

Cultivating Post-secondary Opportunity and Service:  
Youth and Young Adult Perspectives on a High School Leadership Program

By

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## Abstract

Adolescence, adult thriving, and societal benefits are closely interwoven. A healthy adolescence can lead to thriving in adulthood, and thriving adults can contribute to a productive society. There are lifelong economic and social consequences for students who are not engaged in school, in that they are less likely to go on to post-secondary education and more likely to participate in risky behaviors, resulting in opportunity costs to both the students and society. Traditionally-marginalized youth are often less engaged in school and have higher drop-out rates than the national average. In the 1990s, developmental systems theory emerged with a focus on “positive youth development” (PYD). One way to foster PYD is through youth programs that use service as a way to learn about and practice leadership skills. Studies have shown that these leadership programs can encourage academic engagement as well as a desire to continue service activities. My research looked at perspectives of traditionally-marginalized youth who had participated in a high school leadership program that incorporated cross-age tutoring and mentoring as a means of service. Using a longitudinal intrinsic case study design, I followed 11 participants through and after the program, recording their experiences via documents and semi-structured interviews. My analysis involved deductive coding through the “Five Cs” of competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring/compassion, and an additional “Sixth C” of contribution. All participants in my study sought post-secondary education and continued service, crediting their experiences in the leadership program with their positive youth development.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Few age periods are characterized by the dramatic developmental changes of the adolescent period, which encompasses the second decade of life (Lerner & Steinberg, 2004). Adolescence is the lifespan period when most of a person's biological, cognitive, psychological, and social characteristics are changing in an interrelated manner from child to adult (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, 2005). Adolescence begins with the advent of pubertal changes and ends in young adulthood; during this transition, developmental patterns are constantly reinforced, and adult role choices are based on adolescent experiences (Elder & Caspi, 1988; Petersen, 1988). Important dimensions of young adulthood are physical health, psychological and emotional well-being, life skills (goal-setting, decision-making, problem-solving, critical and creative thinking, test-taking, etc.), ethical behavior, healthy family and social relationships, educational attainment, constructive engagement, and civic engagement (Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000). As individual-level adolescent changes occur, along with the world in which he or she is embedded, the relationship between the young person and his or her context is also transformed (Lerner, 1982; Lerner, Theokas, & Jellicic, 2005). The nature of these relationships is critical because adolescents represent the next generational cohort to assume leadership roles that will benefit themselves, their families, communities, and society (Lerner, 2004).

Adolescence can also be a time of increased risk behaviors such as alcohol and drug abuse, unprotected sex, and violence (Youngblade & Theokas, 2006). These behaviors often extend into adulthood and result in enormous societal expenditures (Jessor, 1998). In addition, there are colossal opportunity costs due to lost productivity from individuals who become expensive societal burdens through institutions such as prison, instead of contributing to society

through jobs based on education or professional training. It is estimated that the annual cost to the United States of morbidities related to adolescent risk behavior is more than \$33 billion (Gans, Alexander, Chu, & Elster, 1995).

There are dire lifelong economic and social disadvantages for students who experience academic failure (Barton, 2006). These youth are less likely to go on to higher education and are more likely to engage in risky behaviors, both of which result in enormous opportunity costs to both the students and society (Dishion et al., 1999). Twenty-eight percent of U.S. students do not graduate from high school (Sulkowski, Demaray, & Lazarus, 2012). More than a million students drop out of school each year (Swanson, 2008), and billions of dollars in earnings and tax revenues are lost (Catterall, 1985). Seventy-five percent of state prison inmates are high school drop-outs (Harlow, 2003). Careers, strong family lives, and healthy lifestyles are compromised as a result of youth dropping out of school.

There is ample research on developmental systems theory; the importance of developmental assets in positive youth development; the value of programs that promote positive youth development; the importance of fostering leadership and service in youth; and on the effectiveness of cross-age tutoring and mentoring in doing so. I sought to further develop this research by exploring perceptions of traditionally-marginalized youth while they participated in a high school leadership program that incorporated cross-age tutoring and mentoring, and as they continued on to higher education and sustained service.

My research contributes to the aforementioned body of research by lending youth and young adult perspectives on the aspects of a youth leadership program that foster aspirations for post-secondary education and continued service. My study focused on traditionally-marginalized youth because this group has a higher high school drop-out rate than the national average and

incurs high opportunity costs to both itself and society. I examined this group's perceptions while they were engaged in the youth leadership program, while they matriculated through higher education, and once they had graduated. These perceptions were coded through the "Five C" framework of competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring/compassion, with the additional "Sixth C" of contribution. I used the terms post-secondary education and higher education interchangeably as meaning formal learning that occurs after secondary education. I defined traditionally-marginalized as either students with low socioeconomic status (SES), students of color, or both. The research question that drove this study was, "How do traditionally-marginalized youth involved in a leadership program describe their experiences in this program and the role it played in their lives over time?"

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

In the following literature review, I first discuss why focusing on traditionally-marginalized youth is so important to society. Next, I introduce developmental systems theory as a paradigm shift in the way we look at adolescent development and the significance of adolescence in the development of productive adults. Third, I discuss developmental assets as a means of better understanding developmental systems theory. Fourth, I introduce the Five C construct as another available framework to study developmental systems theory. Fifth, I introduce Positive Youth Development (PYD) as a term used to operationalize and study the Five C construct since this is the framework I used in my research. Sixth, I discuss youth programs that foster PYD. Seventh, I narrow down these programs to those that are school-based. Eighth, I look at service components of school-based PYD programs. I spend some time on the value of cross-age tutoring as a means of service in school-based PYD programs. Finally, I describe the need for research on the long-term impact of in-school PYD leadership programs on post-secondary endeavors and service in traditionally-marginalized youth.

Although existing research plugs the importance of positive youth development on producing young adults who contribute to society, as well as the importance of school engagement, my research looks at the perceptions of traditionally-marginalized youth as they participate in a youth leadership program and become motivated to continue on to higher education and engage in other service activities. In addition, there is a plethora of research that touts the benefits of cross-age tutoring and mentoring for both older and younger students, as well as teachers, and my study brings this research back to the forefront since these practices function as the service component of the leadership program I investigated.

## **Traditionally-marginalized Students**

According to the American School Counseling Association (2006-2008), marginalized students are defined as “students who could potentially drop out of school or engage in self-destructive behaviors that could interfere with academic success. Behaviors including absenteeism, performing below academic potential, or participating in activities that may be harmful to self and/or others such as substance abuse, threats and intimidation, and physical violence are some behaviors that place students at risk” (Rationale section, para 2).

Drop-out rates are three times higher in impoverished neighborhoods than the national average (Alexander, Entwisle, & Kabbani, 2001). Students who drop out have usually decided there is no solution to their academic problems (Johnson & Perkins, 2009). Dropout statistics are lower in school districts with money to hire support personnel to assist these students, but in low-SES and poor rural areas, there are less-qualified teachers and fewer resources to provide this extra support (Evans, 2004). Marginalized youth from low-SES circumstances often have less familial stability, greater exposure to environmental toxins and violence, and more limited extra-familial social support networks. Evans also observed that marginalized students are often held to lower achievement expectations and are frequently students of color.

Beauvais and Jenson (2003) proposed that SES was linked to a wide range of indicators of youth well-being, including school engagement and academic achievement. They found that youth from low-SES conditions are often cognitively less stimulated by their environments, have less complex communications, tend to be less involved in school activities, and feel less connected to school. Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1990) discovered that diminished extracurricular involvement and a decrease in active, cooperative student learning methods impacted classroom practices and academic achievement for marginalized youth.

Caraway, Tucker, Reinke, and Hall (2003) confirmed that lack of school engagement was a major contributing factor to dropping out for marginalized students. They also noticed that lack of engagement was a major contributing factor to risk behaviors such as drug abuse, teen pregnancy, and crime. The authors investigated the effects of self-efficacy, goal-orientation, and fear of failure on school engagement and found that students with higher confidence levels had higher grades and were more likely to be engaged in school activities and organizations. Students who displayed a fear of failure were found to be less engaged than their peers. This study, along with a study by Suh and Suh (2007), suggested that increasing student involvement could lead to fewer dropouts.

The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health looked at more than 36,000 youth and found school connectedness to be the strongest protective factor for health risk behaviors (Resnick et al., 1997). Other studies have found school engagement to buffer against the effects of a negative home environment (Maddox & Prinz, 2003), emotional distress (Wilkinson-Lee, Zhang, Nuno, & Wilhelm, 2011), and that it improves self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism, and positive peer relationships (Resnick et al.). Osterman (2000) suggests that school connectedness also has a positive impact on academic performance, school motivation, self-regulation, and student attitudes toward school. Fortunately, current theories pertaining to youth development encourage interaction between youth and their environments to promote engagement. The Five C framework primarily utilizes a longitudinal study on 4-H participants, which is an extra-curricular youth leadership program. My study examines an in-school program with a focus on traditionally-marginalized youth, defined as those students who are of color and/or low SES.

## **Developmental Systems Theory**

Developmental systems theory was introduced by Richard Lerner in 1992 (Ford & Lerner, 1992). Prior to the 1990s, most research on ways to enhance the health and well-being of adolescents utilized a problem-focused paradigm called deficit theory, where prevention programs concentrated on reducing health-risk behaviors such as alcohol and substance abuse, pregnancy and violence, and situational risks such as poverty, neighborhood violence, and family dysfunction (Leffert et al., 1998). These prevention programs have been challenged by a need for continual funding, and outcomes have yielded mixed to disappointing results in the sustainability of adolescent behavior changes (Brown & Horowitz, 1993).

**Resiliency.** Over time, researchers began to notice that some adolescents not only succeeded, but thrived, despite challenges, obstacles, and deficits; as a result, resiliency became an area of study (Benard, 1991). Resiliency, the ability to overcome challenges and bounce back from trauma, has characteristics of empathy, a will to survive, life goals, use of support networks, and resourcefulness. Based on the concept of resiliency, youth development research shifted to a paradigm that emphasized promoting and protecting positive youth behaviors and situations (Lerner et al., 2005). As opposed to the older deficit theories, researchers adopted strength-based theories, acknowledging that there are individual and ecological (environmental) assets that can protect youth from engaging in risk behaviors. In addition, researchers began to consider all youth as resources to be developed, rather than problems for society to manage (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

**Plasticity.** Another concept that evolved during the 1990s was plasticity, which is an individual's ability to change in response to his/her environment (Gottlieb, 1997). The adolescent period in life represents a time when the potential for plasticity is at its highest because of all the

individual and contextual changes that occur during this time (Lerner et al., 2005). Physical, physiological, cognitive, emotional, behavioral, social-relational, and institutional influences are all present in adolescence, and Lerner, Lerner, and Benson (2011) propose that youth have the inherent power to be active agents in their own developmental changes.

**Adaptive developmental regulations and intentional self-regulation.** Lerner et al. (2011) assert that when individual and context benefit each other and regulate the course of development, it is called adaptive developmental regulations. The authors go on to elucidate that when adolescents can intentionally contribute to adaptive developmental regulations, it is called intentional self-regulation, which means that he or she can select positive goals, using cognitive and behavioral skills to optimize chances of actualizing these goals, but when these goals are blocked or fail, he or she can compensate effectively. This ability to flexibly activate, monitor, inhibit, persevere and/or adapt one's behavior, attention, emotions, and cognitive strategies in response to direction from internal cues, environmental stimuli, and feedback from others, can help one attain personally-relevant goals (Moilanen, 2007, p. 835).

Intentional self-regulation has many of the same features of resiliency, and may help explain why some traditionally-marginalized youth are able to achieve developmental success better than others from similar situations. The ability to alter behavior in reaction to individual and contextual challenges typically stays stable through adolescence and is predictive of future positive development and decreased risk-taking behaviors (Zimmerman, Phelps, & Lerner, 2007).

**Thriving.** Another concept of successful adolescent development and transition into adulthood is thriving, which is the active process by which individuals shape and engage with their developmental contexts to develop competencies, skills, and behaviors that are beneficial to

both self and society (Lerner et al., 2005). In the literature on youth development, I have learned that the term developmental context is synonymous with the terms contextual characteristics, ecological assets, and external assets, and refers to an individual's external environment such as family, peers, school, and community. Dimensions of thriving include prosocial behavior, educational engagement, civic engagement, and a sense of purpose (Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000). Prosocial behaviors are operationalized through empathy, responsibility toward others, and intent to be involved in future community action (Leffert et al., 1998). Scales, Benson, Leffert, and Blyth contend that when there is harmony between a youth's internal and external setting conditions, thriving occurs.

### **Developmental Assets**

In 1996, 40 developmental assets outlining prevention, resiliency, and protective factors were developed to provide a framework for developmental systems theory (Benson, 1997; Leffert et al., 1998). Developmental assets are features of human development, namely positive factors in young people, families, communities, schools, and other settings, that have been found to play a role in promoting healthy youth development by preventing high-risk behaviors, enhancing positive and thriving outcomes, and contributing to resiliency. These 40 assets are divided into two 20-asset domains. The 20 internal developmental assets are sets of competencies, skills, and self-perceptions that young people develop gradually over time as a result of observation and socialization experiences. These internal assets fall into the four categories of commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. External developmental assets refer to the positive developmental experiences of contextual influences such as relationships and opportunities that are provided by adults, families, schools,

and communities. These external assets fall into the four categories of support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time.

Using these assets, researchers have demonstrated that youth with more developmental assets are less likely to experience risk behaviors (Leffert et al., 1998); more likely to thrive (Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000); more likely to perform better academically (Hanson, Austin, & Lee-Bayha, 2003; Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000; Scales, Benson, Roehlkepartain, Sesma, & Van Dulmen, 2006); and more likely to engage in positive, socially-constructive behaviors (Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2003). Research has also shown that traditionally-marginalized youth have fewer developmental assets, leading to poorer academic achievement, socialization, and self-efficacy than their peers (Zusman, 2005).

**Developmental assets and risk behaviors.** Leffert et al. (1998) investigated the effect of developmental assets on protecting youth from harmful or unhealthy choices. The authors utilized a 156-item self-report survey instrument developed by the Search Institute in Minneapolis, MN for 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade youth to measure each of the 40 developmental assets. The survey was administered anonymously in a classroom setting, during one class period, for all youth attending school that day, with standardized instructions. The sample resulted in 99,462 youth from 213 U.S. cities.

The Search Institute's sample revealed equal numbers of boys and girls, and surveys were spread equitably amongst grades. However, the self-reported race or ethnicity of the sample was not nationally-representative, with 86% Caucasian, 5% multi-racial, 4% Latino-Latina, and 2% African American, American Indian, and Asian, or Pacific Islanders. The risk behaviors that were identified were use of alcohol; alcohol and driving; tobacco and other drugs; antisocial

behavior and violence; depression and attempted suicide; school problems; sexual intercourse; and gambling.

Results of the Search Institute study indicated that youth with a greater number of assets had fewer risk behaviors, and that there was an additive or cumulative impact of the assets on risk behaviors. Leffert et al. (1998) concluded that youth need multiple constructive experiences and supportive, caring relationships across the many contexts in which they interact, to contribute to a decrease in health-compromising behaviors.

**Developmental assets and thriving.** Benson (2003), and Scales and Benson (2004) proposed that key thriving dimensions in youth are physical health, psychological and emotional well-being, life skills, ethical behavior, healthy family and social relationships, educational and civic engagement, and a sense of purpose. Scales, Benson, Leffert, and Blyth (2000) explored the contribution of developmental assets to the prediction of these thriving behaviors among adolescents. Thriving behavior outcomes were identified as school success, leadership, valuing diversity, physical health, helping others, delay of gratification, and overcoming adversity. The study was based on a sample of 6,000 youth in 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades, evenly distributed across six ethnic groups. This sample was a subpopulation of a larger sample of 99,462 youth. The same Search Institute survey was used as the one in the aforementioned Leffert et al. (1998) study. Effects of gender, grade, and levels of youth assets on the individual thriving indicators, as well as a composite index of the thriving indicators, were examined.

