooperation between Sara and young people, but also impacted the overall site culture.

In two instances at North Kennedy, arguments between Sara and a young person resulted in that youth leaving or withdrawing from the group altogether. After a difficult encounter between Sara and two different youth, a young person at North Kennedy asked Joanna to talk:

Reena flags Joanna down and starts asking about Sara (who has left the room) and says she doesn't like her; Joanna says 'she just has high expectations for you.

She's not rude if she's telling you to do what you're supposed to do' and Reena responds, 'she's like the rudest girl I've ever known' (February 8, 2017).

Sara's negative comments and interactions disrupted the developing collective identity of the group.

Support Through Laws and Customs

Support through laws and customs was operationalized as the participation of site supervisors and other paid staff in the activities of the YELL groups. The presence of enabling practices, interactions, or interview responses was considered supportive of a site culture that facilitated other ICT conditions. Conversely, the presence of constraining practices, interactions, or responses was suggestive of a site culture that inhibited intergroup contact. The primary source of data for this ICT element were interviews with

site directors. However, this code was also added to fieldnotes when site directors and other paid staff were observed supporting or constraining intergroup contact between youth and adults in YELL. The enable and constrain subcategories were applied equally to transcripts and interviews. After defining each of the subcategories, I provide a description of the presence and magnitude of enabling and constraining characteristics for each site.

Enabling practices and interactions. The “enable” subcategory was applied when site directors or other paid staff were observed demonstrating interest in or support of youth, helping with the project, or recognizing and celebrating youth or their accomplishments. This code was applied to interviews where the facilitator talked about their site director or the site director themselves described ways that they supported the group, held positively-valanced views on youth leadership, and actively and intentionally integrated youth voice into decision-making at the site.

Constraining practices and interactions. The “constrain” code was applied when site directors or other paid staff were observed constraining relationships between the facilitator and youth. The most common way individuals constrained ICT was when the site director or other paid staff member acted as a punitive disciplinarian who came

into the group only to reprimand youth. This code was applied to interviews when the facilitator talked about their site director or the site director themselves admitted that they were not involved in the group to the degree they could have been; viewed their role as being a punitive disciplinarian; described youth in negatively-valanced ways; and described few opportunities for substantive youth voice into decision-making at the site.

Mountain Vista. At Mountain Vista, the site director and other paid staff were mostly observed participating in a punitive disciplinary role in YELL. The site director came into the group on several occasions if the volume of the room reached a certain level, or if asked to intervene by the facilitator. Two-thirds of the total fieldnote excerpts coded with “constrain” under this ICT condition were from Mountain Vista. The site director or other paid staff at Mountain Vista were not regularly a part of the YELL group. When the site director did come into the YELL group, he came in to remove youth. In his interview with me, the site director stated that he had tried to engage youth in decision-making at the site, but was pessimistic about their engagement because he felt that they routinely failed to achieve his expectations. When asked about the support that she received, Olivia, the facilitator at Mountain Vista, described feeling supported by others: “I honestly don’t think I could’ve done it though without like research assistants

and you and Katie and... everyone really helping out” (Olivia, Interview). Olivia did not describe feeling supported by the site director, stating, “At my site my supervisor wasn’t really involved in it at all. Like I don’t think he ever came in and checked or anything” (Olivia, Interview). However, fieldnotes provide evidence that there were other forms of enabling support at Mountain Vista, particularly from the Youth Voice Coordinator.

Riverwood. Riverwood’s site director, Hannah, was not observed participating in YELL. On a few occasions, she was observed positively supporting engagement in YELL, mostly by facilitating brain breaks. On several occasions, the Youth Voice Coordinator was observed supporting the group in a few different ways. She encouraged participation, worked with small groups to complete projects, and helped Zach set up equipment. During her interview, when asked about her role in YELL, Hannah described “not being as involved in YELL” but said, “I would have really liked to have been more engaged” (Olivia, Interview). Her justification for not participating was that she was supervising a large site and other groups of elementary school students required her attention. However, Hannah did state that she perceived her role in YELL to be about retention of youth participants and “bringing the hammer down. . . I am gonna come in

and have to be the bad cop” (Hannah, Interview). She also described a few mostly passive ways that she solicited feedback from and involved youth in decision-making.

In his interview, Zach described feeling that the research team members’ participation and involvement in his group heightened his feelings of inadequacy. He did, however, describe feeling supported during the weekly interaction group by the Youth Voice Coordinator and other YELL facilitators. He felt like the groups provided a sounding board for working through emerging issues. In terms of support from the site director, Zach described feeling like he received ideas related to “behavior management.” However, he also stated that the site administrator helped him “try different approaches, so just encouragement from them, different activities to try, or just helping change my mind set definitely was beneficial” (Zach, Interview).

Rose Park. The site director at Rose Park was observed in many instances, most often during the research and product creation phase of the YPAR process, helping youth and the project and congratulating them on work done well. Of the excerpts from fieldnotes that were categorized as “enable,” almost half were from Rose Park. In one such instance, Claudia, the site director, helped youth with their internet research:

SR and KA came back in the room and said they could not find some of the information they needed. Claudia said: “So you googled how can you be a good friend, and nothing came up what else could you do?” She was helping them brainstorm other ways they could search for the information they needed. Claudia: “I’m thinking of an s word?” SR: “support?” Claudia: “yes! Try that.” (April 26, 2017)

In this excerpt, Claudia helped youth problem-solve and overcome a barrier to finding the appropriate search term. Claudia did not always participate actively in the YELL meetings, but the proximity of her office to the group’s meeting space provided opportunities for her to give support and encouragement. In her interview, Claudia explained that she saw her role in YELL as supporting engagement and participation. Claudia explained that she connected young people’s skills to the needs of the group and remembered telling one young person, “Listen this is the deal, these are the skills that you have, right, and this is what the group is doing and right to be really honest they need those skills and they’re struggling” (Claudia, Interview). Claudia’s explanation of her role contrasts with that of the site directors at Riverwood and Mountain Vista. Elena also

asserted that she felt supported by Claudia, and that the addition of the research team member Anna was positive and supportive.

When asked about the ways that youth are invited to make decisions at her site, Claudia provided a robust description of all of the small and large ways she engaged youth in decision-making, from asking their opinion on the way the space was arranged to getting their feedback on the order and type of programming. Claudia's response was significantly more detailed than that of the other three site directors.

North Kennedy. At North Kennedy there were multiple site staff supporting Joanna, particularly the educator and site administrator. Kelly, the site director, was not observed supporting or participating in YELL until March, when Joanna went on Spring Break. In March, Kelly stepped in to facilitate one YELL session. When asked what she perceived her role to be, Kelly explained, "I'd like to be more involved honestly next year, I feel my role, as a first-year site director was a little like 'Oh my god, what do I?' I'm being pulled in so many different directions" (Kelly, Interview). For half of the year, Kelly scheduled her early night (the night that she went home around 6pm) on a YELL night, which prevented her from being involved. However, Chris, the educator, was observed supporting Joanna and enhancing youth voice. In many cases Chris connected

the work that the youth were doing on racism to the broader political context, encouraging youth to participate in the Women's March and immigration rights events.

Joanna also felt supported by the Youth Voice Coordinator. She explained:

I think Katie was really helpful. Like, if a session went bad it was like never like "Oh this is what you should've done and this is like how I would've done it better.' It was always, like, you know like 'I've had sessions that went really poorly,' . . . And like she was really understanding about that stuff" (Joanna, Interview).

Joanna felt validated when Katie normalized the difficulty of this work.

Kelly, the site director, was able to describe a variety of small and large ways that youth were involved in making decisions at the site, from deciding how youth were going to sit during an activity, to choosing the types of field trips they would go on during summer programming. Her description of decision-making opportunities was not as robust as that offered by Claudia.