Results of the study by Scales, Benson, Leffert, and Blyth (2000) were multi-faceted due to the numerous variables, and the authors agreed that validity and reliability needed to be further investigated. However, results from this study made evident the contribution of developmental assets to the prediction of thriving. In particular, time that youth spent each week in school and

out-of-school activities, their desire to get to know people from different ethnic-racial backgrounds, their motivation to do well in school, their skill at making plans and decisions, and their sense of personal control and feelings of self-worth, were meaningful predictors of two or more thriving outcomes across at least three of the six racial-ethnic groups, even after controlling for the effects of SES, gender, and grade. Another significant finding was that developmental assets accounted for more variance in thriving factors than demographic variables in all categories.

**Developmental assets and academic achievement.** Increases in developmental assets have been significantly associated with boosts in GPAs (Hanson, Austin, & Lee-Bayha, 2003; Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth 2000; Scales, Benson, Roehlkepartain, Sesma, & Van Dulmen, 2006). In the previously-mentioned Scales et al. (2000) study, academic motivation and school engagement assets contributed to school success across all racial-ethnic groups. In particular, when achievement motivation and school engagement, which are internal assets, were combined with time spent in youth programs, an external asset, school success could be significantly predicted for six different racial or ethnic groups of 6<sup>th</sup>- to 12<sup>th</sup>-graders.

Scales, Benson, Roehlkepartain, Sesma, and van Dulmen (2006) followed a sample of 370 students in the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grades for three years to determine whether there was a connection between developmental assets such as positive relationships, opportunities, skills, values, and self-perceptions, and academic achievement over time, measured through GPA. The authors discovered that the greater the number of developmental assets reported in 7<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> grades, the higher the GPA was in 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades. In addition, Hanson, Austin, and Lee-Bayha (2003) studied 1,700 California public schools and found that students had higher standardized test scores when they experienced “resilience assets” such as caring relationships, high

expectations, and opportunities they perceived as meaningful to participate in their schools or communities.

Scales and Roehlkepartain (2003) revealed that developmental assets have more influence on student achievement than demographic factors such as gender, family composition, SES, and race-ethnicity, as well as school reform strategies. In a longitudinal study, they showed that student asset levels were proportional to GPAs. The authors also learned that students with high asset levels had retained their high GPA three years later. Students whose developmental assets stayed the same or increased also had significantly higher GPAs three years later when compared to students whose developmental assets declined. The increase in asset levels was proportional to the increase in GPAs. Students from all racial-ethnic backgrounds with high levels of assets (31-40) were 5 to 12 times as likely as those with fewer assets (0-10) to be successful in school. Low-SES students who experienced more developmental assets appeared to be more likely to do well in school than low-SES students who experienced fewer developmental assets.

**Developmental assets and prosocial behaviors.** The aforementioned Scales and Roehlkepartain (2003) study also illustrated that youth with greater numbers of developmental assets had more positive attitudes and behaviors, such as exhibiting leadership, maintaining good health, valuing diversity, and succeeding in school. The authors looked at numbers of youth assets, creating categories of 0-10, 11-20, 21-30, and 31-40 assets, and then compared these categories to prosocial behaviors. Scales and Roehlkepartain found that prosocial behaviors rose in conjunction with higher-number categories.

**Developmental assets and youth diversity.** The relationship between developmental assets and thriving appears to pertain to a wide range of adolescents, including low-SES, urban,

Hispanic, and African American youth (Scales, Benson, Sesma, & van Dulmen, 2005). Sesma, Roehlkepartain, Benson, and van Dulmen (2003) noted that all youth benefit similarly from experiencing developmental assets in their lives, regardless of race, ethnicity, or SES. Through analysis of data from the Search Institute survey of 217,677 6<sup>th</sup>- to 12<sup>th</sup>-grade youth, including 69,731 youth of color, from 318 U.S. communities during the 1999-2000 school year, the authors found that developmental assets protected all youth from 10 different risk behaviors and promoted thriving behaviors. However, in studying the effects of the 40 developmental assets among African American, American Indian, Asian American, Latino/Latina, White, and Multiracial youth, the authors discovered that the assets did not work the same way with all youth; the importance of certain categories of assets varied by race/ethnicity.

Examples of differences that Sesma, Roehlkepartain, Benson, and van Dulmen (2003) noticed were that constructive-use-of-time assets were more strongly correlated with school success for American Indian and Asian American youth than for other youth. Boundary-and-expectations assets (e.g., family and neighborhood boundaries, and adult role models) were important for all youth in helping them avoid antisocial behavior but were found to have especially strong preventive associations for American Indian, Multiracial, and White youth.

Scales, Benson, Leffert, and Blyth (2000) explored the contribution of developmental assets to the prediction of thriving behaviors in 6,000 adolescents evenly distributed across six ethnic groups and ascertained that different racial-ethnic groups had different clusters of developmental assets that then led to different thriving outcomes. Theokas et al. (2005) looked at family, school, and community contexts as predictive of developmental assets across race/ethnicity. Significant findings were that race/ethnicity was a significant predictor for depression and risk behaviors, with African American youth reporting the highest scores.

Although Benson et al. (2006) claim that greater numbers of assets are associated with fewer risk behavior patterns and more thriving indicators across all racial/ethnic groups and SES, and that the effects of assets are cumulative, they also state that an important remaining challenge is to determine effective ways to help traditionally-marginalized youth benefit from efforts to aid in their development.

Lerner et al. (2011) also emphasize that society needs to understand the strengths of all individuals and the assets that exist in their particular families, communities, and cultures, in order to promote these strengths. The authors suggest that although concentrating on youth assets is useful, society must also pay attention to socializing systems such as schools and neighborhoods. Without the availability of opportunities in these systems, no attempts can be made by youth to develop new skills or build meaningful and supportive relationships with caring adults.

**Limitations in developmental asset research.** The majority of research on developmental assets has emanated from a self-reported study performed by the Search Institute in Minneapolis, MN utilizing a survey entitled “Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors” given to 229,000 youth from 1999-2000. The self-reported race or ethnicity of the sample was not nationally-representative. My study focused on traditionally-marginalized youth who were of color and/or low SES. In addition, past studies have been conducted on youth through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, whereas I looked at behaviors beyond high school.

### **The Five Cs**

While researchers at the Search Institute were studying developmental systems theory through the developmental asset model, a group of researchers from the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development at Tufts University in Boston, MA were examining this theory

through a “Five C” framework (Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2000). The Five Cs were competence (in academic, social, and vocational areas); confidence (or a positive self-identity); connection (to community, family, and peers); character (or positive values, integrity, and moral commitment); and caring (or compassion). In addition, the authors postulated that if these Five Cs were present, a Sixth C would emerge—that of contribution.

Lerner, von Eye, Lerner, Lewin-Bizan, and Bowers (2010) suggested that there is an inverse relationship between the Five Cs and problem behaviors, and that when a young person manifests the Five Cs over time, he or she ends up on a trajectory towards idealized adulthood, which is one marked by integrated and mutually-reinforcing contributions (the Sixth C) to self, family, community, and institutions of civil society such as schools. This definition of idealized adulthood is the same as that which is used in adaptive developmental regulations theory (Lerner, 2004).

To facilitate communication with the developmental asset model, Five C researchers referred to internal developmental assets as individual assets and external developmental assets as ecological assets, which include families, peers, schools, neighborhoods, and communities (Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2000). Lerner et al. (2011) believe that in order to develop into healthy adults, adolescents require both individual and ecological assets, and that schools and communities must proactively provide resources and foster the conditions needed to provide youth with the individual-context relations that place them on thriving trajectories across adolescence and into adulthood. (At this point, I feel the need to insert that there are many synonymous terms utilized in developmental systems theory. Assets and characteristics are used synonymously; the terms internal, individual, and personal are used synonymously; and the terms external, ecological, and contextual are used synonymously.)

## **Positive Youth Development**

To test the Five C construct, a longitudinal study of youth in 4-H programs was launched in 2002 (Lerner et al., 2005). Although the term positive youth development (PYD) had been used throughout discussion of the Five Cs, it became an official term when it was operationalized through the Five Cs and outcome measures became available through the 4-H study. It was theorized that PYD emerges when the potential plasticity of human development is aligned with individual and ecological assets, and is conceptualized through the Five Cs of competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring/compassion (Lerner & Thompson, 2002). Lerner and Thompson hypothesized that youth who are engaged in adaptive developmental regulations of individual and context possess the assets needed for thriving and resiliency, and when they achieve intentional self-regulation, they are able to navigate through adolescence into adulthood in a healthy manner.

Lerner (2004) suggested that when individual assets such as positive cognitive, emotional, and behavioral frames of mind; engagement in school; having hope for the future; and possession of intentional self-regulation, can be aligned with resources found in ecological assets like families, schools, and communities, then healthy PYD is optimized. In return, youth who are developing positively give back to family, school, and community as they transition into adulthood. Jellicic, Bobek, Phelps, Lerner, and Lerner (2007) also assert that a person who is thriving tends to contribute back to the context that has benefitted him or her.

**The 4-H program study.** Researchers started collecting data in 2002 from 1,700 youth in 4-H programs and 1,100 of their parents, from 13 states across the United States, utilizing a cohort sequential longitudinal design (Lerner et al., 2005); this pool has grown to over 6,000 youth and 3,000 parents from 41 states (Lerner et al., 2011). There have been eight waves of

data, beginning with a cohort in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and following them through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Lerner et al. (2011) explains that researchers have used this data to study relationships between youth and their ecological settings to determine whether there are mutually-influential relations between individuals and their contexts. The longitudinal nature of the study was designed to test the idea that when the strengths of youth are aligned with family, school, and community resources across adolescence, PYD in the form of the Five Cs will occur. In addition, the Sixth C of youth contribution will follow. Methods have consisted of teachers giving children envelopes to bring home to parents or guardians that include a letter explaining the study, a consent form, and a parent questionnaire. Students who have received consent have been surveyed at their schools or 4-H sites for two hours.

Lerner et al. (2005) reported data from the first wave of the 4-H study, providing cross-sectional information that indicated measurement usefulness of the Five Cs as a means of operationalizing PYD through the set of 77 self-reported responses to the questionnaire. Data collection was achieved in the following manner. In 2002, data from 5<sup>th</sup>-graders was gathered in wave one; these students were the first cohort. To maintain initial levels of power for within-time analyses and to assess the effects of retesting, subsequent waves of the study involved the addition of a “retest control” cohort of youth and a sample of their parents. Participants in the added “retest control” cohort were then followed longitudinally. In wave two, the grade level of the initial cohort was grade 6. A retest control of 6<sup>th</sup>-graders was added to the study, and these youth became members of the second longitudinal cohort - cohort two. Both the original cohort of 5<sup>th</sup>-graders and the added cohort of 6<sup>th</sup>-graders were followed into 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and a new cohort of 7<sup>th</sup>-graders was added to the sample along with their parents. This process was continued with subsequent waves of testing.

Over time, links were made between PYD, youth contribution, and risk behaviors. Results from a study by Jelacic, Bobek, Phelps, Lerner, and Lerner (2007) indicated that 5<sup>th</sup> grade responses to the questionnaire predicted youth contributions, and lower risk behaviors and depression for 6<sup>th</sup> graders. Three years into the data collection, Phelps et al. (2009) assessed the structure and development of PYD by using longitudinal data from grades 5 to 7. The original findings demonstrated that the measures of the Five Cs were positively related to PYD, and that PYD was positively related to youth contribution. However, there was no assessment of whether the structure of PYD identified among 5<sup>th</sup>-graders was present in subsequent years. Using the Five Cs, confirmatory factor analyses of PYD were conducted with data from 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades; results indicated that PYD was a robust construct that could be defined comparably for grades 6 and 7.

Bowers et al. (2010) continued testing the PYD construct based on the Five Cs to see if it had satisfactory psychometric properties for longitudinal measurement invariance. Based on the previously-mentioned Phelps et al. (2009) study, Bowers et al. tested a hierarchy of second-order confirmatory factor analysis models to assess the extent to which PYD could be measured equivalently across adolescence. The researchers used longitudinal data from 920 4-H youth over three years to test the Five C construct's psychometric properties for longitudinal studies and found strict measurement invariance, leading the authors to allege that PYD could be measured the same way across different measurement points in time throughout adolescent development.

Next, Bowers et al. (2010) took a subsample of the 4-H data of youth who had been sampled through seven waves of data collection. In addition to the regular 4-H data, principals were surveyed on school assets pertaining to school climate and resources, such as education and experience of teachers, recreational facilities, artistic facilities, tutors, student-to-teacher ratio,

after-school programs, school size, and parental involvement. Neighborhood assets were also analyzed through student addresses. Family assets were already included in the 4-H data through parent/guardian surveys. Significant findings were that youth school delinquency was related to school assets, while youth goal optimization was correlated more with families and neighborhoods.

Schmid, Phelps, and Lerner (2011) used the 4-H sample to explore associations between youths' hopeful future expectations and intentional self-regulation in predicting PYD, taking into consideration data from Nurmi (2004), which indicated that adolescents spend a significant amount of time thinking about their futures. The authors stressed the importance of youth capabilities to translate goals for the future into present behaviors that will set them on positive paths toward adulthood. This study concluded that adolescents' hopeful expectations for the future and their intentional self-regulation were inter-related, and both were significant predictors of PYD outcomes.

**Limitations to positive youth development research.** Similar to the research on developmental assets, most of the research on PYD has pertained to one longitudinal study involving youth in 5<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades in 4-H programs. The sample is not nationally-representative. The 4-H sample consists of 67.7 % female; 74.4 % European-American, 5.2 % Latino/a, and 7.3 % African American, and 4-H is an elective, out-of-school club, making it less practical and accessible for many youth (Li & Lerner, 2013). As in the Developmental Asset research, studies were not conducted beyond high school. In addition, the methods relied on teachers giving children envelopes to bring home to parents or guardians, parents or guardians signing and returning a consent form and completing a questionnaire, reducing compliance. My study focused on 11 traditionally-marginalized youth who were of color and/or low SES. I

followed them from the time they were immersed in a high school PYD leadership program, to post-secondary matriculation, to completion of higher education.

**Blending developmental asset and positive youth development models.** Although there are two primary camps of research applying developmental systems theory, they are also cross-linked. For example, Theokas et al. (2005) utilized the 40 developmental assets to examine the relationship between internal and external developmental assets and thriving behaviors, hypothesizing that when there is a good match between internal and external assets, PYD is more likely to occur. Using two randomly-selected, separate subsamples of 50,000 middle and high school students drawn from a profile of the Search Institute Student Life Attitudes and Behavior survey, first- and second-order factors of items assessing internal and external assets were identified to assess self-perceived assets within the individual and the multiple layers of his or her context. The authors found significant first-order correlations between the individual and contextual assets, suggesting a higher-order structure present in the data.

Theokas et al. (2005) also discovered that the scales could be divided into seven individual domains (social conscience, personal values, interpersonal values, rules and boundaries, risk avoidance, school engagement, activity participation) and seven ecological domains (connection to family, community connection, school connection, contextual safety, adult mentors, positive identity, parental involvement). A second-order exploratory factor analysis ascertained that 12 of these 14 scales were associated with individual assets or ecological assets, but two scales loaded on opposite constructs (positive identity, and rules and boundaries). The authors concluded that although integration between individual and context is crucial for PYD, it is not always possible to discriminate between the effects of internal and external settings in youth who are actively connecting and are engaged by their contexts.

Youngblade et al. (2007) took a sample of 42,305 adolescents from the 2003 National Survey of Children's Health to compare item composites representing promotive and risk factors in families, schools, and communities, with outcome composites reflective of positive and negative developmental outcomes. Family characteristics were engagement, closeness, role models, rules, communication, safety, parent coping, parent support, plus aggression, aggravation, and negative health role models. School and neighborhood characteristics were safety and connectedness, plus negative influences and violence. The authors found that there were multiple positive family characteristics such as family communication, rules about television, and parental role-modeling of healthy behaviors that were related to adolescent social competence, self-esteem, lower levels of internalizing and externalizing behaviors, and academic problems. School and community safety were associated with increased social competence and decreased externalizing behavior (arguing, bullying, cruelty, disobedience, sullenness). School violence was related to adolescent internalizing (depression and anxiety, unhappiness, withdrawal) and externalizing behavior, as well as academic problems and lower self-esteem.

**Summary of developmental systems theory.** Multiple studies have examined different relationships between youth and their contexts but two consistent themes have emerged. The first is that there appears to be a combined role of personal characteristics such as intentional self-regulation or school engagement, emotional energizers such as hopeful expectations for the future, and resources or assets in the family, school or community settings, that facilitate PYD and active, engaged citizenship. The second is that point-in-time and longitudinal manifestations of PYD and contributions, and risk/problems or behaviors, can be predicted by individual and contextual characteristics (Lerner, Lerner, von Eye, Bowers, & Lewin-Bizan, 2011). Lerner asks the following question to the National Research Council on the Science of Adolescent Health

and Development and Institute of Medicine at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C. in 2005: “What actions of what duration, with what youth in what communities, at what points in ontogenetic and historical time, will result in what features of PYD and contributions to self, family, community, and civil society?” (p. 58).

In summary, the theory of PYD that has emerged in the adolescent development literature specifies that if young people have mutually-beneficial relations with the people and institutions of their social world, they will thrive and be on the right track to a hopeful future, marked by positive contributions to self, family, community, and civil society (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, 2005). The authors conclude that the key to ensuring PYD rests on developing research-based policies that strengthen in diverse communities the capacities of families to raise healthy, thriving children. Such policies must take a strength-based approach to youth; should be developmental in nature; and should emphasize enhancing the fit between youth capacities and assets for PYD that exist in their communities.

Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, and Lerner (2005) stress that we need to take a strength-based approach to youth development and find ways to enhance the fit between the individual capacities of diverse youth and the assets for positive development that exist in their families, schools, and communities. Since no two adolescents are alike, no one single policy or intervention will reach all of a given target population or influence everyone in the same way. Therefore, it is necessary to study individuals and their unique contexts to gain an understanding and celebrate the strengths of these individuals, along with the assets in families, schools, communities, and cultures that promote these strengths.

My research focused on exploring the Five Cs in traditionally-marginalized youth as they progressed through a supportive youth leadership program, and how the combination of these

individual and ecological assets helped to develop young adults who pursued post-secondary opportunities and embodied the Sixth C of contribution.

### **Positive Youth Development Programs**

One way to foster PYD is through youth development (YD) programs (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). “When circumstances prevent disadvantaged families, schools, and communities from providing their youth with fundamental resources, youth development programs offer one avenue for increasing youths’ exposure to positive developmental settings” (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003, p. 97 ).

Many studies have tried to define elements of successful YD programs, basing the concept of success on higher academic performance and decreased risk-taking behaviors (Eccles & Barber, 1999); participant college attendance, volunteering, and voting (Moore, Papillo, & Williams, 2003); psychological resilience, self-worth, and feelings of belonging (Fredericks & Eccles, 2006); or giving back to the community and visions of future leadership roles (Nelson & Eckstein, 2008).

Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) consider PYD programs as those YD programs that intentionally incorporate teachings and experiences that address and advance PYD. These programs can take a variety of forms and range from being highly structured, such as curricula with step-by-step guidelines, to having looser structures, as in programs involved in community service. There have been a variety of studies that have attempted to determine the qualities that distinguish PYD programs from other YD programs. For the remainder of this paper, I will often refer to YD programs that promote PYD as PYD programs.

Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, and Foster (1998) conducted a literature review of YD programs. The authors began with a data base of 4,341 programs but by the time they narrowed

down the data base to those programs that utilized a PYD framework, 15 programs remained. In their study, Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, and Foster defined PYD program elements, then looked at the relationship between these elements and program outcomes. The three themes that emerged from these programs were as follows: more positive outcomes occurred with more PYD program elements; caring adult-youth relationships were critical even when they were not one-on-one; and longer-term YD programs were more successful in PYD.

Five years later, Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) further defined PYD programs from looking at research and practice. The authors conducted an extensive literature review to locate empirical evidence on the efficacy of the PYD approach in YD programs. Surveys were mailed to over 100 programs and 71 were returned. Three characteristics of YD programs were addressed: program goals, atmosphere, and activities. Survey questions inquired about operations, services, participants, and philosophy, and included open-ended questions about the program, its development, and current and future goals. The following seven items on the authors' survey captured atmosphere and activities that produced PYD outcomes in YD programs: a sense of safety; a sense of belonging; participation in challenging and interesting activities; perceived social support from adults; input and decision-making opportunities; leadership opportunities; and youth participation in volunteer and community service.

**Program goals and atmosphere.** Results of the Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) study indicated that to facilitate PYD, YD program goals should include helping youth develop skills and competencies while preventing health-compromising behaviors. Programs that were successful at promoting PYD had atmospheres that were empowering, positive, caring, youth-centered, conveyed a sense of safety, a sense of belonging, and encouraged supportive relationships with adults and peers as well as input and decision-making opportunities for youth.

There were expectations for positive behavior and communication, along with an understanding of clear rules for behavior and consequences. Program leaders created and established an atmosphere of hope. Programs also provided opportunities for youth to gain a sense of personal and group recognition. The authors emphasized that programs should keep in mind that successful applications of PYD programs among different groups of youth requires an understanding of the specific contexts surrounding these youth. Roth and Brooks-Gunn discovered that a supportive and empowering program atmosphere was more important than opportunities provided by activities; however, activities were second in importance.

**Program activities.** Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) learned that YD programs that facilitated PYD offered a wide variety of program activities, both structured and unstructured, that optimized youths' exposure to opportunities and supports that furthered youth development. Seventy-five percent of programs effective at promoting PYD reported life skills, social skills and leadership training, along with recreational activities. Activities could have direct or indirect impacts, such as homework tutoring or mentoring youth to stay in school. Both academic skills and service-learning were offered. The authors stressed that activities should grant opportunities for youth to build skills, engage in real and challenging activities, and broaden their horizons. If possible, activities should try to increase developmental supports in other contexts of youths' worlds, such as families, schools, and communities.

Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) concluded that measurement of YD program atmosphere and its link to youth outcomes is lacking. Outcomes need to be related to measured support and opportunities. There is a need in the research field for evaluation studies that measure the developmental opportunities offered as well as the quality of the YD program atmosphere.

**Program effectiveness, scale, and sustainability.** Lerner and Thompson (2002) examined issues in the design and evaluation of PYD programs. They found that there were more than 17,500 organizations reporting that they were delivering YD programs. These programs were defined as those that attempted to ameliorate the presence of an emotional, behavioral, or social problem; prevent such problems from occurring; or promote positive, healthy behaviors. The authors considered the Five Cs of competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring/compassion as key areas of PYD programs. Lerner and Thompson analyzed three dimensions of these PYD programs: effectiveness, scale, and sustainability.

Even with the results that follow, Lerner and Thompson (2002) quickly realized when looking at effectiveness, there was no way to determine whether changes in youth behavior were due to program participation or personal attributes at the start of the program. In terms of program scale, even if programs were known to be effective, there was no way to determine whether they were able to reach all of the young people for whom they could have positive benefits. The authors found that sustainability was even more of a challenge because many of the programs they studied were not able to obtain sustained funding.

Lerner and Thompson (2002) concluded that YD programs that concentrate on PYD automatically address problem-reduction and prevention. The authors also determined that to be effective at PYD, programs must engage both the individual and contextual variables affecting youth development. Borrowing from the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1998), the authors determined that for PYD, youth need to find a valued place in a constructive group; learn how to form close, durable human relationships; feel a sense of worth as a person; achieve a reliable basis for making informed decisions; know how to use the support systems available to them; express constructive curiosity and exploratory behavior; find ways of being useful to

others; and believe in a promising future with real opportunities. The Carnegie Report also states that for PYD to occur, youth need to master social skills and manage conflict; acquire technical and analytical capabilities to participate in the world; cultivate inquiring and problem-solving habits for lifelong learning; become ethical; become responsible citizens; and respect diversity.

Lerner and Thompson (2002) concluded through their literature review that the 10 components of effective PYD programs are: 1) predicated on the Five Cs; 2) emphasize youth assets in their design, conduct, and evaluation; 3) pay attention to the diverse strengths and needs of youth and their communities; 4) provide a safe, accessible place for youth; 5) recognize the need for integration of families, peers, communities, and schools; 6) provide safe, accessible, integrated services to youth in all aspects of their lives; 7) recognize the importance of adult-youth relationships; 8) emphasize the development of life skills; 9) are committed to program evaluation; and 10) advocate for youth through policy.

Scales, Benson, Leffert, and Blyth (2000) found that youth reports of three or more hours per week of participation in sports, clubs, or organizations at school or in the community were the single developmental asset most linked to thriving outcomes among adolescents in the 4-H program data from the Search Institute. Based on their review of this sample, the authors defined PYD programs as those YD programs that provided youth with access to caring adults and responsible peers, along with skill-building activities that could reinforce the values and skills associated with doing well in school and maintaining good physical skills. Further analysis of the 4-H data led Lerner (2004) to clarify that optimal PYD programs separate themselves from other youth programs by offering the following “Big Three:” 1) positive and sustained adult-youth relationships that last at least one year; 2) skill-building activities; and 3) opportunities to use these skills in community-based activities.

Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, and Hawkins (2004) from the Social Development Group at the University of Washington conducted a review of the PYD Evaluation Project, which sought to summarize how YD programs have been defined in the literature, and to identify programs with strong evaluations and summarize their outcomes in order to determine which of these programs successfully facilitated PYD. Through a literature review and a consensus meeting of youth development practitioners, policy community, and prevention scientists in youth development, the authors derived an operational definition of PYD for the purpose of their study. They defined PYD programs as those with approaches that seek to achieve one or more of the following objectives/constructs: bonding, resilience, social competence, emotional competence, cognitive competence, behavioral competence, moral competence, self-determination, spirituality, self-efficacy, clear and positive identity, and/or belief in the future. These PYD programs provide recognition for positive behavior, opportunities for prosocial involvement, and foster prosocial norms.

**Program design, methods, intervention, and evaluation.** Criteria for the Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, and Hawkins (2004) literature review included programs that addressed one or more of the aforementioned constructs, after which they were screened for adequate study design; outcome measures; description of research methodologies; description of the population served; intervention; implementation; and demonstrated effects on behavioral outcomes. As a result, the 161 programs that were initially identified were narrowed down to 25 programs.

Common characteristics among the 25 YD programs that met the aforementioned PYD definitions as well as design and evaluation criteria in the Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, and Hawkins (2004) study were as follows: youth development constructs addressed a minimum

of five positive youth constructs, with all programs addressing competence, self-efficacy, and prosocial norms; measurement of positive and problem outcomes involved a structured curriculum; and program frequency and duration revealed that 80% of programs lasted nine months or longer.

Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, and Hawkins (2004) found that the following methods and interventions were common in successful programs: there were methods to strengthen social, emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and moral competencies; methods to build self-efficacy and shape messages from family and community about clear standards for youth behavior; methods to increase healthy bonding with adults, peers, and younger children; methods to expand opportunities and recognition for youth; methods to provide structure and consistency in program delivery; and interventions with youth that lasted nine months or longer. An additional finding was that one-third of programs took place in a single setting, while two-thirds of programs combined resources of families, schools, and communities.

My study focused on a youth leadership program that satisfied the elements of a successful PYD program through the provision of positive and longstanding adult-youth relationships, skill-building activities, and opportunities to use these skills in service situations. I looked at the impact of this high school program on post-secondary embodiment of the Five Cs, along with the Sixth C of contribution, in 11 traditionally-marginalized youth, as described by them.

### **School-based Positive Youth Development Programs**

The literature review of PYD programs by Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) revealed that only 39% of programs were school-based and the rest were community-based. Although community-based and extracurricular programs are highly impactful on PYD, especially for

youth living in lower-asset neighborhoods (Urban, Lewin-Bizan, & Lerner, 2009), my dissertation focuses on school-based PYD programs for the reasons that follow. Community programs are often initiated and funded through start-up funds or grants, and sustainability can be challenging (Lerner & Thompson, 2002). In addition, community-based programs may be inaccessible to youth who lack transportation, monetary means, or free time. Students who live amid difficult circumstances are not well-served by elective programs; they need consistent sources of support that are fully integrated into their daily school life (Doll & Lyon, 1998); schools can provide this consistency. It should be noted that while I emphasize school-based programs, all PYD programs should involve schools, families, and communities, as was evident in two-thirds of successful programs evaluated by Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, and Hawkins (2004).

Simovska (2012) discusses how the same criteria that apply to effective extra-curricular programs can apply to in-school PYD programs: the provision of safe and enjoyable environments where students can pursue tasks they find intrinsically motivating; caring and supportive relationships with adults; and opportunities for students to take on meaningful responsibilities while engaging in work that is challenging and has social or civic significance (Kahne et al., 2001). Both theoretical and empirical studies have shown that integrating PYD qualities into the school day improves academic and social outcomes (Battistich, Watson, Soloman, Lewis, & Schaps, 1999; Comer, 1980; Noddings, 1992).

Although in-school PYD programs are less common, there are some advantages over out-of-school programs. One of these advantages is the overlapping philosophies of PYD and education. Greenberg et al. (2003) state that the comprehensive mission of schools is to educate students to be knowledgeable, responsible, socially-skilled, and caring. The authors cite

educational goals as the ability to have good character; be culturally-literate; intellectually-reflective; committed to lifelong learning; practice positive, safe, and healthy behaviors; contribute ethically and responsibly to peers, family, school, and community; and possess the basic competencies, work habits, and values for meaningful employment and engaged citizenship. These objectives are symbiotic with those of PYD. Lerner and Thompson (2002) describe integrated social, emotional, and academic education as a framework for conceptualizing school-based PYD programming.

During the school day, curricula and PYD experiences can support and inform each other (Greenberg et al., 2003). The authors emphasize that schools can foster PYD because they are where youth spend most of their waking hours; provide both academic and nonacademic environments that influence multiple areas of adolescent functioning, including identity formation, cognitive and social development, peer relations, and vocational development; can provide positive academic experiences and opportunities that contribute to adolescent resilience and PYD; and are more likely to have resources and an infrastructure suitable for systems-change interventions focused on PYD.

Greenberg et al. (2003) emphasize that schools can supply adult role models, supportive peers, and a safe, caring, stimulating environment. They can help youth meet stressful life challenges by facilitating their engagement in social systems that support PYD, and can help protect youth against adverse life events and difficult social situations, pressure to engage in risky health behaviors, and academic failure. The authors highlight the importance of positive adults, positive places (safe, caring, and supportive for both youth and adults), and positive opportunities.