Section 2: Relationship between ICT and Attitudinal Adulthood

In this section, I present the findings in relation to my second research question: does the presence and magnitude of constraining or enabling conditions relate to

attitudinal adultism among facilitators? To explore patterns between ICT conditions and attitudinal adultism, I first developed site summaries of the presence of enabling practices and interactions. Then, I inductively created four indicators to assess attitudinal adultism and applied those indicators to adult facilitator post-program interviews. After rating each site on these four indicators, I created an overall site characterization related to attitudinal adultism. Then, I compared the site summaries of the presence of enabling practices and interactions and the attitudinal adultism characterizations. I also looked for patterns between high and low attitudinal adultism and specific enabling and constraining practices associated with the four intergroup contact conditions. I begin this section by reporting the results of the site summaries and then describe the four indicators of adultism. Finally, I report on patterns of overlap between attitudinal adultism and ICT.

Summary of ICT Conditions Across Sites

In order to summarize findings across sites, I established site ratings of low, medium, and high for enabling practices for each of the ICT conditions. Importantly, ratings were established for three of the ICT conditions using the mean of normalized code occurrences. However, the ratings of support through laws and customs were created by weighing a variety of non-nominal factors.

Equal status across sites. The “enabling equal status” code was applied most at North Kennedy (n = 92), followed by Mountain Vista (n = 88), Rose Park (n = 63), and applied least at Riverwood (n = 47). The mean code occurrence across all transcripts was 73 (SD = 18). North Kennedy was rated “high” on practices that enabled equal status, while Rose Park and Mountain Vista were rated as “medium” and Riverwood was rated as “low.”

Shared goals across sites. The “enabling shared goals” code was applied most at North Kennedy (n = 63), followed by Mountain Vista (n = 55), Rose Park (n = 40), and applied least at Riverwood (n = 25). The mean code occurrence was 45 (SD = 14.5). North Kennedy was rated “high” on practices that enabled shared goals, while Rose Park and Mountain Vista were rated as “medium” and Riverwood was rated as “low.”

Cooperation across sites. The “enabling cooperation” code was applied most often at Mountain Vista (n = 69), followed by North Kennedy (n = 52), Rose Park (n = 41), and applied least at Riverwood (n = 21). The mean code occurrence was 46 (SD = 17.4). Mountain Vista was rated “high” on practices that enabled cooperation, while Rose Park and Mountain Vista were rated as “medium” and Riverwood was rated as “low.”

Institutional support across sites. I conceptualized the site culture and site director involvement at the four sites along a continuum of “low” to “high” support. I developed these ratings relationally, comparing and contrasting the factors and then placing them along this continuum. Given the positive involvement of the Youth Voice Coordinator, which contradicted the high incidence of the use of punitive discipline from the site director, Mountain Vista received an overall rating of “medium.” At Riverwood, given the lack of involvement of the site director in YELL and her view of her role as a “bad cop,” this site received a rating of “low.” Given the positive role of the Claudia in celebrating accomplishments of youth, supporting the project, and her depth of responses that were favorable of youth voice, Rose Park was given the rating of “high.” At North Kennedy, because of the variable support of the site director, the acknowledgement that she wanted to be more involved, the different ways she infused youth input into decisions at the site, and higher support from the Youth Voice Coordinator, I placed North Kennedy in the middle of the continuum, as a “medium.”

Given the presence of enabling characteristics for each of the ICT conditions—equal status, shared goals, cooperation, and support through laws and customs—Mountain Vista was given the overall site characterization of “medium,” Riverwood was

characterized as “low,” Rose Park was rated “medium,” and North Kennedy was characterized as “high.” Table 5.1 summarizes the site ratings for the presence and magnitude of enabling ICT conditions. These ratings were then compared to attitudinal adultism ratings.

Table 5.1: Summary of site synopsis of enabling ICT conditions

Intergroup contact conditions	Mountain Vista	Riverwood	Rose Park	North Kennedy
Equal status	Medium	Low	Medium	High
Shared goals	Medium	Low	Medium	High
Cooperation	High	Low	Medium	Medium
Support through laws and customs	Medium	Low	High	Medium
Contextual factors	Facilitator switched in January; ample research team involvement	Bachelor of social work student	Second year facilitating	
Overall characterization:	Medium	Low	Medium	High

Attitudinal Adultism Indicators

After creating site characterizations, I inductively created four indicators of attitudinal adultism and applied these indicators to interviews with each of the four adult facilitators. These indicators aligned with the definition of attitudinal adultism: pronoun use, adjectives used to describe middle-school students, perceptions of being an ally, and perceived personal and professional growth as a result of working with youth.

Indicator #1: pronoun use. There were several interview questions that I used to examine pronoun use. While site-specific ratings consider the overall use of pronouns

across the multiple interview questions, excerpts that illustrated the trends for each site are provided below.

At Mountain Vista, Olivia mostly used “they” pronouns to describe the group.

This is illustrated in Olivia’s response to the question, “How did the youth change during the year?”:

I definitely think that a lot of *the kids*, especially once *they* chose the projects *they* were working on became more engaged, there were the few that I think maybe, never grew super interested but I feel like that may have been that maybe just a maturity thing. But, for the most part it seemed like a lot of *kids* did become a lot more interested in it, especially when *they* were able to like, voice their opinions and themselves and really see what *their* work was turning into” (Olivia, Interview).

Olivia used “they” almost exclusively throughout the interview to describe the work that youth had done. The use of “they” and “the kids” signaled that Olivia had higher levels of attitudinal adultism.

At Riverwood, Zach used a mixture of “I” and “they” to describe his group. When asked “How did your experience change throughout the year?” Zach responded:

I feel you know it's a learning process so if something happened in one group or *I* notice something *I* might be doing wrong or might've noticed like 'oh *I* can change that' it was something *I* could apply to a future session so *I* feel like *I* got a little more comfort, *I* got a little more comfortable in the role and kind of, and *I* was able to establish and build kind of, deeper relationships and connections with members and the group so, that made it easier as well (Zach, Interview).

However, when describing the end project, Zach explained,

So *our* end project, obviously the topic was suicide and depression. And *we*... mostly focused on, *they* wanted to do survey but actually that was a little difficult just cuz of the sensitive topic, and consent and all of that, the way to go about it, so *they* decided to find facts and statistics to present, so *I* feel *we* had about 15 facts or statistics that were presented in the presentation (Zach, Interview).

Zach used the pronoun "I" more than the other three facilitators, but overall his pronoun use was mixed. Zach used "we" to describe the end product that was created, but often used "they" to describe work that the youth did in creating the product. Zach was rated medium for this indicator.

Elena at Rose Park used mostly “they” pronouns to describe the work of the group and used “we” less frequently. When I asked Elena “What was the end product?”, she responded,

Our end project was on cyberbullying. It was really pretty broad. So *they* did interviews on different, on middle school and high schoolers that have been cyberbullied. And then *they* found solutions for if you’re getting cyberbullied and kind of did like a PSA (Elena, Interview).

The use of “they” was used to describe the work that youth did for the project, and then overall, when talking about the group, Elena used the pronoun “our.” Elena was rated as medium for this indicator.

Joanna at North Kennedy used mostly “we” and “they” pronouns and irregularly used “I.” When Joanna was asked “What was the end product?”, she responded,

I think. . . kind of like brainstorming, like who *we* could talk to in the community, and how it [racism] affects them also. I mean *they* initially had like really broad things *they* wanted to look at. Like, ‘we should look at, cuz you know like racism in school,’ ‘we should look at police brutality,’ ‘we should look at...’ It’s just like obviously racism affects almost every area [laughs] of... So, I think initially it

was like *they* had a lot of ideas, I think it kind of got narrowed down when *we* actually... started, I don't think it really got running until like *we* actually opened up the video (Joanna, Interview).

Joanna's use of "they" was most often used to call attention to specific tasks that youth completed. Joanna used "we" more frequently in describing the group's product, a video about racism and community outreach activities, such as distributing invites about the "Know Your Rights" workshop to neighbors. Given that Joanna used "we" most frequently, she was rated as "low" for this indicator of attitudinal adultism.