Although the school environment is ripe with opportunity for PYD, Greenberg et al. (2003) discuss some key considerations and challenges to school-based PYD programs. First, the authors stress that sustaining PYD in schools requires a culture that is supported by all parties and is infiltrated throughout the school. There is need for a system-wide emphasis on PYD, with involvement of societal and cultural contexts such as families, schools, neighborhoods, government, law enforcement, churches, and cultural institutions. Another consideration is school readiness. A well thought-out plan would include active participation, collaboration, and commitment from all key stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, school leadership, school board members, and community stakeholders like law enforcement, and social and health services. Stakeholders must be committed to continuous collaborative assessments of risk and protective factors in the lives of youth and communities served by the school.

Connections between teachers and parents, students and communities, students and teachers, plus teacher satisfaction and community support, are crucial (Greenberg et al., 2003). There must be a shared vision aligned with district and state priorities; selection of evidence-based programming for school-wide and community-wide integration; implementation of ongoing professional development for school personnel; and continual evaluation of implementation and outcomes of programs and strategies. Schools also need physical and financial resources to maintain programs, which requires stable sources of program funding through governmental and/or private sources. Professional development and technical assistance for school personnel are critical for sustainability, to ensure fidelity of program implementation, as well as flexibility to adapt to unique and emerging needs of the school and community.

Greenberg et al. (2003) claim that despite the availability of evidence-based PYD programs, most schools do not use them. One issue is that schools are hard-pressed to meet their

many demands, leaving them little time for reform. Accountability is another barrier; schools need measurement tools, and ways to collect and analyze data. A third challenge is creating comprehensive approaches that involve students, staff, systems, districts, parents, and communities. The authors suggest that future directions should include giving superintendents, principals, teachers, and parents access to research and information, along with training and technical assistance (Greenberg et al., 2003). State-level, district-level, and school-level policies and practices are needed, as are school-wide and district-wide programming that is person-centered and addresses the school environment.

Greenberg et al. (2003) also feel that questions regarding program replication, coordination, professional development, and sustainability are under-researched. They recommend that researchers, educators, and policy-makers work together to design evidence-based, coordinated youth development programs, along with accountability and support systems to ensure their effective implementation.

Positive youth development programs are most successful when they are coordinated with attempts to enhance competence, connections to others, and contributions to community (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Pittman, Irby, & Ferber, 2001). Schools offer the perfect place for these processes to occur, but PYD cannot occur without youth engagement and connectedness (I use these two terms found in the literature synonymously).

**School engagement and connectedness.** School engagement is critical for youth to draw from those resources that enable them to attain the knowledge and skills necessary for PYD. Concentrating on school engagement is a way to work on individual-context relations, along with behavior, emotion, and cognition, all of which are inversely related to problematic youth development (Lerner, Lerner, von Eye, & Lewin-Bizan, 2011).

Studies have shown that school connectedness leads to academic achievement, motivation, self-regulation, higher attendance rates, and retention, all of which are likely to result in academic, occupational, and life success (Lerner et al., 2009). The authors reveal that school connectedness has been shown to be positively associated with self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism, positive peer relationships, and negatively related to poor conduct, antisocial behavior, depression, anxiety, emotional distress, and suicidality. Moore and Glei (1995) found that children and adolescents who participated significantly more than their peers in school clubs were more likely to report positive outcomes in young adulthood (ages 18-22), such as closer relationships with their parents and greater involvement in community affairs and volunteer work.

School connectedness can also buffer against effects of negative home environments (Maddox & Prinz, 2003), emotional distress (Wilkinson-Lee, Zhang, Nuno, & Wilhelm, 2011), and offer protection against risks like exposure to violence and pressure from gangs (Hirsch, 2005, Hurd & Zimmerman, 2010). Way and Robinson (2003) found that in a sample of 100 racially- and ethnically-diverse adolescents from low-SES conditions, a positive school climate contributed to higher levels of self-esteem two years after high school - even more than the positive effects of family and friend support.

Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterle, Fleming, and Hawkins (2004) conducted two longitudinal studies, entitled the “Seattle Social Development Project and the Raising Healthy Children Project,” on school connectedness for healthy PYD. The authors’ definition of school connectedness and bonding was attachment characterized by close affective relationships at school, and commitment, characterized by an investment in school and doing well. Both studies

included interventions that sought to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors for adolescent health and behavior issues.

Based on their studies, Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterle, Fleming, and Hawkins (2004) make the following recommendations. To promote a nurturing classroom, create a climate that can support academic success for students who face difficult life circumstances; show students that they are personally responsible for their success; develop a caring classroom community; provide opportunities for meaningful participation; and set clear and consistent expectations for student behavior. For instructional and collaborative strategies, use cooperative learning strategies such as problem-based learning and reciprocal learning, along with different instructional strategies; and involve students in cross-age tutoring. To help students acquire and use personal skills, teach transferable life skills; encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities; and emphasize effective literacy skills. To build teacher-student rapport, build healthy interpersonal relationships with students; set and communicate high, realistic expectations for academic performance; and use students' strengths to promote positive self-esteem. Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterle, Fleming, and Hawkins conclude that life skills development and adult-youth relationships are major contributors to PYD.

Lerner (2004) stresses that PYD interventions should involve life skills building opportunities; participation and leadership roles in family, school, and community activities; and adult-youth relationships. Osterman (2000) recommends the following conditions for school bonding: opportunities for classroom and school involvement, teaching students the skills they need to succeed, and recognizing effort and accomplishments to enhance motivation to stay involved in academic activities. The authors claim that successful engagement is dependent on

learning environments and activity processes that foster youth competence, autonomy, and quality relationships.

Lerner, von Eye, Lerner, Lewin-Bizan, and Bowers (2010) state that school engagement is a person-to-contextual relational construct that depicts the way in which an individual cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally interacts with the school setting. They suggest that school engagement may mediate the associations between ecological and individual assets, and academic competence. The authors looked at 4-H study data of 5<sup>th</sup>- and 6<sup>th</sup>-graders and found that individual and ecological assets affected behavioral and emotional school engagement, which later predicted academic competence. Lerner, von Eye, Lerner, Lewin-Bizan, and Bowers found that adult-youth relationships were a significant person-to-context component of school engagement.

Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterle, Fleming, and Hawkins (2004), Lerner (2004), Lerner, von Eye, Lerner, Lewin-Bizan, and Bowers (2010), and Osterman (2000) all stress the importance of adult-youth relationships in fostering PYD; the educational setting is fertile ground for cultivating meaningful relationships between adults and students.

**Adult-youth relationships.** One of the recurring themes of PYD in schools is the advantage and proximity of adult-youth (AY) relationships. Scales, Benson, and Mannes (2006) studied developmental assets and non-parental adults, and found that these adults contributed to PYD by valuing youth; providing positive role models, support, and empowerment; and by setting and reinforcing boundaries and expectations for behavior, which contributed to socialization processes such as guidance, affection, modeling, monitoring, belongingness, and norm-setting. The authors found that AY relationships are even more promotive than preventive, and tend to lead to long-term well-being, with youth ultimately contributing to civil society.

Grossman and Bulle (2006) looked at 15 years of research on youth programs to address what had been learned about connectedness between youth and non-parental adults. Most of the authors' emphasis was on relationships that occurred outside of school; however, Grossman and Bulle asserted that the most common non-parental relationship is that of a teacher and a student. Teachers can provide accessibility, availability, support, celebrate successes, and enforce healthy boundaries and expectations (Scales & Leffert, 1999).

Positive adults in schools recognize youth needs for ongoing support in their development along with their need for connectedness to others (Scales & Leffert, 1999). Teachers can recognize prosocial behavior, provide concrete feedback and praise for achievements, and can be sensitive to signs of difficulty in students' lives. The authors contend that teachers have the opportunity to provide daily support when listening without judging; provide comfort and emotional support; encourage students to think about values and feelings; tell students their efforts are appreciated; encourage students to do well; and provide practical help.

***Traditionally-marginalized students.*** Research shows that the connection to caring, non-parental adults not only improves the health and well-being of youth, and decreases risky behaviors such as violence, negative behavior, and experimentation with sex or drugs, but also improves school performance (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). The authors emphasize that social supports that lead to academic achievement may be harder to find in families and peers for marginalized youth, making teachers and other adults even more important. Structured neighborhood activities serve as safe places for youth but in neighborhoods lacking in institutional resources like libraries and community centers, school may be the primary source of safety and structure.

School-based PYD programs can help offset a relative absence of opportunities to receive mentoring through less formal routes like neighborhood extracurricular activities (Scales, Benson, & Mannes, 2006). Schools in these neighborhoods are also less likely to provide instruction, materials, and qualified teachers, and can have lower future expectations and negative messages about youths' academic abilities (Becker & Luthar, 2002).

Drop-out rates are disproportionately high for low-SES and minority students (Ainsworth, 2002). Marginalized youth are more likely to be disengaged due to inadequate institutional resources, and increased exposure to negative peer norms and danger such as gang violence. School outcomes are impacted by lack of good role models and adult supervision, limited educational and career opportunities, and unsupportive social networks.

Daly, Shin, Thakral, Selders, and Vera (2009) looked at the effect of risk factors (perceived neighborhood crime/delinquency problems, neighborhood incivilities) and protective factors (teacher support, family support, peer support) on the school engagement of 123 urban adolescents of color. School engagement, with its built-in AY relationships, was one of the most important factors for student success and prevention of dropout. The importance of school engagement and AY relationships in preventing dropout should be a national priority and presents a challenge for schools and professionals working with marginalized youth to thwart school failure (Ainsworth, 2002).

Theokas et al. (2005) found that within the contexts of family, school, and community, a different variable had the greatest effect on developmental outcomes for each racial/ethnic group he studied, but the key variable was always related to assets provided by people. This relationship phenomenon is supported by Youngblade et al. (2007), who looked at promotive and

risk factors in families, schools, and communities. Across contexts, one of the three themes that emerged was interpersonal connection; the other two themes were safety and health promotion.

***Promotion of adult-youth relationships in schools.*** Grossman and Bulle (2006) emphasize that teachers must be educated and trained in classroom management and methods for diverse students in order to foster a positive classroom environment. Youth must be taught in ways that motivate, engage, and involve them in their learning so they enjoy learning and have a stake in their achievement.

Research suggests that one of the most effective means for helping youth experience PYD is to help them become active agents in their own development (Lerner, Theokas, & Jellic, 2005). Lerner's work emphasizes that meaningful engagement through participation leads youth participants to take ownership of the activity. If they feel ownership, they become motivated to elicit change, develop feelings of self-efficacy through achievement, and develop more positive views through self-confidence. This youth empowerment is facilitated when adults are also engaged; adults must acknowledge and relinquish power to youth (Jordan, 2001). Youth who do not feel their opinions are valued may become disengaged (Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005).

School-based adult-youth mentoring uses school personnel, is cost-effective, and has potential to put teachers in a positive light for youth (Sulkowski, Demaray, & Lazarus, 2012). The authors emphasize the importance of students believing that adults in the school care about their learning, as well as about them as individuals. In the Sulkowski, Demaray, and Lazarus study, AY relationships were shown to be effective on youth attitudes, engagement, behavior, and school attendance. The effects of mentoring in this study were measured through rates of disciplinary referrals, attendance, and student survey responses. Not only did attendance

improve, but principal referrals were significantly lower. Surveys reflected that youth pre- and post-attitudes toward self, peers, teachers, and other personnel were also improved.

Based on their research, Sulkowski, Demaray, and Lazarus (2012) discovered that adult-youth connectedness in schools is dependent on staff interactions and program policies. Interactions in the authors' study included informal socializing, responsiveness to youth needs and desires, teachers skilled at teaching youth, teacher and youth shared interests and characteristics, and mutual respect. The authors stress that school policies should grant unstructured time and space for informal interactions, where adults can interact with youth in caring and respectful ways; there needs to be a balance between teaching and relationship formation. In addition, a school-wide assessment of students should be conducted to make sure each student has one positive relationship with an adult in school. Ideally, either adults or activities should be in youths' lives at least nine months so students do not lose both simultaneously. My research studies a school-based PYD program, with AY relationships at its core.

### **Service as a Component of School-based Positive Youth Development Programs**

Eccles and Gootman (2002), and Pittman, Irby, and Ferber (2001) claim that PYD programs are most successful when they are coordinated with attempts to enhance competence, connections to others, and contributions to community. I have discussed how PYD programs in schools can enhance competence and connections to others; I will now address how schools can facilitate youth contributions to community or service learning (I am equating community service with service learning since both have similar attributes, with one being community-based and one being school-based). Youth leadership programs represent the service component of PYD programs, either through community service or service-learning. Consistent with other

PYD programs, AY relationships and life-skills development are both focuses of youth leadership programs (Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterle, Fleming, & Hawkins, 2004). Most youth leadership programs take place out of school and involve voluntary community service, such as 4-H programs. School-based leadership programs embed service-learning into the curriculum, such as cross-age tutoring programs.

**The importance of youth service.** Putnam (2001) emphasizes the danger of America's decline in social capital and the need to nurture and reinforce youth to spend time in developmental contexts such as schools to promote PYD, leadership, and positive community development. Youth leaders can learn to make good decisions and influence others in ethical and socially-responsible ways. Putnam stresses that leadership skills and attitudes can be learned but they must also be practiced, making it crucial for leadership programs to provide opportunities to exercise these skills. In summary, programs must be *about* leadership (curricula) and *for* leadership (practice).

In adolescence, leadership can be expressed in a variety of ways - whether it is through speaking out on community issues or shoveling a neighbor's sidewalk. It is crucial that these actions are recognized, celebrated, and encouraged for reinforcement (Fertman & Van Linden, 1999). In addition to leadership and service, leadership programs foster camaraderie and a sense of belonging, thereby reinforcing the connections that are so important in PYD.

Planty, Bozick, and Regnier (2006) stress that the adolescent time of vulnerability is also a time of maximum opportunity to develop positive self-identity and orientation toward others. The authors reiterate that empowerment and a sense of community are integral to growth in adolescence. Late adolescence and early adulthood are times when individual attitudes toward civic responsibility are most malleable, but ages 16-24 normally have the lowest rates of

volunteering except for the elderly (Oesterle, Johnson, & Mortimer, 2004); high school leadership programs have the opportunity to change this trend.

Research findings suggest that youth leadership programs designed to promote empowerment and a sense of community can lead to positive changes in empathy and intent to be involved in future community action (Planty, Bozick, & Regnier, 2006). Participating in service activities helps youth strengthen their communities while learning to understand the adverse conditions that others face. Youth gain a stronger sense of civic identity while becoming healthier, less delinquent, and improving their school performance.

The service-learning that occurs as a part of leadership programs builds prosocial behaviors, and enhances self-esteem and school success (Billig & Welch, 2004; Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004). Youth develop altruism, integrity, caring and compassion, respect, responsibility and accountability, excellence and scholarship, and leadership. Service-learning can lead to better relationships with teachers, increased engagement in academics, leadership potential, and acceptance of diverse people and ideas (RMC Research Corporation, 2005). Service-learning benefits youth because they learn to work well with others, solve conflicts, understand emotions and actions, and gain empathy for others. Youth grow more confident in their abilities to contribute to their communities and as a result, their feelings of self-worth increase (Nelson & Sneller, 2011).

The Teens as Volunteers: Research to Results Fact Sheet Publication (2006) shows that teens who volunteer do better in school, feel more positive about themselves, avoid risky behaviors, are more likely to vote, and have a positive work ethic and socially-responsible attitude as adults; this also benefits communities and society (Theokas & Bloch, 2006). Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, and Atkins (2007) looked at the influences of high school community

service, extracurricular activities, and civic knowledge on voting and volunteering in early adulthood. The authors utilized the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS:88) data base of 12,144 high school graduates over eight years to look at civic participation through voting and civic volunteering. They concluded that active involvement in addressing social problems during youth is predictive of long-term civic engagement.

Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, and Atkins (2007) found that voluntary and mandatory high school community service were strong predictors of adult voting and volunteering. They noticed that in performing community service, youth became personally involved in issues instead of just reading or hearing about them, gained a network with which they could discuss issues, and became familiar with social problems of which they were previously unaware. Community service shaped their identities. Youth ended up being exposed to value systems and began to see themselves as capable of contributing to the common good.

Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, and Atkins (2007) state that this type of experience is an anchoring point for personal and social identity in youth. Youth become members of networks that become lasting resources of civic engagement. The authors found that AY relationships and working with others toward a mutual end gave youth a basis for viewing themselves as capable volunteers. A limitation of the Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, and Atkins study, as well as other studies that measure changes in viewpoints, is the inability to control for variables that are known to influence civic development such as personality, as well as factors that may contribute to a change in beliefs over time.

Planty, Bozick, and Regnier (2006) explored whether service in adulthood was influenced by whether high school service had been voluntary or mandatory. They utilized a sample of 9,966 students from the previously-mentioned 1988 National Education Longitudinal

Study and followed these students for eight years after graduation. The authors found that mandatory service yielded slightly lower volunteer rates in adulthood than voluntary service. However, other researchers have found that service embedded in a required curriculum yields greater positive effects in adulthood than voluntary community service (Conrad & Hedin, 1991; Dewsbury-White, 1993).

Schmidt, Shumow, and Kackar (2007) analyzed the National Household Education Survey, a nationally-representative data set of 4,306 high school students and one parent of each student, to describe youth characteristics, the nature of their service activities, and academic, behavioral, and civic outcomes associated with service. The authors looked at type of service performed by youth. Schmidt, Shumow, and Kackar found that service impacted adolescents through improved civic attitudes, appreciation for diversity, increased responsibility toward community, increased political efficacy/awareness/knowledge, a willingness to vote and volunteer, and harbored a sense of positive contribution to society. Schmidt, Shumow, and Kackar discovered that youth who worked directly with individuals in need had higher academic achievement, whereas youth who worked with organizations had better civic outcomes.

**Service and traditionally-marginalized students.** Schmidt, Shumow, and Kackar (2007) make an argument to mandate service for marginalized youth, who would normally be less likely to participate but most likely to benefit. The authors found that marginalized students who participated in service earned higher grades, had fewer behavioral problems, knew more about the society in which they lived, and felt more empowered to effect change. Schmidt, Shumow, and Kackar stress that community service and service-learning programs are important educational strategies for marginalized youth because they typically address many of the factors that contribute to risk of academic failure. In addition, by its very nature, service involves

practices such as mentoring, community collaboration, hands-on activity, and working with responsible adults, all of which have been depicted to be successful practices when working with marginalized youth.

Scales, Roehlkepartain, Neal, Kielsmeir, and Benson (2006) studied the relationships between service, academic success, and SES, and found that more service in all students led to higher school attendance, engagement, and academic achievement. The authors observed that students from low-SES circumstances who were engaged in service scored better on most academic success variables than their peers with less or no service. Students from low-SES situations with higher levels of service had more developmental assets than high-SES youth without service experience. In addition, youth who engaged in service were more inclined to continue to serve society into adulthood. Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, and Atkins (2007) discovered that service-learning that occurs as part of youth leadership programs in high school can lead to service-learning later in life due to an understanding of the power of commitment.

Community service and service-learning may be connected to academic success in marginalized youth because they begin to feel useful and valued, and they get to demonstrate what they learn in school in the real world, which is empowering (Scales, Roehlkepartain, Neal, Kielsmeir, & Benson, 2006). The authors emphasize that these youth also receive instructive feedback and have high expectations placed on them. In experiential education, youth get to assume teaching roles, granting them the opportunity to create positive, caring relationships. Scales et al. discovered that attendance for marginalized students was high on service-learning days because youth did not want to disappoint their clients.

Newmann, Wehlage, and Lamborn (1992) claim that engagement increases when curricula involve students in the construction of knowledge, ownership of cognitive work, and

authentic connection to the real world. The service-learning component of youth leadership programs is an example of a way to experientially engage students in shared inquiry and meaningful decision-making, while integrating classroom and community (Zeldin, 2004), all of which support marginalized students in academics and community involvement (Newmann, Wehlage, & Lamborn). Newmann, Wehlage, and Lamborn's research suggests that when involved in service-learning, marginalized youth believe they are contributing to the community, are less bored than in traditional classrooms, are engaged in academic tasks and general learning, and are more accepting of diversity.

Nelson and Sneller (2011) also looked at service-learning as a way to capitalize on positive assets in marginalized youth. The authors believe that service-learning harnesses the positive assets of these youth by allowing them to talk about their problems and concerns, problem-solve, and make decisions with supportive adults, all of which lead to youth empowerment. Nelson and Sneller found that 75% of students who participated in service-learning courses said they were more interesting than other classes; 64% agreed that these classes could have a major impact on the drop-out rate. Eighty-three percent of principals said service-learning had a positive impact on academic achievement and that it has potential to close the gap between students from low-SES situations and other students.

In conclusion, a school environment that promotes PYD through close relationships between students and teachers, offers an experiential curriculum and authentic instruction that engages students and connects subject matter to real-world problems, such as occurs with service-learning, may help compensate for the detrimental effects of low-SES circumstances (Billig & Welch, 2004).

**Leadership program attributes.** After realizing there was little consistency in defining youth leadership, Conner and Strobel (2007) operationalized youth leadership as competency in communication and interpersonal skills, analytic and critical reflection, and positive involvement in community affairs. The authors discovered that most studies addressing youth leadership either focused on individual developmental processes or contextual supports and practices that facilitated leadership development; in their study, Conner and Strobel emphasized the links between leadership development and programmatic structures and support. By utilizing an embedded case study design that concentrated on two girls' experiences in a youth leadership program over a three-year period, the authors attempted to bridge the gap between leadership development and programmatic structures and supports.

Based on their research, Conner and Strobel (2007) emphasize the importance of getting students to think for themselves, communicate thoughts and feelings, and help others understand and act on their beliefs. The authors believe that leadership program features should provide opportunities for growth but also goal-setting and self-reflection, showcasing adult models of commitment and abilities to deal with change. Conner and Strobel stress that leadership development takes time and is different for everyone. They state that interactions, praise, and positive reinforcement from adults go a long way in supporting youth leadership development. The authors also learned that contexts informed and influenced youth development but the reverse also held true - youth also impacted their environments.

Planty, Bozick, and Regnier (2006) state that objectives of youth leadership programs should be enhancement of personal goals, development of interpersonal relationships, empowerment, and building a sense of community. The process should include empowerment and promoting a sense of community through opportunities for youth to feel in control of

something important, and if possible, through collaboration with peers. The authors believe that educators need to blend the adolescent desire for autonomy with their contradictory drive for affiliation and acceptance. Leadership program outcomes should include an evaluation of youths' sense of selves and orientations toward others.

Essential components of service-learning programs are that they should be integrated into a curriculum, meet community needs, and provide opportunities for youth to think critically, reflect, and have a voice in decision-making (Scales, Roehlkepartain, Neal, Kielsmeier, & Benson, 2006). Billig (2010), and Billig and Weah (2008) found that leadership programs that employ the following standards were shown to demonstrate positive youth development effects: duration of at least a semester, linked to a curriculum, utilized youth-adult partnerships, offered meaningful service, embraced youth voice, gave opportunity for reflection, celebrated diversity, and monitored progress. Billig cites standards for service learning in eight domains acquired from the K-12 Service Learning Standards for Quality Practice, released by the National Youth Leadership Council in 2008: duration and intensity, link to curriculum, partnerships, meaningful service, youth voice, reflection, diversity, and program monitoring.

Grothaus (2004) discusses a seven-month, comprehensive leadership training program that was designed to achieve youth goals of enhanced resiliency, self-esteem, leadership abilities, and life skills. Through projects that were meaningful to them, students engaged in community stewardship and learned to function as service leaders, increasing communication of empathy, greater autonomy, an appreciation of cultural differences, enhanced self-awareness, and equitable decision-making. Youth also gained increased awareness of the importance of investment in communities, and developed advocacy skills to increase their effectiveness as positive change agents, thereby strengthening their ethical commitment to serve the common

good. Youth leadership goals were achieved by engaging in a significant serving role, balancing experiences with guided reflection, combining support with developmentally-appropriate challenges, and ensuring continuity in the experience for a recommended minimum of months.

Martinek and Schilling (2003) recommend the following strategies to encourage youth leadership: accept youth where they are in their development while gently nudging them to try out advanced leadership skills; reinforce expectations for youth leaders as teachers; provide choices and opportunities to enhance leadership; and use reflection consistently throughout the program.

**The importance of reflection.** Billig (2010), Billig and Weah (2008), Conner and Strobel (2007), Grothaus (2004), and Martinek and Schilling (2003) all mention the importance of reflection, journaling, and discussion during the youth leadership development process. Leadership education requires assessments and opportunities to get to know students and for them to learn about themselves. Project-based learning and journaling help with these tasks while bringing out students' leadership qualities and providing opportunities for them to lead (Putnam, 2001).

Stephens (1995) claims that, "Reflection is the yeast that transforms service experiences into learning. It is the path to development of critical thinking skills" (p. 31). Sheckley and Keeton (1997) state:

The expectations, values, images and models of meaning developed from prior experience that learners hold in semantic memory, and the cultural values, norms, and beliefs they have assimilated, interact with the concrete experience to confirm or disconfirm prior expectations, values, etc. Without strong opportunities for reflection on the experience, learners will tend to assimilate the experience into their existing models

of meaning. But with structured opportunity to reflect, describe, discuss, and construct meaning from the experience, learners have the potential to develop more complex understandings and more comprehensive intellectual functioning (p. 50).

As such, reflection and collective identity is especially crucial to overcoming barriers faced by traditionally-marginalized populations (Lakin & Mahoney, 2006).

**Older youth helping younger youth as a means of service.** Martinek and Schilling (2003) discuss a program that establishes relationships at the other end of the lifespan, called “Youth Leadership Corps.” This program provides leadership positions to teens to mentor younger children, starting with a summer camp and extending into the school year. The idea is to provide leadership opportunities for older youth who are trying to connect with something bigger than themselves. In this study, youth wrote about four themes in their journals: personal needs, teaching skills, reciprocal learning, and compassionate leadership. The authors found that this program instills a sense of responsibility for serving others while creating a broader and healthier view of the future in its youth participants.

Barclay (2013) says there are two great days in a person’s life - the day we are born and the day we realize why. The Youth Leadership Corps program helped youth realize that they could contribute to their community, and perhaps even the world (Martinek & Schilling, 2003).

Haski-Leventhal, Ronel, York, and Ben-David (2008) studied older youth, 12-19 years of age, who worked with younger youth and found that the teens were more effective than adults at mentoring and tutoring the children. This study was undertaken at 25 youth drop-in centers. It combined qualitative and quantitative data collected through adult volunteer, youth volunteer, and youth client questionnaires, followed up by interviews. The authors found that youth were more relationship-oriented while adults were more service-oriented.

The program studied by Haski-Leventhal, Ronel, York, and Ben-David (2008) empowered teens to make a difference in others' lives, and made it easier for children to receive help. A common language and similar backgrounds generated trust and facilitated interpersonal communication between older and younger youth. Traditionally-marginalized youth mentioned that they had often times avoided adult helpers because they felt alienated. Many youth never received assistance because they did not have families or support systems that could facilitate the process of connecting them to resources. Younger youth said they wanted to emulate the older youth and volunteer someday, which they knew was possible because the teens were "like them."

Haski-Leventhal, Ronel, York, and Ben-David (2008) learned that motivations for the youth volunteers were helping others, social interaction, and recognition. An ulterior motive was to get help for themselves without being obvious – AY relationships were important in this regard; the older youth had role models and became role models. The more the youth volunteered, the more satisfied they became as they experienced gratitude, the excitement of witnessing client progress, and supportive supervisor and peer relationships. The leadership role became more and more important, and some youth stated that it became the most important thing in their lives.

My study involved a PYD leadership program that taught leadership skills, then put these skills into practice in the form of service through cross-age tutoring with children. The curriculum involved teaching different units through stories, movies, speakers, readings, followed by reflection.

### **Cross-age Tutoring as Part of a School-based Positive Youth Development Program**

Haski-Leventhal, Ronel, York, and Ben-David (2008), and Martinek and Schilling (2003) give examples of youth helping other youth as service. One way to provide service in schools

through leadership is through cross-age tutoring (CAT). Cross-age tutoring is a form of cooperative service learning in which an older student, often one who can benefit from additional reinforcement, is paired with a younger student who may or may not be in need of remediation (Thorpe & Wood, 2000). Putting students in cooperative groups or pairs has a long history of improving everything from achievement scores to self-esteem to peer relationships; there are a plethora of studies demonstrating the effectiveness of CAT for both older and younger youth (Cohen et al., 1982; Eggers, 1995; Karcher, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009; Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1993; Schneider & Barone, 1997).

**The history of cross-age tutoring.** Cross-age tutoring has been in existence since the 1800's (Paolitto, 1976). What follows is the history of CAT as told by Paolitto in the form of an annotated bibliography. Cross-age tutoring was initiated early in the century when active boys were put to work teaching younger children in an effort to channel their energy while reinforcing their lessons. As more money was put into public education, student to teacher ratios increased and there was no longer a need for older students to teach younger students.

In 1960, Benjamin Wright re-introduced cross-age tutoring as a recommended strategy to deal with a teacher shortage (Wright, 1960). This strategy was meant to benefit the younger children but teachers were consistently surprised at how CAT benefited teens. Many of the CAT programs in the 1960s also concentrated on disadvantaged youth because these students were in schools that needed assistance. The fact that CAT could actually benefit impoverished, low-achieving students by improving their grades and behaviors, and sometimes inspire them to become teachers, was even more reason to continue CAT practice.

Rasmussen (1969) studied 16 cross-age tutoring programs and acknowledged the benefits of these programs to both tutees and tutors. He found that CAT stimulated tutors' learning and

gave them confidence while encouraging them to read, write, and develop curriculum.

McCracken, Leaf, and Johnson (1965) noticed that students developed positive and efficient work habits during CAT. Cross-age tutoring provided assistance to teachers while giving youth the opportunity to play adult roles and take on leadership positions (Rasmussen). Wright (1965) noticed that CAT also prepared tutors for future teaching careers.

Gartner, Kohler, and Reissman (1971) reaffirmed that cross-age could provide teachers with needed assistance and began to formally recognize that CAT granted both intellectual and socio-emotional benefits. The authors emphasized that each tutor processes differently to facilitate the unfolding of his or her own thought pattern, and that learning to teach others can become part of the learning process. Cognitive learning can foster growth in terms of whatever broader social needs the individual tutors have. Social and emotional benefits of CAT are self-respect and ego strength. Students gain new interests, become better adjusted, and attain better character.

Lippitt and Loman (1965) asserted that cross-age tutoring goals should go beyond reading skills to give older and younger youth opportunities for modeling to occur, trust and responsibility to develop, realistic self-images to accrue, and self-awareness about relationships to increase. The authors stated that goals should be for tutors to learn and understand themselves and others. At the same time, Lippitt and Loman noticed an increased desire in tutors to learn and improve relationships with adults. Cross-age tutoring helped youth grow and change, work on relationships and interactions, and develop autonomy and individuality. Atkins (1972) stressed the importance of role-modeling but also emphasized that CAT is an experience in role-taking, or expansion of one's ability to understand the perspectives of others.