Indicator #2: adjectives used to describe YELL youth. Facilitators at three out of the four sites exclusively used positively valenced words to describe YELL youth. This behavior was rated as low for this attitudinal adultism indicator. Zach, for example, shared that his five adjectives for YELL youth were, "Curious. Hard-working, smart... funny... and... I'd say and motivated, too" (Zach, Interview). However, three out of the five adjectives that Olivia at Mountain Vista provided had a negative valence. She used words such as "emotional" and "insecure" and then "growing" which was more associated with youth's development. This response was rated as high for this indicator.

Indicator #3: being an ally to young people. When asked whether they described themselves as an ally to young people, and if so, what that meant to them, there was one facilitator, Olivia, who did not view herself as an ally because she perceived herself as being more of a teacher. She explained, “I’m still working on is that I do come off too much like a teacher sometimes” (Olivia, Interview). Perceiving herself as a teacher and not an ally meant that I rated Olivia as high for this attitudinal adulthood indicator. Two facilitators, Elena and Zach, perceived themselves as allies, but provided examples of only interpersonal-level allyship of listening or being a good mentor. This is exemplified in the following interview excerpt from Elena: “I think that means being open-minded and helping out youth in any way possible, and any regard that they need it, and assisting... assisting them to have their voices heard not speaking for them” (Elena, Interview). While Zach’s response was similar, he explained that he perceived that an ally was a good mentor. Both Elena and Zach were rated as medium for this indicator. The only facilitator who provided examples of both interpersonal and macro-level allyship was Joanna, as exemplified in the following interview excerpt:

I think that... to me it’s just like being an ally I guess is like just basically being like action-oriented...Supporting like programs that engage youth and like give,

like be as like leadership opportunities and supporting like, policies that, I guess do the same thing, or yeah... I enjoy working with the youth and like obviously being respectful of them and stuff. But that's like something you should do to everyone, that doesn't really make, I don't think that makes you an ally. I think it's like going above that, and you know like sticking up for young people, or like making sure they're getting opportunities (Joanna, Interview).

Having mutual respect is an element of interpersonal allyship, but in addition, Joanna explained that allies must advocate for policies that provide youth with opportunities to lead. Joanna was rated as low for this attitudinal adultism indicator.

Indicator #4: description of personal or professional growth from engaging with youth. The question “How do you think you’ve benefitted from being involved in YELL?” was examined to assess the depth of description provided. More detailed descriptions of the mutual benefit that adults received from facilitating YELL was seen as disrupting adultism, while responses that were non-specific or brief were seen as emblematic of higher levels of adultism.

At Mountain Vista, Olivia reflected on her personal growth, which is intermixed with self-reflection:

I think it was interesting for me because I hadn't worked with this population before and I kinda went in thinking like oh I've done teaching and this won't be that bad. And it ended up being, taking a lot longer to build relationships for me with this population than maybe it has in some other populations that I've worked with and so I think I underestimated that and kind of became frustrated when, you know, kids weren't wanting to like have a close relationships or like be cool with me or whatever (Olivia, Interview).

Olivia reflected that she had learned about a different racial and socioeconomic group than she had worked with previously. She spoke about how this experience was difficult overall, in part, because of the youth being "mean" and in part, because of a lack of validation from her site supervisor. Given the overall tenor of her response, I have categorized her response as "high" attitudinal adultism.

Zach at Riverwood described how facilitating YELL solidified his interest in working with youth:

I've learned that I still, like I've, in the past, like my overall goal I always wanted to do is kind of do mental health work with children and adolescents. And at the beginning of my role, of, at Bridge as an intern, I mean, with YELL and this other

groups, but I was very overwhelmed and just like holy moley. But, I was like, do I want to work with kids anymore like just cuz it was so stress, number one, but I, I come full circle to today like I, it's only solidified that I'm, like my passion for wanting to work with children, adolescents to help them because, like I said, just built so many different relationships, got to know so many great human beings, like, and participants at Bridge (Zach, Interview).

Zach questioned his career trajectory initially due to feeling overwhelmed by facilitating multiple groups for the first time, but these feelings were replaced by positive experiences that were supported through relationships with participants. Zach was rated as medium for attitudinal adultism.

At Rose Park, Elena was in her second year of facilitating but her response was brief and non-specific: "Yeah I think I've just learned that just how powerful youth voice can be, and I hope to continue to use it in my practice" (date). The overall indifferent tone of Elena's responses to all interview questions seemed to indicate that she did not benefit from facilitating YELL.

Joanna at North Kennedy described how she learned how to run groups and became more comfortable with middle school students:

I think I'm probably still like processing what I learned or, maybe, I probably just learned more about, how to like run a group. Cuz I think a lot of it would be applicable to, like running, you know even an adult group or something. You still want it to be like engaging, you don't want be like talking at the group the whole time, and then like, little things, like putting up the schedule, yeah. Like how you plan out the group, and like what kind of like how space out activities, different activities and stuff like that...I probably just feel, if I work with like middle school age again, I'd probably feel way more comfortable with that age group than I ever did (Joanna, Interview).

Joanna's multiple examples of the mutual benefit that she received from facilitating YELL signaled lower levels of adultism.

Overall attitudinal adultism rating. Olivia at Mountain Vista had more features of high attitudinal adultism than other facilitators and described the youth in negatively valenced ways. Zach at Riverwood was given a medium rating because he was able to describe many benefits that he had received from participating in YELL alongside the youth but thought an ally was more of a mentor. Elena at Rose Park was given a Medium rating because of her many positive adjectives yet used mostly "they" to describe the

work youth had done in YELL. Joanna at North Kennedy's responses were much less indicative of adultism and thus she was given a low rating, she used "we" frequently to describe her YELL group. In Table 5.2, I summarize the four indicators of attitudinal adultism by site and provide the overall ratings.

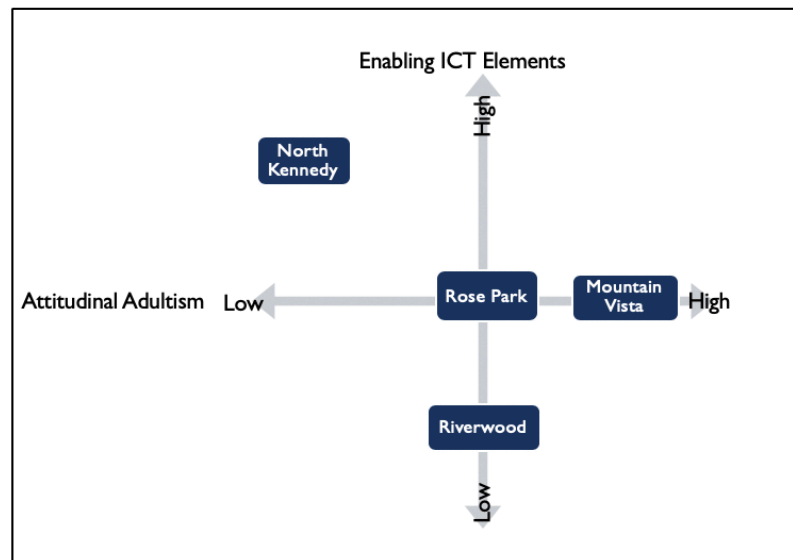
Table 5.2: Site ratings on indicators of adultism

Adultism Indicator	Olivia (Mountain Vista)	Zach (Riverwood)	Elena (Rose Park)	Joanna (North Kennedy)
Pronoun use	“They” predominately	Mixed “I,” “we,” and “they”	Mostly “they,” some “we”	Mostly “we” and “they,” some “I”
Adjectives	Energetic, growing, emotional, passionate, insecure	Curious, hard-working, smart, funny, motivated	Intelligent, knowledgeable, interesting, excited, loyal	Fun, bright, caring,.. inspiring, cool
Ally?	Not an ally	Interpersonal mentorship	Interpersonal allyship	Interpersonal and macro-level allyship.
Magnitude of change	A few examples of change, intermixed with negatively valanced experiences	Many examples, positive outlook	Very short response, non-specific. More favorable to youth voice.	Several long examples of how she changed
Confounding factors		BSW student	Second year facilitating	
Overall characterization of attitudinal adultism:	High adultism	Medium adultism	Medium adultism	Low adultism

Relationship between ICT and Attitudinal Adultism

In order to explore the relationship between the ICT conditions and attitudinal adultism, I graphed the sites along two perpendicular lines with the Y axis representing the overall site characterization of the enabling ICT conditions and the X axis representing the site characterization of adultism (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Enabling ICT conditions and attitudinal adultism



North Kennedy, the site with the facilitator who articulated the fewest indicators of attitudinal adultism, was also the site with the highest rating of practices that enabled ICT. Rose Park was rated medium on practices that enabled ICT and attitudinal adultism. Riverwood was rated low on enabling ICT practices, but its facilitator, Zach, was rated as medium for attitudinal adultism. Finally, Mountain Vista was rated as medium for

practices that enabled ICT and Olivia's responses to interview questions for the indicators of adultism were the highest. Based on this chart, there does not seem to be significant overlap between attitudinal adultism and practices within ICT, however, there does seem to be some influence, particularly for North Kennedy.

I further assessed which enabling or constraining practices may have been associated with higher or lower attitudinal adultism. At sites with higher adultism ratings, there were more instances of policing youth behavior or conversations and more instruction. Furthermore, having a higher rating on adultism was inversely related to being inclusive. Low levels of adultism were related to creating dialogue and asking open-ended questions, but this trend did not hold across medium or high adultism.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Discussion

For this dissertation study, I used techniques from critical discourse analysis to examine intergroup contact between middle school youth and adult social work students who were engaged in youth participatory action research at four different sites of an after-school program. This dissertation responds to the call for more scholarship on the practice of youth work from the adult's perspective (Larson et al., 2015b).

In this chapter, I start with a discussion of my first research question and the practices that I found enabled or constrained equal status, shared goals, cooperation, and support through laws and customs. Next, I discuss the findings for my second research question related to the relationship between ICT and attitudinal adultism. I describe each of these findings in relationship to the broader extant youth work literature.

In the limitations section I explain how my methods prevented me from understanding some of the nuance of ICT and attitudinal adultism. Given these limitations, I offer suggestions for areas of future study. Finally, in the implications

section, I discuss evidence-informed considerations for youth programs, social work, and theory.

Discussion of Enabling and Constraining Practices

The four intergroup contact conditions—equal status, cooperation, shared goals, and support through laws and customs—mapped well onto observations of youth and adult interactions within YPAR. I found a common set of practices that either enabled or constrained these four contact conditions, adding to a growing body of literature on what happens in the “black box” of youth programs (Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010).

Across sites, facilitators engaged in practices that enabled the four ICT conditions far more often than they engaged in practices that constrained them.

Allowing youth to lead and make decisions, and facilitating dialogue and asking open-ended questions were the most common practices that enabled power-sharing. The YELL curriculum supports multiple opportunities for youth to make day-to-day and larger project-level decisions and encourages facilitators to ask open-ended questions (Anyon et al., 2007). At Mountain Vista, for example, two YAB members led several sessions and this contributed to a higher rating of equal status at this site. The facilitator

at this site spent a considerable amount of time preparing one of the youth facilitators, who thus felt more agency to lead activities and sessions.

These findings align with scholarship on factors that facilitate trust within youth development programs. In their study of 13 youth programs led by experienced adult staff (who had an average of 14 years leading youth programs), Griffith, Larson, and Johnson (2018) examined how certain facilitator practices and characteristics—such as assisting youth’s work, exchanging interests with the youth, and responding to youth’s emotional needs—fostered trust between youth and adults. While these authors used different terms than I do, their practices aligned with those that I identified for equal status and collaboration, specifically letting youth lead and make decisions, and joint work. In this dissertation study, facilitators were relatively inexperienced at facilitating youth development programs. While knowledge of youth work deepens and becomes more complex as adults interact with youth in multiple contexts, it is promising that novice facilitators were able to engage in many of the same practices of more seasoned facilitators.

Youth development and critical youth engagement scholars argue that youth should be allowed to make substantive decisions for the programs in which they

participate (Dundar, 2013; Schusler, Krasny, & Decker, 2017; Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes, & Calvert, 2000). Furthermore, leading and taking ownership for decisions and projects are critical roles for adolescent development (Larson, 2000; Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, 2005). While this form of participation seems to meet both youth and organizational goals, youth programs do not always emphasize substantive decision-making. In this study, it was more common for youth to participate in lower-level decisions through voting and discussion; only one site, Rose Park, involved youth in multiple levels of decision-making both in the YELL program and at the site overall.

One recent study by Akiva, Cortina, & Smith (2014) examined the extent to which youth were included in different aspects of organizational decision-making in 63 after-school programs in four states. While it was common to engage youth in the more day-to-day aspects of the program, considered to be practices that require the adult to give away very little power, the authors found that less than 5% of the 63 programs involved youth in all four types of decision-making considered to be commiserate with a high degree of power-sharing or relinquishing of control in support of youth-adult partnering (Akiva et al., 2014). This study also found that there was a strong direct correlation between the amount of decision-making opportunities and youth's motivation,

attendance, and interest. My findings align with this study. There is a need to provide youth with increasing levels of decision-making authority within programs and within the setting as a whole. These practices have been consistently shown to contribute to retention of youth, particularly middle schoolers, who often disengage from programs without these components (Deschenes et al., 2010).

Asking open-ended questions has been suggested as a core practice of youth development programs that enable youth to consider multiple perspectives, while maintaining their accountability for the solutions (Kirshner, 2008). In this dissertation study, asking open-ended questions and not punctuating each youth's response were ways that adult facilitators spurred dialogue. These practices supported the explicit and implicit goals of YELL, supporting youth to increase their knowledge and skills. In allowing conversations to develop, adults may need to learn the "the art of restraint," in which they use their authority deliberately according to each situation (Larson, Izenstark, Rodriguez, & Perry, 2015a). When facilitators helped youth in times when they seemed stuck or frustrated, but did not take over for them, adults engaged in the art of restraint.

Policing youth's behavior and conversations, lecturing, and using closed-ended questions were the primary ways that adults constrained equal status. At Riverwood, the

facilitator perceived that discussion of political events and youth's emotions related to them was somehow tangential to the topic of suicide and depression, and often halted politically-oriented conversations. Research has demonstrated the importance of these types of conversations in developing critical consciousness among youth (Hope & Spencer, 2017; Kennedy et al., 2019).

Engaging in intentional facilitation and celebrating accomplishments enabled youth and adults to enact the shared goals for YELL. Sharing agendas, providing clear instructions, intentionally debriefing, and linking content between sessions were all ways that facilitators were intentional with their instruction. Providing clear instructions was a way for adults to engage in instrumental scaffolding, which refers to an adult providing a young person with "suggestions, cues, modeling, or clarifications" that help direct his or her attention to key elements in a learning problem (Larson, 2006, p. 684).

While many of the practices mentioned fit within the dichotomous categories of enable or constrain, there were some practices that were harder to analyze. For example, the practice of giving tickets to reward good behavior was not always related to enabling shared goals. The ticket system was also used to police youth's behavior or coerce youth

into doing the desired behavior. Therefore, adults must critically reflect on how certain tools can either reproduce the status quo or disrupt it.

Providing incomplete instructions and disengaging with youth or their project were the main ways that facilitators constrained cooperation. Each of these practices resulted in missed opportunities to enhance the shared goals of YELL. By providing incomplete instruction or failing to connect content between sessions, adult facilitators missed opportunities to scaffold youth's learning. Potential explanations for adult facilitators providing incomplete instruction include not fully understanding activities or lessons or not spending time preparing for a session. It is important, therefore, to encourage adults to schedule time to prepare activities and lessons. When facilitators did not scaffold their instructions, this may have constrained youth's opportunity to build knowledge or develop skills.

When adults described activities or lessons in YELL as something to "get through" it constrained the shared goals of YELL. During observations, youth sometimes made comments that YELL was similar to school. When adults made comments related to "getting through" an activity, this reinforced the feeling that YELL was something being done to them rather than something they were actively participating in. Previous

research has shown that subtle statements like this can contribute to youth resisting participation (Fox, 2013).