Greenspan (1974) noted four strands of development theory that supported cross-age tutoring: 1) intellectual development - transition to formal operational thinking, which starts around age 12 and progresses into adulthood; 2) moral development - opportunities for social participation and role-taking to stimulate moral thinking; 3) identity formation - role-taking responsibility in combination with experiences related to childhood become important to adolescent identity formation; and 4) interpersonal development. She saw CAT as developmental through its experience in role-taking with younger children, but also through its inherent seminar discussion with adults and peers to help make personal meaning out of direct experience with the children. Around this time, Paolitto (1976) emphasized two aspects of CAT that can present challenges. One is the matching of tutor to tutee and the second is the necessity of schedule flexibility.

Allen (1976) also recognized that cross-age tutoring had social and psychological effects in addition to academic benefits, and attributed positive behavioral and cognitive changes to role-taking theory. Allen postulated that in order to meet role expectations, tutors had to establish an empathetic understanding of tutees' problems in order to help them. Tutors were also forced to gain a better understanding of their teachers by placing themselves in their positions. They gained an ability to understand other people through identification of their own feelings and viewpoints (Carkhuff, 1969). Tutors also gained the intrinsic psychological benefits of helping others. Allen postulated that realization of these psychological dividends enhanced altruistic motivation - motivation to offer help for intrinsic reasons. Successful role enactment and achieving role expectations increased tutors' self-esteem. They were expected to show confidence when they were with tutees. In return, tutors were respected and admired by tutees,

also gaining respect from tutees, teachers, family, and friends. Self-esteem was strengthened as a consequence of self-reinforcement and respect from others.

Berliner and Casanova (1988) reiterated that it is often difficult for teachers alone to meet the needs of each individual child in the classroom; the implementation of cross-age tutoring programs can enable teachers to become facilitators who oversee their students' mastery of concepts and skills, and guide them on the road to independent learning. Hall (1994) reaffirmed that CAT can help when teachers feel like they are spending an inordinate amount of time correcting behavior and low test scores. A study by Levin (1988) found that when compared to other practices employed to confront teacher shortages, such as reduced class size and computer-assisted instruction, the greatest effects per \$100 spent were associated with pupil to pupil tutoring. Cross-age tutoring was found to have a cost-effectiveness ratio approximately four times that of reducing class size and increasing instructional time.

In summary, cross-age tutoring began as a practice, not a concept, with a goal of providing academic knowledge to youth to help overburdened teachers. The emphasis switched to tutors as researchers recognized first academic benefits and later, psychological benefits. Subject matter and interaction with children, adults, and peers enriched youth development. Role-playing helped youth gain different perspectives, and learning about the developmental stages of the tutees helped tutors contemplate their own development. As previously mentioned, teen mentors were more often effective than adults at educating and mentoring younger children, and adolescents learned best through active learning instead of being told information, making CAT a win-win situation for both tutors and tutees (Sheehan, DiCara, LeBailly, & Christoffel, 1999).

**More on cross-age tutoring theory.** Gaustad (1993) claims that cross-age tutoring is successful because the process allows tutors opportunities to review materials, contemplate the purpose and intended outcome of a task, and improve communication skills. He found that tutors are better than adults at relating to tutees on cognitive, emotional, and social levels. Gaustad discovered that CAT allows tutors to feel older and wiser than their tutees while still remaining relatively close in age when compared to adults. He found that both groups become empowered to become more self-directed in their learning in order to impress the other. Older youth look to each other instead of teachers to problem-solve, allowing for autonomous performance, bonding, and cooperation. Students gain enhanced self-esteem, academic learning skills, and a sense of responsibility (Barone & Taylore, 1996).

Thorpe and Wood (2000) believe that cross-age tutoring is a highly effective form of cooperative learning that is overlooked and underestimated by educators. Research has shown that putting students in cooperative pairs can improve everything from achievement scores to self-esteem to peer relationships (Harper, Maheady, & Mallette, 1994; Johnson, Johnson, & Stanne, 1985). Cross-age tutoring has resulted in enhanced enjoyment of working with partners, increased requests for help, expanded friendships outside the tutoring setting, and better attitudes about engaging in writing activities (Utay & Utay, 1997).

Other studies have indicated that cross-age tutoring results in heightened self-respect (Fitzsimons-Lovett, 1998); increased vocabulary (Giesecke, Cartledge, & Lii, 1993); enhanced study skills (Gaustad, 1993); and less absenteeism and fewer disciplinary referrals (Maher, 1984) in tutors. Thomas (1990) found that tutors learn to adapt tasks to the learner's pace, learning style, and level of understanding. Tutees receive immediate feedback and move along quicker. In the affective domain, tutors benefit from being role models and being looked up to. Tutees gain

role models. Both feel a sense of personal accomplishment and competence, and grow in their understanding and compassion for each other.

Karcher (2008, 2009) looked at academic and peer connectedness, and self-esteem in high school students who served as cross-age tutors. The 46 tutors in this study reached higher levels of maturity and responsibility than the 45 controls. Grossman and Rhodes (2002) claim that the developmental skills gained from CAT extend beyond the classroom, empowering youth to feel more connected to the future and getting them to think about their future roles in society.

**Cross-age tutoring for traditionally-marginalized youth.** Supik (1991) states that cross-age tutoring programs are particularly effective for marginalized youth. Berliner and Casanova (1988) claim that lower-achieving students can become effective tutors when given responsibility for a younger child's learning. Lower-achieving youth can improve their self-esteem when younger tutees lean and rely on them for problems and advice (Osguthorpe, 1984). Downey et al. (2008) recommend CAT for increasing resiliency and academic achievement in marginalized youth, citing benefits in boosting self-esteem, reinforcing skills, improving school-wide relationships, and fostering a sense of civic responsibility.

Walker (2005) discusses a program where marginalized teens read books to younger children about conflict. In this study, older youth gained positive adult role models and learned to respect teachers; learned from the lessons on conflict; gained reading skills, self-confidence, self-worth, empowerment, patience, motivation; and learned how to facilitate discussion. These students also acquired skills in problem-solving and conflict resolution, which are protective factors for developing resiliency and preventing violence. In return, teens positively influenced and motivated the younger children.

The Valued Youth Program developed by the Intercultural Development Research Association recruited low-achieving Hispanic high school students to tutor marginalized Hispanic elementary children. The program decreased tutor drop-out rates, improved their academic skills and attitudes toward self and school, and led to decreased truancy and disciplinary referrals by making them feel like valued members of the school community (Cardenas, Harris, del Rufugio, & Supik, 1991). The authors believe this program worked because tutors understood tutee problems since they were cognitively closer in age than adults, and they could read tutees' non-verbal behavior. Similarities between tutors and tutees likely also increased the influence of modeling; marginalized students may more easily identify with students relatively close in age, particularly students from the same ethnic or social backgrounds.

DePaulo et al. (1989) agree that one of the reasons that cross-age tutoring may be successful is because teens can draw from their own first-hand experiences in school and are seen as role models by younger children. Supik (1991) believes that empathy contributes to low achievers' effectiveness as cross-age tutors. Students who have struggled academically themselves may empathize with tutees and be more supportive, accepting, patient, and understanding than adults (Lippitt, 1976).

Cohen (1986) found that not only do marginalized youth who are tutors benefit academically from the time spent reviewing and practicing material with tutees, they also model study skills like concentrating on material, organizing work habits, and asking questions. Cohen discovered that tutors make cognitive gains through critical thinking and higher-order thinking skills. Tutoring gives youth opportunities to practice and improve communication skills and work habits. Self-esteem rises as they see their tutees improve. Knowing they are making a

contribution is empowering. Gaustad (1993) found that students stopped skipping class and behaving disruptively once they believed they were role models.

**Recommendations.** Thorpe and Wood (2000) recommend the following steps to develop a successful cross-age tutoring program: define goals, design an appropriate program, select tutors and tutees, plan with collaborating teachers, select skills and content, train tutors, design a sample tutorial lesson, allow tutors to practice on one another, have tutors keep a journal of their experiences, allow time for discussion and debriefing so tutors can realize common challenges and problem-solve, and monitor and evaluate the program.

Gaustad (1993) emphasizes that cross-age tutoring program success is dependent on tutor/tutee matching, tutor training, and understanding of material. Tutors should be trained in communication and helping skills, given guidance and support by adults, and group support from other tutors. Scheduling is the biggest challenge because older and younger youth schedules are involved, usually from two different schools.

There has been plenty of research throughout history on the effectiveness of cross-age tutoring. My study incorporated CAT as the service component of the PYD leadership program. Although it has already been shown to be promising for traditionally-marginalized youth, more needs to be known about CAT in schools, especially those with significant populations of students who are from traditionally-marginalized backgrounds.

## **Summary**

This literature review has examined the importance of a healthy adolescence in creating adults who can contribute to society. There are severe economic and social consequences when youth participate in risk behaviors and experience academic failure; traditionally-marginalized youth have significantly higher incidence rates. Prior to the 1990's, most efforts to curtail youth

risk behaviors fell under deficit theory, where programs focused on problem reduction.

Developmental systems theory was introduced by Richard Lerner in 1992 in an effort to shift the emphasis from prevention of risky behaviors to promotion of healthy behaviors. Researchers began to look at youth as assets to be nurtured rather than problems to be solved, and it was recognized that their environments played a crucial role in youth development.

Also in the 1990's, the Search Institute released a framework for developmental systems theory consisting of 40 developmental assets, which identified a set of skills, experiences, relationships, and behaviors that enable young people to develop into successful and contributing adults. These 40 developmental assets represent internal (individual) and external (contextual) preventive and protective variables. Research has shown that youth with more developmental assets experience fewer risk behaviors (Leffert et al., 1998), are more engaged academically (Hanson, Austin, & Lee-Bayha, 2003; Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000; Scales, Benson, Roehlkepartain, Sesma, & Van Dulmen, 2006), and have greater prosocial behaviors (Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2003). It has also been determined that traditionally-marginalized youth often have fewer developmental assets, poorer academic achievement, socialization, and self-efficacy (Zusman, 2005).

A concurrent research study applying developmental systems theory took place at the Institute of Applied Research in Youth Development and involved a "Five C" framework, which depicted youth competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring/compassion as keys to a concept entitled positive youth development. It was hypothesized that if these Five Cs were in place, a "Sixth C"- contribution, would emerge. Researchers used longitudinal data from over 6,000 youth in 4-H programs to study relationships between youth and their environments and to demonstrate that there are mutually-influential relations between individuals and their contexts.

When youth strengths were aligned with family, school, and community resources across adolescence, PYD in the form of the Five Cs occurred. In addition, the Sixth C of youth contribution was more likely to follow (Lerner et al., 2011).

The overall conclusion of both threads of developmental systems theory research was that there is a combined role of individual and ecological assets in families, schools, and communities in the facilitation of PYD, and that PYD can result in contributions back to self, family, schools and communities.

One way to foster positive youth development is through youth development programs. Research has shown that programs with the most positive outcomes have tended to institute goals that are aligned with an emphasis on positive youth assets and supportive environments, and have offered structured and unstructured activities that promote academics, recreation, and life, social, and leadership skills (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Lerner (2004) described optimal youth development programs as those that offer positive and sustained AY relationships, skill-building activities, and opportunities to use these skills in community-based activities.

School-based youth development programs appear to have potential to not only promote positive youth development but to facilitate school engagement. Schools can provide an established infrastructure with existing resources; a safe, positive, supportive, consistent environment; positive peer and adult-youth relationships; connections to family and community; and academic and non-academic activities. As Greenberg et al. (2003) allege, schools offer positive adults, positive places, and positive opportunities. The automatic access to school and the opportunity to build positive AY relationships can be particularly useful for traditionally-marginalized youth and has been shown to decrease risky behaviors, boost health and well-being, and improve school performance (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Youth development programs are

most successful when they enhance competence, connection, and contributions, all of which can transpire in schools (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

School-based youth development programs can facilitate leadership by including a service component. To be effective, leadership programs must be about leadership (curriculum) as well as for leadership (practice) (Putnam, 2001); the advantage of school-based leadership programs is that they can be embedded into an existing curriculum. Research shows that youth who engage in service are more likely to feel better about themselves, perform better and continue on in school, avoid risky behaviors, connect better to others, and give back to their communities later in life (Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007; Planty, Bozik, & Regnier, 2006). The close relationships that form between students and their peers and teachers through service-learning, while connecting them to real-world problems and giving them a voice and opportunity for reflection, can empower traditionally-marginalized students and help them learn to overcome their own challenges (Billig & Welch, 2004).

One way to provide service opportunities in school while helping older youth, teachers, and younger children is through cross-age tutoring and mentoring. This model uses teens to tutor or mentor younger children, often those from similar racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic backgrounds. Research has shown that cross-age tutoring and mentoring result in academic and psychological benefits for teens as they learn study habits; develop relationships; acquire confidence, self-esteem, responsibility, problem-solving skills, empathy, and leadership skills; and decrease risky behaviors once they understand that they are role models. Teachers gain assistance and role models for their younger students, often motivating their students to learn and work to become role models themselves (Gaustad, 1993; Thorpe & Wood, 2000).

In view of the existing research on the importance of positive youth development and its ultimate impact on society, as well as the importance of school engagement, my research examined how a PYD leadership program was perceived to facilitate future education and continued service in traditionally-marginalized youth. For the reasons listed above, schools can provide an ideal setting because of their universal and consistent access, availability of adult mentors, and opportunities to create supportive, protective environments. Both individual and ecological assets need to be nurtured through leadership programs that have both curricular and experiential components. In addition, cross-age tutoring and mentoring programs have proven to be cost-effective for teacher shortages (Levin, 1988), and for assisting teachers and younger children, along with adolescent youth. School-based PYD programs that incorporate service through CAT appear to not only have the capacity to empower adolescent youth to become contributing members of society, but can also provide a cost-effective means of helping teachers through both assistance and the provision of role models for younger children.

Given these implications, I drew from developmental systems theory, applying the Five C construct, to explore perspectives of traditionally-marginalized youth as they participated in a PYD high school leadership program, and followed them as they engaged in, and moved on from, higher education. The PYD leadership program I studied took place in a high school; service was conducted through cross-age tutoring and mentoring. I followed 11 traditionally-marginalized youth into young adulthood to record their perceptions as they progressed through the PYD program, post-secondary education, and continued service.

My research contributes to the aforementioned body of research by lending traditionally-marginalized youth and young adult perspectives on the aspects of a school-based youth leadership program that cultivated higher education aspirations and continued service. I

examined this group's perceptions while they were engaged in the program, while they were matriculating through higher education, and once they had completed higher education. I am hoping that this study will also revitalize the concept of cross-age tutoring and mentoring as a means of service that benefits older and younger traditionally-marginalized youth, as well as teachers. The research question that drove my study was, "How do traditionally-marginalized youth involved in a leadership program describe their experiences in this program and the role it played in their lives over time?"

My study is novel in that it merges the more-recent research on the effectiveness of positive youth development leadership programs with the long-standing research on the effectiveness of cross-age tutoring and mentoring. Other unique aspects of my research are application of the Five C construct in a school-based setting, focusing on traditionally-marginalized youth, and tracking their experiences and views as they develop from youth into young adults.

## Chapter 3

### Conceptual Framework

Given what we know about the importance of adolescence on a productive adulthood, developmental systems theory, the necessity of focusing on traditionally-marginalized youth, the potential role of leadership programs and schools in positive youth development (PYD), the value of service-learning and how cross-age tutoring and mentoring fulfill this service, I felt that it made sense to examine perspectives of traditionally-marginalized youth as they went through a school-based PYD leadership program that emphasized cross-age tutoring and mentoring, and continued on to higher education and sustained service as young adults.