This dissertation study underscores the importance of youth and adults working, problem-solving, playing, and cleaning together to create an atmosphere of cooperation. This finding is supported by other scholarship on intergroup contact in youth program settings which has emphasized the importance of unstructured time in fostering personalized interactions between group members (Watkins, Larson, & Sullivan, 2007). In engaging in work jointly, the adult communicates an underlying belief that each individual contributes unique knowledge and skills to the endeavor (Zeldin, Christens, & Powers, 2013).

The obvious separation of youth and adults and adults making negative comments to or about youth were associated with constraining cooperation. At times, the presence of Sara contributed to a tense program climate by arguing with youth. It is important to be aware of who is coming into the group. Programs can screen adults to assess their perceptions of youth (Blanchet-Cohen & Brunson, 2014). If an adult is found to interact with youth in problematic ways, it may be important to remove these individuals from

groups, particularly in groups specifically designed to enhance youth voice. This type of due diligence can improve the overall experience for youth and adults alike.

Overall, this is the first study to describe constraining practices of adult facilitators in detail, and to provide concrete justification for why they matter for intergroup contact. These findings respond to a call for research on how trust may be eroded in youth development programs (Griffith et al., 2018).

The presence of and interactions with site directors and support staff also impacted intergroup contact in YELL. When site directors celebrated youth's accomplishments, helped with the project, named multiple ways that they integrated youth voice, and described youth in positively valenced ways, this was supportive of an overall site culture conducive to ICT. Site directors who viewed their role as policing youth and delivering punitive discipline contributed to a site culture that relied on constraining practices overall. However, the participation of research team members and staff, such as the Youth Voice Coordinator and Program Assistant, seemed to attenuate some of the negative influence of unsupportive program staff. Many of these factors have been found in other studies related to an organization's culture and the ways it influences youth and adult interactions. For example, Blanchet-Cohen and Brunson (2014) argue

that organizations must have a clearly articulated youth engagement strategy that frames staff practice and organizational decision-making.

Two facilitators and their site directors regularly engaged in power struggles with the youth at their sites. One possible explanation is that these adults perceived that youth did not fit the model program participant who patiently waited for instruction or participated dutifully and enthusiastically in all activities. When site directors described their role as “bad cop” or said that it was their job to manage, police, or control young people, this likely contributed to these site directors using practices that communicated norms unsupportive of intergroup contact. The site director who engaged most in punitive discipline did so often after the facilitator felt like she had lost control of the group. It is, therefore, crucial to manage and negotiate behavioral expectations of adults who work with youth.

Discussion of ICT and Attitudinal Adultism

To answer the question “Does the presence and magnitude of constraining or enabling conditions relate to attitudinal adultism among facilitators?”, I first created site characterizations of the presence and magnitude of the enabling practices for each of the intergroup contact conditions. Then, I established four unique indicators of adultism:

pronoun use, valence of descriptors for middle school youth, perceptions of being an ally to young people, and magnitude of personal and professional change from the experience. Given the dearth of literature on adultism, establishing preliminary indicators for assessing was crucial and constitutes a contribution to the theoretical literature on adultism.

While pronoun use was mixed, two facilitators used the pronoun “they” more often to describe the work that occurred during YELL. This may have been an indication that the facilitator did not feel a collective identity with the group or did not significantly contribute to the project. It is also possible that these facilitators were operating from the “facilitation” approach to working with youth. Kirshner (2008) found different models of the adult’s role in youth work that may relate to different roles of facilitators at Bridge: facilitation and apprenticeship. The role of “facilitation” is when the adult acts as a neutral facilitator of a youth-led process. Olivia’s support of the YAB members to lead sessions reflected a neutral facilitator role. The adult’s facilitation role may correspond with a specific set of practices, but they may not be aligned with strategies to promote positive intergroup contact. The use of the pronoun “we” was more indicative of a shared or collective identity and evidence of the facilitator’s contributions to the project. Adults

who used “we” may have viewed YELL as an “apprenticeship” for youth in which adults participated alongside youth and provided them appropriate scaffolding to increase youth’s skills (Kirshner, 2008).

While there has been some attention to youth’s experiences of adultism, this is the first work that has attempted to catalogue indicators of adultism. The relationship between attitudinal adultism and practices that adults engage in with young people may be interactional. I found that the adults who were rated as higher on attitudinal adultism indicators engaged in practices that constrained equal status, such as policing and excluding youth. What is unknown is how these experiences compound over time and their interaction with an adults’ perceptions of young people. The inverse was also true: the adult rated low on attitudinal adultism indicators allowed for dialogue and offered substantive opportunities for youth to lead. Research suggests that youth respond favorably to positive program experiences (Deschenes et al., 2010), but given the small sample size, more scholarship is needed to verify these patterns.

There were interesting trends related to the presence of a higher magnitude of constraining practices, such as policing youth’s behavior or instruction, at sites that had higher attitudinal adultism ratings. Inversely, the site with the lowest amount of

attitudinal adultism, North Kennedy, had far more moments of dialogue. Given that there were only four facilitators rated for attitudinal adultism, it is hard to generalize, and more research is needed to see if these preliminary indicators of adultism are salient in larger samples of adult facilitators. It would also be important to examine how these indicators are distinct from other forms of oppression such as racism.

While this dissertation has examined issues related to the power differential between youth and adults, participants in YELL had multiple intersecting identities that impacted power dynamics. Many youth who participated in YELL were refugees and immigrants, identities that are marginalized in our country. Almost all of the YELL youth lived in publicly subsidized housing neighborhoods and were classified as extremely poor. Many of the youth, particularly youth at Mountain Vista, were Muslim. Adult facilitators and researchers were mostly people with greater economic privilege and were mostly White. YPAR efforts need to overtly discuss power differentials in the beginning and throughout the process. This is particularly important given evidence that differences in power in youth program settings can be created and maintained through cultural insensitivity, stereotyping, prejudice, and expectations that staff and youth bring to the program (Outley & Witt, 2006).

Limitations

While I have made a significant effort to strengthen the trustworthiness of the research and confidence in my findings, there are still several important limitations to consider related to the research design, sample, data collection, and analysis. There are several conditions of the design of this research and methods of data collection that impacted the findings. While our research team was asked to take note of the ways that youth and adults navigated power, however, observers were not instructed to record information specific to the four intergroup contact conditions or adultism. Intergroup contact theory was applied to the data retrospectively. Given the salience of ICT in youth work, future scholarship that prospectively assesses intergroup contact is warranted.

Another limitation relates to data collection and my approach to analysis. I used tools from CDA to break down exchanges and assess power. The observations were not all recorded verbatim. Transcripts of recorded speech are standard in CDA studies (Wood & Kroger, 2000). CDA is also often applied to smaller chunks of texts, such as a single discursive event, and not often applied to the quantity of data used in this dissertation. In examining smaller excerpts, an analyst might consider diction, speed, discourse markers,

and turn-taking (Rogers, 2011). Given the quantity of data for this project, I was not able to attend to this level of detail, nor was it appropriate to the level of depth provided in the field notes at Rose Park and Riverwood. Therefore, I used techniques from CDA, but cannot purport to have done a full CDA.

While member checking is an indicator of data validity in qualitative research, since I was critically analyzing power between youth and adults in YELL, I did not invite the adult facilitators to serve as member checkers. I realize that youth could also have served as member checkers, but I decided not to ask the youth participants because this research involves interactions that occurred in 2016-2017 and asking them to recollect experiences or read a large amount of text did not feel developmentally appropriate. Research team members served as member checkers for this research, but they may have been biased given their relationship with me.