As I investigated the potential effects of a high school positive youth development leadership program involving cross-age tutoring and mentoring on post-secondary education and service in traditionally-marginalized youth, developmental systems theory (Ford & Lerner, 1992) served as an ideal lens to inform my study. Through this theory, frameworks such as the developmental assets identified by Benson (1997), and Leffert et al. (1998), and the Five Cs and PYD branded by Lerner, Fisher, and Weinberg (2000), and Lerner and Thompson (2002), respectively, have been conceived. Both developmental assets and Five C frameworks emphasize youth assets, positive relationships, and supportive communities. Two themes have consistently emerged in developmental systems theory research (Lerner, Lerner, von Eye, Bowers, & Lewin-Bizan, 2011). The first premise is that there is a combined role of internal personal characteristics and external contextual resources found in families, schools, and communities that facilitate PYD and eventual engaged citizenship. The second claim is that individual and ecological assets in adolescence can dictate longitudinal manifestations of PYD and societal contributions.

By using developmental systems theory as my lens, I had two choices for a conceptual framework: developmental assets or the Five Cs. Both frameworks address the aforementioned developmental systems theory principles. I chose the Five C framework to inform my inquiry; my data collection and analysis were guided by the Five C descriptions below.

Table 1

*The Five Cs of Positive Youth Development*

“C”	Definition
Competence	Positive view of one’s actions in specific areas, including social, academic, cognitive, health, and vocational. Cognitive competence refers to cognitive abilities (e.g., decision-making). Academic competence refers to school performance as shown, in part, by school grades, attendance, and test scores. Health competence involves using nutrition, exercise, and rest to keep oneself fit. Vocational competence involves work habits and explorations of career choices. Effective entrepreneurial skills may be one instance of vocational competence.
Confidence	An internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy.
Connection	Positive bonds with people and institutions that are reflected in exchanges between the individual and his or her peers, family, school, and community in which both parties contribute to the relationship.
Character	Respect for societal and cultural norms, possession of standards for correct behaviors, a sense of right or wrong, and integrity.
Caring/Compassion	A sense of sympathy and empathy for others.

*Note.* From “Positive Youth Development, Participation in Community Youth Development Programs, and Community Contributions of Fifth-Grade Adolescents Findings from the First Wave of the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development,” by Lerner et al., 2005, *the Journal of Early Adolescence*, 25(1), p. 17-71. Copyright 2005 by Lerner et al. Reprinted with permission.

Lerner (2004) deduced that optimal positive youth development programs separate themselves from other youth programs by offering the following “Big Three:” 1) positive and sustained adult-youth relationships; 2) life skill-building activities; and 3) opportunities to use these skills in community-based activities, so I paid attention to youth perceptions of a PYD program using these criteria as guidelines. Lerner, von Eye, Lerner, Lewin-Bizan, and Bowers (2010) suggested that when a young person manifests the Five Cs over time, he or she ends up on a trajectory towards idealized adulthood, which is one marked by integrated and mutually-reinforcing contributions (the Sixth C) to self, family, community, and institutions of civil society; thus, I also investigated perspectives of future contributions (i.e., service) of traditionally-marginalized youth who went through the PYD leadership program. In addition, I explored youth perspectives on higher education because of its prevailing role in providing economic and social advantages for young adults (Barton, 2006).

## **Chapter 4**

### **Methods**

The literature review in this dissertation discussed leadership programs that foster positive youth development (PYD). In addition, the literature review showed the positive impact of cross-age tutoring and mentoring. Despite their historical success, these leadership programs are not prevalent; however, I was able to locate a high school leadership program that encompassed all the aforementioned recommended PYD components by Lerner (2004): positive and sustained adult-youth relationships; life skill-building activities; and opportunities to use these skills in community-based activities; and it employed cross-aged tutoring and mentoring. I sought to explore how this leadership program worked and to derive insights for others who are interested in doing similar work. I used a longitudinal intrinsic case study design to carry out my inquiry. My research question was: “How do traditionally-marginalized youth involved in a leadership program describe their experiences in this program and the role it played in their lives over time?”

Developmental systems theory and the Five C framework lent useful insights to my research. I studied perceptions of traditionally-marginalized youth who participated in a high school leadership program that provided service learning to children through cross-age tutoring and mentoring. My research gives an in-depth understanding of youth perspectives while in the leadership program as well as their desire to pursue higher education and further service. I then investigated the perceptions of these same youth as they graduated from the leadership program and became young adults; I interviewed them while they were engaged in, and after they graduated from, post-secondary pursuits. I conducted a qualitative analysis, where my unit of analysis was the common experience of 11 youth who participated in the leadership program and

pursued higher education and sustained service as young adults. By studying these youth as they developed into young adults, I was able to look at how they perceived the leadership program, how and why they ended up where they were presently, changes they had undergone over time, and aspects of the leadership program they identified as most important in developing the Sixth C (service) and a desire to pursue post-secondary education.

### **Context**

In this section, I discuss the setting in which my research was conducted. I describe the program I studied, the physical locations where my research occurred, and the time frame over which it took place. I also give a brief description of each of the 11 participants. The context for my research study was a high school leadership program entitled “Your Life and Community” (this name is a pseudonym). This program employs a unique approach to working with teens to inspire, mentor, and encourage an attitude of service through cross-age tutoring and mentoring of children. The hope is that the children’s lives are positively impacted and that with time, they form the next generation of teen student leaders as the teens move on and become leaders as young adults. The Your Life and Community program posits to promote learning and engagement through the following three core components:

**High school class.** The curriculum is designed to challenge traditionally-marginalized teens, who are either referred by teachers or coaches, or are self-referred, to evaluate and reflect upon their own experiences; to broaden their understanding of and respect for others; to gain exposure to a wide range of individuals who have made a positive impact on their community; and to begin to consider their own potential to provide meaningful service via the planning and implementation of service projects. The monthly themes are as follows:

Month One: The Power of One Life

Month Two: Living a Life that Matters

Months Three and Four: Facing and Overcoming Hardships in Life

Month Five: Having a Plan for the Future and How do You Get There

Each theme is presented in a way that addresses multiple learning styles via a lecture, movie, guest speaker, readings, writing, journaling, and class discussion. After each week of class, students are asked to reflect on what they have learned by writing papers and in their journals. This curriculum covers the recommended PYD component by Lerner (2004) of teaching life skill-building activities, along with the encouragement of reflection recommended by Lakin and Mahoney (2006).

**Cross-age tutoring.** A portion of class time is devoted weekly to providing service to traditionally-marginalized children through one-on-one tutoring. It is here that teens begin to form relationships with younger youth who come from similar backgrounds as them. This component of the leadership program satisfies Lerner's (2004) recommendation of providing opportunities to use the aforementioned skills in community-based service activities.

**Summer camp.** Teens who have graduated from the class have the opportunity to serve as counselors/mentors at a summer camp designed for traditionally-marginalized elementary and middle-school students, many of whom they have met through tutoring during the school year. The camp is designed to provide younger youth with an opportunity to explore the arts, athletics, and science/nature. Older youth have the opportunity to develop deeper, more meaningful mentorship relationships with the children, who often look forward to becoming teen mentors themselves someday. Teens, in turn, receive mentorship from adult volunteers drawn from schools, businesses, and non-profit sectors who return to work at the camp each year. This element of the program continues granting teens the opportunity to use learned skills and sustains

the positive adult-youth relationships created during other two aspects of the program, satisfying Lerner's (2004) third recommendation of PYD programs.

**Other service opportunities.** Teens also have the opportunity to tutor and mentor younger youth after school at local community centers.

## **Design**

My research utilized a qualitative longitudinal intrinsic case study design. Creswell (2007) states that "A case study is a good approach when the inquirer has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the cases or a comparison of several cases" (p. 74). The author claims that "case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system" (p. 73). The issue I explored was the perspectives of traditionally-marginalized youth as they participated in a high school leadership program that fostered positive youth development and incorporated cross-age tutoring and mentoring, following them as they continued on to higher education and engaged in continued service. My case was 11 experiences bounded by the Your Life and Community high school leadership program. All experiences involved traditionally-marginalized youth who were of color and/or low SES; my unit of analysis was these collective common experiences.

Creswell (2007) also asserts that "Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information..., and reports a case description and case-based themes" (p. 73). I examined 11 traditionally-marginalized youth as they matriculated through the Your Life and Community leadership program, became young adults, and continued on to pursue higher education and sustained

service. I gathered information from high school journals and semi-structured interviews that were conducted during and after post-secondary education. All participants matched my definition of traditionally-marginalized for the purpose of this study, and were of color and/or 2low SES. All participants were from the same high school, where they were involved in the same leadership program; all were either referred into this program by teachers or coaches, or were self-referred.

I looked at the pursuit of post-secondary education and service, based on research that states that traditionally-marginalized youth who do not go on to higher education are more likely to engage in risky behaviors and ultimately cost society instead of contributing to it (Dishion et al., 1999), and the developmental systems theory research that maintains that if the Five Cs are present, the Sixth C of contribution is more likely to occur (Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2000). By examining the 11 participants that formed my case, I was able to gather insights on their perceptions of what contributed to their desire to pursue higher education and continued service.

The following is a brief description of each participant, enriched by interview data collected from the director of the Your Life and Community leadership program. All names and places of education and employment are pseudonyms.

**Alan.** Alan participated in the Your Life and Community leadership program, provided after-school tutoring and mentoring, and helped during two summer leadership camps. He completed degrees in nursing and psychology, and now studies public health in nursing.

I did not know Alan prior to his taking the class. He came in with a lot of confidence. He wasn't cocky, just sure of himself. In a community that needs more minority male leaders, I wanted to take advantage of his confidence. I told him that I didn't want him to be just a role model for younger students, but to step up as a peer leader as well. Students

responded to his classroom leadership. Alan stepped up with strong comments in classroom discussion. And because he had such a presence, Alan rotated through multiple classrooms for service. He also helped children with after-school homework and sports. Alan worked for two summers at the leadership camp (T. Hipke, personal communication, July 17, 2013).

**Emelia.** Emelia took the Your Life and Community leadership program, provided after-school tutoring and mentoring, and worked at the summer camps. She graduated with degrees in social welfare and women's studies, and now works as a social worker.

Emelia was referred into the class by me because I had coached her in freshmen basketball, and she had stepped up as a leader on the team. Because I expressed my appreciation on the team for her willingness to lead, I furthered that encouragement in the class setting. Emelia was active in discussions. She helped out in multiple rooms at the elementary school because I knew she was competent as a leader and also understood the value of encouragement. Emelia was able to lift the spirits of students who were struggling in the classroom setting. Because of that, I recruited her for the summer camp. She did a great job. And because the students really liked Emelia, she was hired for a few summers. She did a great job of 'being seen' by the younger students – meaning, if Emelia told the kids during the school day that she was helping out at the community center, it helped to ensure that those students who needed after-school connections would come because of her (T. Hipke, personal communication, July 17, 2013).

**Evelyn.** Evelyn was involved in the Your Life and Community leadership program and loved the service component. Evelyn graduated with two master's degrees, in social work and in public administration, and is working in child protective services.

Evelyn was referred into the service part of the program as a sophomore. She really cared about being involved in service projects. Often times, students only do service because it benefits their college application. The class gives students a real understanding about leadership and the value of the focus on service. Because Evelyn had yet to take the class, I wondered if her involvement was solely for resume-building. But she gave every opportunity she could. And she was fully invested in doing good. Evelyn took the class and was a great fit. The class takes students on a journey of deeper understanding. The mix of the class and the service contributed to her choosing to go into social work (T. Hipke, personal communication, July 17, 2013).

**Jack.** Jack participated in the Your Life and Community leadership program and worked at the summer camp for eight years! He graduated from the University in four years and was selected to attend Officer Training School for the Marine Corps. He plans to become a physical therapist.

Jack was referred into the service component of the program his sophomore year. He was recommended by a student who had taken the class, which I think says something about a leader's ability to recognize those who can also step up to make a difference. Jack was involved in a lot of extra-curricular activities in high school. When he wasn't busy with other activities, he would always give time after school. He was also involved in the summer leadership camps for eight consecutive summers. Jack had some factors that could have become obstacles and could have easily derailed him but he took advantage of the many assets that were available to him. I put Jack in every position of leadership I could, whether it was in camps, after-school programs, service trips – stateside and one overseas. He is a person of strong character. I never doubted giving him responsibility

over younger students. He continued to grow as a leader every year. With his many obstacles, Jack took advantage of the supports around him to lift him above his circumstances and come out on the other side (T. Hipke, personal communication, July 17, 2013).

**Jacqui.** Jacqui took the Your Life and Community leadership program class two times, appeared to grow through the tutoring aspect, and worked at the summer camp. Jacqui is now a medical technologist.

I did not know Jacqui prior to her taking the class. She took the class early in her high school career and again as a senior. The first time Jacqui took the class, she seemed to be trying to find where she fit in the high school groups. She alluded to this struggle in some of her journals. In the design of the class, the service component takes advantage of the fact that elementary kids look up to teens. For teens who have leadership potential but are still developing it, being around younger people who look up to the high school students and are always excited to see them, service day is always a confidence booster. It is a confidence booster on both sides – the elementary student gets individualized attention with words of encouragement JUST for them, and the teens feel power for good in their position. Jacqui felt confident at the elementary school, which I didn't always see in the classroom. She continued to be involved in service projects and volunteering at summer camps. So when she took the class again as a senior, she saw herself as a leader in discussions and modeling leadership in the service activities. It was great to see (T. Hipke, personal communication, July 17, 2013).

**Jocelyn.** Jocelyn was involved in the Your Life and Community leadership program, engaged in tutoring and mentoring after school, and worked for four summers at the leadership camp. Jocelyn is now working as an ICU nurse.

I did not know Jocelyn prior to her taking the class. Jocelyn was active in school activities. She really liked the class and shined during the tutoring. She understood the lessons and how they applied to her and her community. Jocelyn is a person of strong character and conviction. She was very good in the classroom. She cared about making a difference. Jocelyn came as often as she could to volunteer after school. She worked four summers at the leadership camp. It has never been the intent of the class to prod students into teaching, social work, or any other community service career. But because of the class content and the service, students hear, see and do....they apply what they have learned. I ask that students find some way to give back – in time, talent or financially....but give back. Jocelyn wanted to go into nursing – the class often crystalizes for students the path they choose to pursue. It is a very nice outcome of the class (T. Hipke, personal communication, July 17, 2013).

**Nick.** Nick took the Your Life and Community leadership program, and worked after school and at the summer camp. He earned his master's degree in advertising and creative writing, and is now copywriter.

I had no knowledge of Nick prior to him taking the class. He was a good referral to the class. Nick has an entertaining personality – very funny. He comes across as very confident. I would say that as with other students, learning more about leadership and then applying it through the service activities, enhanced his skills. Nick volunteered after school and during summer camp. I believe that though Nick is very outgoing, this class

allowed for exposure to a different group than he would have had otherwise (T. Hipke, personal communication, July 17, 2013).

**Nigel.** Nigel had been on the receiving end of the Your Life and Community leadership program and switched roles when he took the class as a senior. Nigel was interested in radiography and is now a surgical technologist.

I knew Nigel prior to taking the class. He took the class as a senior. By that time, Nigel had spent eight years in the summer and after-school program. Nigel was quiet but always very eager to participate in activities. He was well-liked. He really liked to be around the teen and college leaders. So many of the teens were consistent in giving of time either to the after-school program and/or the summer camp. Nigel stated by the sixth grade that when he got to high school, he would take the class and give time back to young students. When he took the class, he did a great job at the elementary school and in giving time after school to the program he grew up in. Nigel had been mentored and understood the value of that time. One of the benefits of this design in leadership development is that if a teen feels they have leadership potential but might not be ready as a young person to step up and use that ability with their peers, spending time with elementary students allows this skill to develop with a less threatening audience. A lot of the students over the years have utilized the time developing this skill through volunteering. I have seen that confidence grow. It is then easier to begin to step into that leadership role during their high school years and beyond (T. Hipke, personal communication, July 17, 2013).