Given that I was deeply embedded in the Bridge Project and had ten years' experience supporting adults for youth engagement preceding this dissertation research, I must attend to the issue of confirmation bias. Confirmation bias in qualitative research is understood as interpretations being overly congruent with an a priori hypotheses (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). In order to increase legitimation, I have taken several

steps including using memos as an audit trail, weighting the evidence, peer debriefing, and triangulation (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). In order to document my ongoing thought process, I used analytic memos to differentiate and critically reflect on prior assumptions and interpretations based on actual excerpts. I reported on only those codes that reached saturation across documents and after-school program sites. I engaged in regular peer debriefing with two of my dissertation committee members who asked critical questions regarding my interpretations. The process of peer debriefing required that I return to the data to justify any assumptions and reduce bias. Finally, I used multiple sources of a data including observations and interviews and multiple informants. These efforts are all tools for trustworthiness in qualitative research and should strengthen confidence in my findings. However, researcher bias cannot be fully attenuated.

While efforts were made by participant observers to record interpersonal interactions between individual youth and adults, personal identifying information, such as youth's names, was inconsistently recorded. The lack of individually identifying information limited my ability to systematically analyze the impact of individual interactions across time. While youth in each group shared many identities, given the lack

of information about individual actors in many situations, I could not undertake a critical analysis of how adultism practices differed based on participant demographics.

For this study, I inductively created the four indicators of attitudinal adultism that aligned with the definition, given the lack of measurement work on the concept. Because of the nascent state of this literature and dearth of work on indicators of adultism, much more work is needed to validate these indicators. More sensitive indicators of attitudinal adultism are needed to more concretely understand adultism. Grounded theory methodology with adult facilitators working in different contexts would allow for a more complete conceptualization of attitudinal adultism.

While this research sought to better understand adultism and its relationship to intergroup contact, the methods and data collected in this study do not allow me to make causal claims about adultism and how it influenced adult facilitator practices. Future research is needed to examine the role of adultism on youth worker practices and how it shifts over time. Additionally, given that there were multiple adults at each site, and that interactions between the context, youth, and adults all matter (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), I cannot make causal claims about the relationship between intergroup contact and attitudinal adultism.

Importantly, while I acknowledged, at multiple points, how adultism intersected with other forms of oppression such as racism and classism, it is difficult to disentangle the practices that distinctly reflect adultism rather than other forms of oppression. This is made particularly difficult because the youth in this study were classified as extremely poor, all were students of color, and were early adolescents. Did adults police young people's behavior because they were young, extremely poor, or because they were African or Latinx? To be sure, these different forms of oppression compound in the lives of young people with these intersecting identities. However, future measurement work on adultism could examine the salience of the practices in homogeneous populations of young people with identities that more closely represent dominant identities (e.g., White, middle-class) to disentangle adultism from other forms of oppression.

Many interactions that occurred before YELL, such as Robotics, likely influenced contact between youth and adults within the setting. Youth participated in many other groups in addition to YELL, and most had participated in after-school programming for years. Youth and adult experiences prior to those under study likely influenced the patterns observed in this study. Future scholarship could more narrowly focus on a single site and examine youth across multiple contexts.

In youth programs, there is a need for more research into the impact of youth to adult ratios on intergroup contact. For this dissertation study, I could not disentangle the impact of group size, facilitator attitudes and practices, and site director perspectives. However, at Riverwood and Mountain Vista, the two sites with more than 15 youth, there were more instances of constraining practices such as policing youth conversations and behaviors, fewer enabling practices, and higher attitudinal adultism. Future research, therefore, could examine the role of group size and youth to adult ratios on program experiences and outcomes.

Finally, while this research centers the importance of youth and adult relationships, the way that I coded the data focused on the degree to which adults engaged in practices that enabled or constrained intergroup contact. To more completely understand the degree to which equal status, shared goals, and cooperation truly exist, data is needed from youth participants. While I did consider the size of the group when assigning participant observers, and while participant observers caught many interactions between adults and youth, many interactions were likely missed. It is likely that subtle behaviors and practices were not recorded. While YELL groups started in late September, we did not begin observations until late October and early November. The delay in data

collection was at the request of program staff. However, it is also likely that we missed important interactions associated with the negotiation of shared goals and foundational aspects of creating a collaborative environment. All of these factors influenced the results of this study and should be taken into consideration.

Implications

This research has many important implications for youth work practice, social work, and related theory. Findings from this dissertation can be used to further refine and improve youth work practice, from individual-level practices to organizational-level policies. In the field of social work, these findings can be used to better prepare adults to empower young people. Finally, this research contributes to more nuanced understanding of intergroup contact theory and positive youth development.

My study offers some preliminary evidence that adults with higher indicators of attitudinal adultism may engage more in practices that constrain intergroup contact and reinforce power hierarchies between youth and adults. Since the YMCA and 4-H programs alone employ over 25,000 professionals, and support over 500,000 volunteers (Fusco, 2012a), and given the fact that these adults play an important role in the lives of

over ten million children (Afterschool Alliance, 2014), more attention should be paid to mitigating the negative impacts of adultism.

Youth Work Practice

Very few scholars have provided guidance on how youth workers can disrupt adultism. John Bell (1995) recommends “the mirror test,” which involves an individual looking in the mirror and asking if you would treat an adult in the same way. Samantha Godwin (2011) calls for the abolition of age-based laws, such as tobacco possession ordinances, on the grounds that they are discriminatory. Aside from these two scholars, there has been very little discussion of what to do about adultism. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, intergroup contact between youth and adults may lessen attitudinal adultism.

My study’s results present a more complete empirical understanding of youth work practice that enables positive intergroup contact and may minimize adultism. By describing strategies that adult facilitators use to support or constrain equal status, cooperation, shared goals, and supportive customs or laws, my dissertation findings contribute to a greater understanding of the “black box” of youth program effectiveness (Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010). Practices that constrain intergroup contact may

attenuate the positive outcomes of youth programs, suggesting a need for more attention to these practices across PYD approaches. Despite almost three decades of implementation of PYD, many contexts continue to lack pro-social norms and expectations about young people, which may reflect adultism (Gil Clary & Rhodes, 2006). My dissertation has implications for combatting adultism in order to achieve positive youth development.

At the individual level, youth workers can continue to strengthen youth-adult relationships through creating shared goals, engaging in cooperation, and attending to power within their groups. Given the myriad of practices that I found either enabled or constrained intergroup contact, it is important to acknowledge that engaging youth authentically is a complex task. The nuance of high-quality youth work has been articulated through metaphors such as a rhythmic dance (Krueger, 2005) or jazz improvisation (Harris, 2014). Trained musicians and skilled dancers learn to work with the instruments and rhythms to create a joint work of art. Skilled youth workers can function as the conductors that bring together the unique contributions of each member of the group while co-creating a shared product.

My data suggest that adults who work with and for youth may need to engage in critical reflection and reflexivity to more consciously attend to and address issues of power, the communication of shared goals, and cooperation. Critical reflection and reflexivity are defined as “the intention of learning through our thinking to develop new insights or perceptions of self and to shift the way we view and feel about the world” (Johns, 2009, p. 16). Youth practitioners can engage in critical reflection by considering the following questions:

- How did I reinforce power hierarchies?
- What power dynamics were operating in the group?
- What are the ways that I intentionally transferred power to young people?
- Did I explain activities well so that youth understood what they were doing and why?
- How might I improve my practice for the next interaction?

Critical reflection can be performed at the end of a session, in dialogue with others, or as part of regular supervision. Dana Fusco articulates that youth workers must engage in the “professional use of self” which requires that the adult “stay attuned to his own reactions, judgments, reflections and use those to aid progress” (2012b, p. 39). While not explicitly

termed critical reflection, the professional use of self is one way in which youth workers can more actively attend to, reflect on, and take action to enhance intergroup contact.

The process of critical reflection is particularly important for YPAR. While studies of YPAR have burgeoned over the last five years (Caraballo et al., 2017), research has not examined how it may facilitate prejudice reduction. Despite that fact that scholars assert that YPAR provides an egalitarian space that disrupts traditional power hierarchies (Rodriguez & Brown, 2009), there is insufficient guidance related to practice and implementation, particularly how it shifts over time. As the popularity of YPAR continues to grow across disciplines, my dissertation research highlights facilitator practices that can be used within YPAR to operationalize power-sharing.

There are also several organizational-level implications of my dissertation findings related to the hiring, training, and support of youth workers. Given that attitudinal adultism overlapped with facilitators' use of practices that constrained intergroup contact, youth organizations may want to incorporate the indicators of adultism demonstrated in this study into screening questionnaires at the initial stage of the hiring process. For example, the question "Please describe, using examples, what it means to be an ally to young people" would provide an opportunity to explore whether an

applicant can describe allyship at multiple levels (interpersonal and macro) and provide robust examples. Selecting applicants who are less likely to have adultist attitudes or beliefs may be a strategy that prevents problematic interactions and tense program environments.

Research suggests that when adults who work with youth have appropriate education and training, they have higher self-reported competencies for implementing strong positive youth development programs, which in turn has significant impacts on youth and program outcomes (Evans, Sicafuse, Killian, Davidson, & Loesch-Griffin, 2010). However, there is very little information on how to best support adults who work with youth (Richards-Schuster & Timmermans, 2017). Given the critical role of adults in youth's experiences and outcomes of programs, more focus is needed on training youth work professionals to incorporate practices that enable positive group contact. Indeed, implementation science recognizes that training and ongoing coaching are key factors in program effectiveness (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Other scholars have argued that "training should include helping staff examine their own assumptions" (Gutiérrez, Larson, Raffaelli, Fernandez, & Guzman, 2017, p. 88). Training that includes an acknowledgement of adult's attitudes and increases competence in utilizing the enabling

practices uncovered in this dissertation, would likely enhance youth experiences and program outcomes.

While youth programs often run on tight budgets, and “free” adult support staff may seem alluring, my dissertation suggests that the involvement of individuals with adultist attitudes can negatively impact the implementation of activities that were designed to promote young people’s voices, such as was the case at Riverwood and North Kennedy. Staff members may need more training or scaffolding to successfully implement practices that enable intergroup contact.

Implications for YELL

It is well established that organizational policies, values, and practices create the backdrop for youth-adult interactions within programs (Camino, 2005; Kirshner, 2008; Zeldin et al., 2013; Zeldin et al., 2008). In my analysis of the laws and customs that enable intergroup contact, only one site director perceived that her role was to enhance engagement and provide project support and guidance. To strengthen support for youth voice, it would be beneficial to spend time discussing the YELL curriculum with each site director at the beginning of the year. Site directors should be encouraged to attend

YELL sessions, just as Claudia at Rose Park did. Site directors can help youth with their projects and celebrate small and large accomplishments.

To support the implementation of practices that enable equal status, the YELL curriculum could incorporate more overt discussions of power differentials based on the different identities of youth and adults in the space. The original YELL curriculum did include some discussion of power differentials between youth and adults, but this content was cut in subsequent curriculum revisions based on feedback from facilitators during the 2014 program year. It is possible that facilitators felt uncomfortable overtly discussing power relations, and thus did not rate those sessions as highly. However, in YPAR, as Torre, Fine, and Alexander (2010) point out, there is a need to consciously attend to power. These authors underscore the importance of interrogating and deconstructing forms of privilege if participatory action research is to be a contact zone. Therefore, it may be prudent to reintegrate existing lessons related to youth and adult power differentials into YELL, and to add additional lessons for youth and adults to discuss their other identities that feed into these hierarchies.

Another consideration for YELL is to spend more time training the facilitators on the overall purpose of YELL and the underlying principles of youth voice. At Riverwood,

the facilitator was not clear until March on the objectives of YELL and the expectation that youth had to create a product. Other facilitators did not have access to examples of past projects that would help them envision how program activities would culminate in a product that would be shared at a celebration. Early training would address much of this confusion. Additionally, given that at times, adults described YELL as something to “get through,” there is a need to stress that adults should adhere to the principles of intergroup contact instead of strictly following a program manual (Anyon et al., 2019). It is important to ensure that adult facilitators feel a sense of agency and ownership and get clear permission to adapt activities to more authentically meet their youth’s needs and their local program context.

Social Work

Results from this study have relevance for the education and training of social workers who intend to work with youth. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are more than 300,000 social workers engaged in child, family and school social work in the United States (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). Social work values and ethics position the profession to be on the frontlines with youth in solidarity and in action. Values of human dignity and social justice are aligned with efforts to reduce adultism and

promote positive intergroup contact between youth and adults. In the preamble of the NASW Code of Ethics (2017) it states that our profession must seek “empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty” (para 1). Richards-Schuster and Pritzker (2015) argue that social work should play a central role in enhancing youth participation. However, my dissertation findings suggest that this goal may only be possible if social workers understand adultism and increase their knowledge of the practice and skills needed to enable power-sharing, cooperation, and the maintenance of shared goals with youth. Efforts involving youth that neglect to acknowledge adultism or the practices and interactions that either enable or constrain youth-adult relationships run the risk of reproducing power hierarchies between youth and adults (Taft & Gordon, 2013).

While many Master of Social Work programs have a concentration related to children, youth, and families—and while social work values position us to provide clients with opportunities for agency and self-determination—there is a paucity of curricula specifically designed to educate students regarding how to implement these core values. Indeed, social work scholars and youth engagement experts argue for more youth empowerment theory and practice in the social work curriculum (Richards-Schuster &

Pritzker, 2015). Given the high number of social workers in children, youth, and family-related jobs, providing students with opportunities to work in empowering ways with early adolescents through YPAR may offer important skills. Excerpts from this dissertation could be used as case examples of how to enact these practices; this responds to a call for practice-based examples that can move youth participation from the margins into a core strategy in social work (Richards-Schutster & Pritzker, 2015).

As this dissertation has demonstrated, there are several practices that well-meaning adults engage in that unintentionally constrain their relationship with their young clients. While this research examined youth-adult relationships within a YPAR program, these constraining practices may also impede relationships in other clinical and macro-practice settings. It is important to attend to and consciously work to disrupt adultism across practice settings.

Furthermore, even within social work, adultism is not widely recognized as an axis of oppression, despite recognition that age is one axis of potential discrimination (NASW, 2017). The social work curriculum would be strengthened by incorporating content on adultism as an axis of oppression that intersects with other forms of marginalization in the lives of youth. Texts such as *Teaching for Diversity and Social*

Justice, (Adams, Bell, Goodman, Joshe, 2016) which acknowledges adultism as a form of oppression, would support coursework devoted to understanding intersecting forms of oppression. These discussions would also be enriched by providing alternative interpretations of adolescent neuroscience research. With an acknowledgement of the existence of adultism, and more training for adults who work with youth across settings, social workers can lead efforts to bring youth from the margins into the center.

ICT Theory

In addition to the contributions of this research to youth work practice and social work education, the findings of this dissertation have important implications for the theory and study of intergroup contact. This research adds to the strong evidence regarding the application of intergroup contact theory to prejudice reduction, in this case, adultism. A robust meta-analysis of ICT (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) did not include prejudice reduction between youth and adults, so this dissertation extends ICT to a new form of oppression. Other scholars have observed that adultism is “substantially under theorized,” but my dissertation suggests that intergroup contact is a relevant framework (Conner et al., 2016, p. 26).

In terms of methodology, my dissertation illustrates new ways of examining ICT using qualitative methods. Despite half a century of investment in intergroup contact across multiple disciplines, many studies use only quantitative methodologies. Qualitative methods can capture greater nuance regarding how the four ICT conditions are enacted and maintained. Observations allowed me to understand not only that these four conditions are evident in youth work, but also the practices that are associated with each of these conditions. Furthermore, while the epistemological orientation of YPAR aligns with the four intergroup contact conditions (Caraballo et al., 2017; Schensul, 2014), this study identified practices of adults that enabled or constrained these conditions. This study, therefore, adds nuance to the existing ICT literature.

Conclusion

Adultism is ingrained in almost every social sector—including research, social services, healthcare, government, education, and the media—yet there has been limited recognition of this form of oppression in social work or youth programs. My dissertation findings suggest that intergroup contact between youth and adults that includes power-sharing, shared goals, cooperation, and support through laws and customs may be one

way to disrupt traditional power hierarchies and reduce adults' prejudice toward young people.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: YELL facilitators interview guide

1. What was your role at [Bridge or Agency]? How have you been involved with youth at [Bridge/Agency]?
 - a. Did you choose to engage with youth from YELL/Agency or was that decision-made by someone else?
 - b. What site did you serve?
2. What were your goals for the youth in YELL/Program? How did the youth change during the year? Do you feel like you reached your stated goals?
3. What are all the ways you involved youth in making decisions (both big and small) as part of YELL/Agency?
4. What were your initial experiences/reactions with YELL/Agency? How did your experience change throughout the year?
5. What do you think that you did well? What do you think you learned from the experience?

6. What was your end project? What do you think about the impact of the project? Is there anything you would do differently? How did you feel at the celebration?
7. What support did you receive from your supervisors, mentors, or other staff?

What was most helpful? What do you wish you had received in terms of support, but didn't get?
8. Please name 5 words that you associate with middle school students?
9. What skills or knowledge do you think adults need to support youth in community change?
10. Has your opinion about MS school students changed? If so how?
11. Do you consider yourself an ally for young people? If so, what does that mean to you
12. Has what you've learned been integrated into your current work/practice? If so, please describe?
13. Do you envision engaging youth in the future? If so, how?
14. How do you think you've benefitted from being involved in creating community change with youth?
 - a. Personally?

b. Professionally?

c. Organizationally

Appendix B: Code definitions and excerpts

ICT code and Enable or constrain	Subcategory	Definition	Excerpt
Equal status enable	Dialogue and open-ended questions	Conversations flow and youth and adult both contribute to discussion. Adult uses open-ended questions to spur discussion.	MA and NA presented their picture last. It was a picture of graffiti. They were confused about whether the graffiti was good or bad. They explained that they have seen graffiti before that is supposed to be there. TR explained that graffiti is unwanted paintings. DN said it costs money to call the police if there is graffiti. MA added, people do whatever they want in the ghetto. SR explained that it's okay to graffiti an abandoned building, but if it's ruining building, that's disrespectful. S added that he has painted graffiti on a legal wall. The facilitators let the group chat but then Elena focused the conversation more by asking the group: does it have to be like this? TR answered by saying it does not have to be like this. [Rose Park 11.16.16]
Equal status-Enable	Youth lead and make decisions	Either youth are leading a session or activity or youth make decisions (whether this is through a vote or	Chris went and sat with the Immigration group (AW, AS, AD, AH). Artemis began to lead the group and started to talk about how they would approach people to ask them about immigration. The group

		discussion) about the activities of the day, the project, or product. This also includes times when youth write on the board.	began to brainstorm and offered that they could make sandwiches or bring candy for people who they interviewed and that they could go to other bridge sites to interview. They then began to talk about how they would ask people if they could record their interviews/voices. Then began to talk about how many interviews they should do. AS offered that they could interview 10 people and then use the best 3 in their photovoice project. [Mountain Vista 3.8.16]
Equal status- Constrain	Adult polices youth's conversations, participation, or behavior	Adult stops youth from having certain conversations, restricts how they move within the space, limits times when they can use the restroom, and sees tangential discussions off topic or openly discourages conversation or sharing of likes and dislikes.	Then, Olivia was trying to get everyone's attention she screamed "LISTEN UP!!" She then said that today she was being very lenient on the rules and that people kept leaving the classroom and they knew they aren't supposed to be doing that. She reminded them that they have to listen [Mountain vista 3.1.17]
Equal Status- Constrain	Lecturing and closed-ended questions	Adult tells youth what to do. Adult asks questions with obvious yes/no answer. Adult overwhelmingly directs conversation.	Elena then explained to the group that they had just gathered information and coded it. Elena then told the group: So the next activity, I'm not gonna lie is not the most exciting. So you're each gonna get a pile of interviews and each come up with main points that you can lump together. We're gonna

			independently work and then work with partners. You guys can spread out anywhere in this room and then we'll come back together. [Rose Park 4.12.17]
Shared Goals-Enable	Intentional facilitation	Describing activities well so that youth are clear on what is supposed to be done. Connecting content (knowledge, skills, or activities) from previous sessions to current session. Sharing the agenda for the day and connecting it with the larger purpose of the project. Debriefing activities in a way that allows youth to understand how the skills they've learned might be useful in the future. Describing why youth are doing a particular activity.	Everyone gets back into the circle and Zach asked the youth what the significance of the activity was. One youth said, "you should finish what you started," another youth said, "to make a fool of yourself," and then OD said, "Miss Sara said, 'until we need help.'" NA asked, "why do I need help?" Zach replied, "the longer you didn't need help, the longer you stayed in the circle." YE replied to the original question by saying, "it's okay to seek for help." Zach then asked the youth how it felt with other people watching you in the maze. Someone said it felt stressful, another youth said it felt like a challenge, and another said someone was following them and that was uncomfortable. Zach then asked how the activity relates to mental health. AL responded that people with mental health problems, "can ask for help like we did." [Riverwood 5.1.17]
Shared Goals-Enable	Celebrating big and small accomplishments	Recognizing when youth are on task. Telling a young person that his/her idea was good.	The youth continued to get snacks. Darian chatted with one of the youth near me about school. Lynn sat with OB, who is in 7th grade. She told him he should think about YAB. He says, "Miss! You should look at me!"

			Lynn replies, “I am looking, and I think you have leadership potential. That’s why I think you should think about YAB.” He did not seem to respond or react to this. There was a lot of informal talk at this point and things seemed to be winding down. [Riverwood 1.27.17]
Shared Goals- Constrain	Incomplete instruction explanation	Adults do not describe an activity well and youth express confusion. Adults do not connect content with previous session (AKA missed opportunities). Adult does not explain why youth are doing an activity.	The session seemed to be over at this point, but Olivia didn't announce this or try and recap the session, participation points, or talk about what would be done next session. [Mountain Vista 3.8.17]
Shared Goals- Constrain	Disengagement with project, indifference to youth	Not following up when youth shares something difficult; Making a lack of group knowledge the youth’s problem or ignoring their questions; calling work boring, saying "we gotta get through this" or incentivizing only with external motivators.	There were several interruptions, and Zach commented, “We’re almost done. We’ve gotta get through this,” which made Lynn think that it sounds as if the central part of YELL is a chore to “get through” in order to get snacks. She wondered if there might be a more productive way to frame things on the part of the leaders, but it was clear that today, the young people were very distracted. [Riverwood 1.30.17]
Cooperation- Enable	Joint work	Working, playing, participating, problem-solving together; Cleaning room	The youth were separated into 2 teams and started to play the game. I chose to join the smaller of the 2 teams and Brandon joined the larger

		together; Sharing food; Adults describe group using "we" language	team. My team said they wanted to be Giants and RY asked me to give him a piggy back ride and climbed on my back for a few seconds, which was uncomfortable so I had him get back down. We then started to play the game, many of the youth clearly did not understand the rules and began running around making the noises of their chosen creature. Brandon was huddling (planning what creature they wanted to be) and playing with the other group. We played the game for a little while but many of the kids did not seem to be very engaged or they might not have listened to the instructions. [Mountain Vista 11.16.16]
Cooperation- Constrain	Obvious separation of youth/adults	Adults talks with other adults during breaks. Adults remove themselves from activities.	I asked him if he wanted to start first, and he did. Everyone played the game, even Darian. Although Sara just sat on the table (not participating) and AD was working on creating the flyer. [Riverwood 4.10.17]
Cooperation- Constrain	Negative or snarky comments	Adult responds to youth in a terse, negative or pejorative way.	Eri is trying to figure out what race Sara is and she says she's Indian, Eri asks if she's "Native American Indian or Indian" and she doesn't help him out at all and just says "I'm Indian" and he goes "like from where" and she keeps saying she's Indian. He asks what part and she says "The western part". MI asks if it's nice there and Sara asks why she assumed she was born there. Joanna asks Mina

			<p>if people make judgments about her based on how she looks and she says “yes but I was just asking if she went there”. Joanna asks MI why she thought that as Sara says, “remember how I told you to think before you ask questions?” and MI goes “!” and leaves. [North Kennedy 2.8.17]</p>
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