**Rebecca.** Rebecca became involved in the Your Life and Community leadership program as a senior and was interested in the tutoring. She graduated from the University with an

elementary education teaching degree and is certified in middle childhood-early adolescent teaching.

Rebecca took the class as a senior. Because she wanted to know if teaching was a career she really wanted to pursue, she took an independent study which allowed her to tutor five days a week for a semester. Rebecca took every lesson in class to heart. She understood her ability to help elementary students. She seemed destined to be a teacher. When she was in the classroom setting, she was confident. That confidence allows the teacher to give teens more responsibility with the elementary students, and it makes the elementary students feel good about being mentored by a strong teen (T. Hipke, personal communication, July 17, 2013).

**Victoria.** Victoria participated in the Your Life and Community leadership program for three years and worked at the summer camp for eight years! She was awarded a President's Scholarship at the University, which is a four-year, merit-based undergraduate scholarship offered to gifted and talented individuals from under-represented minority groups and educationally/culturally-disadvantaged backgrounds. Victoria earned a degree in sociology with a certificate in criminal justice and then attended nursing school.

Victoria took every leadership class I taught in high school (three in her four years). The first class she took was when she was a freshman. I think the content of the class overwhelms some students. It is a lot of information and depending on maturity level, it may just go over the head of certain students. In ten years of doing this, the students that thrive in the class are the ones it was designed for – teens with leadership potential. Victoria was tracking with the class. Students display their understanding through their weekly journals. But she never looked fully engaged. She didn't look bored but her

expression never changed. She did not participate in discussions but most freshmen really don't say much in a class that has upperclassmen. Victoria did a great job at the elementary school. She was a natural with the kids. The elementary students were really drawn to her smile and fun personality. Her final submission was good but I have students say a lot of the same comments...“I love this class”...”I see things in a totally new way”...”I want to live a life that makes a difference.” What stood out to me – and this has happened about every other semester – Victoria gave me a “thank you card” for teaching the class. In it, she wrote about how much this class has meant to her, and how she felt like she had been changed as a person. Victoria took advantage of every opportunity to serve and be involved. Along with all the service projects she has done, she has worked in the summer camps for eight years. She states that it was her hard work for her grade point but also all the leadership and service she participated in that earned her the President's Scholarship. She is a very good person and the type of person that I like to have mentoring young people. She works hard, sets goals, values education, and wants to make a difference in her community (T. Hipke, personal communication, July 17, 2013).

**Zeke.** Zeke was a participant in the Your Life and Community leadership program and had a goal of becoming a firefighter. He is now a firefighter and paramedic.

I did not know anything about Zeke prior to him taking the class. He was a confident student. He participated in discussion and relished the opportunity to be a role model to elementary students while in the program. I think that true leaders find a way to encourage and lift up those around them in small ways that others may miss. Zeke was active in the community prior to coming into the class. His career goal was to be a

firefighter. He liked being involved in his city. He knew that firemen do a lot of service in the community. Zeke was set to make an impact for good regardless of this class (T. Hipke, personal communication, July 17, 2013).

The director of the Your Life and Community leadership program summarized:

A common trait in these eleven students is that they were all very selfless. They all had this ability to receive information from the class and use it. They were encouraged and lifted up by the messages, and in turn, they would go encourage and lift up others. A lot of students from this program have gone on to good works and are active in their communities (T. Hipke, personal communication, July 17, 2013).

### **Data Collection**

Creswell states that “case study data collection involves a wide array of procedures as the researcher builds an in-depth picture of the case” (p. 132). Using purposeful sampling, 11 participants were selected for my study who had graduated from the Your Life and Community leadership program. All were from traditionally-marginalized backgrounds, and had advanced on to post-secondary education and continued service. Creswell breaks down data types into observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials. I studied these 11 participants through journals (documents) collected while they were enrolled in the Your Life and Community leadership program and through two semi-structured interviews conducted after graduating from the program – one during (Appendix A), and one after (Appendix B), higher education. The following is a description of the data I collected.

**Documents.** Creswell claims that “Case study researchers examine groups of individuals participating in an event or activity or an organization...For case studies...the researcher uses multiple forms of data to build the in-depth case or the storied experiences” (p. 143). Journals are

one type of document and Creswell affirms that “Journaling is a popular data collection process in case studies” (p. 141). I was given permission to access the 11 student journals from their time in the Your Life and Community leadership program. Students had a choice of whether or not they relinquished their journals, so the data was voluntarily provided. Journal entries were made after each class session and addressed the themes mentioned earlier (Month One: The Power of One Life; Month Two: Living a Life that Matters; Months Three and Four: Facing and Overcoming Hardships in Life; Month Five: Having a Plan for the Future and How do You Get There). Reflections addressed what students had learned about themselves, the younger youth with whom they worked, and their communities; and if they felt they could make a difference in their lives, others’ lives, and their communities. In addition, each student provided a final essay on whether or not they were impacted by the class, and if so, how. Exploring the journals of the 11 participants in my study allowed me to gain insight into the developmental processes the students underwent while in the Your Life and Community leadership program.

**Semi-structured Interviews.** One of the interview options that Creswell offers is to “conduct a semi-structured interview, audiotape the interview, and transcribe the interview” (p. 130). I conducted two semi-structured interviews with the 11 participants; one during, and one after, their post-secondary education. My semi-structured interviews were guided by Institutional Review Board (IRB) interview protocols but allowed for open conversations to unfold between the participants and myself. The semi-structured format allowed me to augment the conversations with follow-up questions as necessary for clarification or to add depth. These interviews were recorded and transcribed.

I interviewed participants after they had graduated from high school and were pursuing post-secondary education. The emphasis of this interview was on how the Your Life and

Community leadership program influenced the participants once they had graduated from high school. The interview questions were adapted from the aforementioned journal questions asked during the Your Life and Community course, with the addition of questions addressing the participants' lives since high school graduation, with topics referring to higher education, working, community service, self-reflection, pursuit of leadership skills and opportunities, and what they felt were the most valuable components of the leadership program, in hindsight, if any. Using similar questions between the journals and first interview led to consistency between these two sets of data.

The purpose of the final semi-structured interview was to have participants, as young adults, self-report via the framework I chose to inform my data. Since the Five C framework suggests that when a young person manifests the Five Cs over time, he or she is more likely to engage in a "Sixth C," that of contribution, I also inquired about this Sixth C. This second interview took place after the participants had completed post-secondary education. The interview questions were derived from the Five Cs listed in the Conceptual Framework chapter of this dissertation and directly addressed the Five Cs plus the Sixth C of Contribution.

**Triangulation.** I triangulated my data in multiple ways – by time, by participant, and by "C." First, I triangulated all data within each data set (journals and two interviews), then coded by the Cs. Next, I triangulated each participant's data from all three data sets and again, coded by the Cs. Finally, I ranked the prevalence of each C for each of the data sets over time. I believe these multiple modes of data triangulation bolstered the results of my study and its trustworthiness. All of my research was approved by the University of Wisconsin-Madison IRB to ensure that ethical guidelines were met and research participants were protected.

## Data Analysis

I employed a deductive coding process. I coded using the Five Cs plus the Sixth C of contribution because ultimately, the pursuit of post-secondary education and continued service should lead to the Sixth C as defined below. I construed stories from the aforementioned themes. I then related these stories and themes back to the Five C framework, along with the Sixth C of contribution, interpreted the meanings of the cases, and made assertions about what we can learn from them. I used a loose deductive analysis, informed by the Five C framework, as described on pp. 15-16 and summarized in the table below, while remaining open to identifying and exploring areas that were not directly relatable to this framework.

Table 2

### *Summary of the Five Cs plus the Sixth C of Contribution*

“C”	Definition
Competence	Positive view of one’s actions in specific areas, including social (interpersonal), academic (school performance), cognitive (decision-making), health (taking care of oneself), and vocational (work habits).
Confidence	An internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy.
Connection	Positive bonds with people and institutions that are reflected in exchanges between the individual and his or her peers, family, school, and community in which both parties contribute to the relationship.
Character	Respect for societal and cultural norms, possession of standards for correct behavior, a sense of right and wrong, and integrity.
Caring/Compassion	A sense of sympathy and empathy for others
Contribution	Contributions to self, family, community, and to the institutions of a civil

	society (represented through post-secondary education and continued leadership and service, for the purpose of this study).
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*Note.* From “Positive Youth Development, Participation in Community Youth Development Programs, and Community Contributions of Fifth-Grade Adolescents Findings from the First Wave of the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development,” by Lerner et al., 2005, *the Journal of Early Adolescence*, 25(1), p. 17-71. Copyright 2005 by Lerner et al. Adapted with permission.

In addition, I used using Lerner’s (2004) criteria for optimal PYD programs of positive and sustained adult-youth relationships; life skill-building activities; and opportunities to use these skills in community-based activities, to guide my analysis.

### **Positionality**

“The qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing participants. They may use a protocol – an instrument for collecting data – but the researchers are the ones who actually gather the information” (Creswell, 2007, p. 38). I recognize that my own experiences and position as a researcher may have shaped the lens through which I collected and analyzed my data. Although my professional background dwells in higher education, a mandatory class on an introduction to K-12 education opened my eyes to the concept of social justice in schools. I engaged in a project for a class that involved studying a middle-school leadership program where students in a Read 180 class (an on-line reading program for “struggling readers”) were connected to elementary-school classrooms, where they read to younger children. I witnessed a transformation in the middle-school students, who became excited to return to school with a renewed motivation to improve their reading. The elementary-aged children idolized the middle-school youth, which appeared to further empower the older students. In return, the younger children could not wait to learn to read so they could

show off their skills to the older students when they returned. This situation helped out the teachers as well, not only through the provision of classroom assistance, but also because often times the younger and older students came from similar backgrounds and understood each other in ways the teachers could not relate. The older students became positive role models for many of the younger children, which incentivized the older children to succeed in a way that would make the younger children proud; in return, the younger children aspired to become leaders like the older youth.

From that point forward, I became interested in mentoring and tutoring models in K-12 education, even though my professional career is in higher education. Through my advisor, I was introduced to the Your Life and Community high school leadership program for traditionally-marginalized youth, which incorporates service learning through cross-age tutoring, and provides a summer camp for cross-age mentoring between high school students and younger children. I decided to study this program as a school-based PYD leadership program that teaches service learning to traditionally-marginalized youth through cross-age tutoring and mentoring. Since my research interests are outside my career, my professional background and experiences did not influence my research; however, I am aware that my passion for social justice and my desire to find a panacea that gives every child an equal chance at success may have impacted my perspectives. I attempted, as much as possible, not to conduct this research just to lobby for more leadership programs like the one I am studying, but to focus on the experiences of traditionally-marginalized youth as they go through a leadership program that utilizes cross-age tutoring and mentoring, and to follow them as they continue on to higher education and into young adulthood.

## **Limitations**

I recognize that purposeful sampling presents a limitation in my study. By selecting accessible participants for my study, there is no way to know whether these participants would have engaged in further education and service after high school without going through the Your Life and Community leadership program. It is also difficult to determine whether changes in youth development were due to program participation, personal attributes present at the start of the program, or other variables that could contribute to changes over time. In addition, it is impossible to know whether other program participants pursued similar futures, just as it is impossible to determine whether traditionally-marginalized high school students who did not participate in this program pursued similar futures as these 11 participants. While I realize that purposeful sampling prevents generalizable results, selecting accessible participants strengthened my study by allowing for a selection of individuals who could be followed from youth into young adulthood. Furthermore, I was able to work backwards by taking participants who had successfully pursued post-secondary opportunities and continued to engage in service, and derive their perceptions about what led to these choices.

I also realize that it is impossible to classify comments into strict “C” categories and that while coding, the boundaries between the C definitions were often blurred; many statements could have fallen into multiple C groups.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Findings**

I deconstructed my data in three ways: by time period, by participant, and by prevalence of each “C” during each time period.

#### **By Time**

I combined data from all 11 participants during each of the three time periods. Once the data was consolidated for each time period, I applied deductive coding using the Five C framework. This way, I could determine what was reflected in each data set at different points in time: while in high school, during higher education, and after higher education. For example, I analyzed 11 high school journals, written while the participants were in the Your Life and Community leadership program, looking for indications of competence, confidence, connection, character, caring/compassion, and contribution. Then, I did the same type of analysis for each of the two semi-structured interviews; the first during which the participants reflected on the leadership program, and the second during which I could look for a longer-term impact of the program on the Five Cs and especially the Sixth C of contribution.

#### **By Participant**

I combined data from each of the three time periods by participant and employed deductive coding using the Five C framework. For example, I looked for the presence of each C during each time period for each participant. This way, I could track the presence of the Cs over time for each participant.

#### **By C**

I looked at the prevalence of each C during each time period for the 11 participants as a group.

Once I deconstructed my data in the aforementioned ways, I presented it in a blended manner, where all of my data was folded into the “Cs” of competence, confidence, connection, character, caring/compassion, and contribution. Each C was broken down by time period, with an emphasis on the prevalence of group findings during each of these time periods, supported by representative individual comments. In addition, I review other key findings that emerged from the data.

### **Competence**

**Competence during high school.** The Five C framework defines competence as a “positive view of one’s actions in specific areas, including social, academic, cognitive, health, and vocational.” Although it could be assumed that the participants were competent in the sense that they were referred or self-referred to the leadership program, this C was not a central theme in the participants’ journals. Comments were made that implied competence, such as the realization of good interpersonal skills, the desire to work hard, do well in school and go on to higher education, make good decisions, and engage in healthy behaviors. Overall, however, the participants did not self-reflect much on their levels of competence. The closest entry I came across was by Rebecca, who stated that she “felt like a sponge and took every lesson in the program to heart.”

**Competence during post-secondary education.** Competence was more prevalent during higher education than it was in high school. In some cases, it appeared that the leadership program simply drove participants to pursue post-secondary opportunities. A sample comment reflecting this influence was made by Jack:

I’d never started thinking about college until I joined Tim’s program because I guess I kind of learned from the grade above me, and they were thinking about college and I was

like, “Oh, okay I should probably start thinking about college, too” and it just kind of started from Tim’s program going back to the beginning.

Nearly all participants had chosen majors and careers with a service component. For example, there were majors in sociology and human services, social welfare and women’s studies, ethnic studies, and nursing. There were statements such as this one by Emila: “This program definitely influenced what I wanted to do with my life. Basically since then, I’ve known I wanted to go into social work. I declared my freshman year.” Evelyn said:

I went to college and graduated with a degree in social welfare and women’s studies, all because of this program. I ultimately would like to go back to law school and do family practice law, or go get my masters in social work and definitely do that kind of thing. I applied for a job at Child and Community Development, and the job I would be doing is working with high schoolers and sort of getting them on track to college and dealing with the financial responsibilities that go along with that, and all that kind of stuff. I like that. I like working with kids a lot and I like feeling like I’m making a difference. That’s important to me.

Jocelyn, who intended to go into nursing, claimed:

I think this program helped because I definitely know I want to work with people. I want to be around people and through service, I’ve learned that I just want to make a difference in people’s lives, and any way I can help do that is what makes me feel better as a person; so being a nurse, you influence so many people throughout your whole day, and I just think that’s awesome. I want to use my nursing to work with kids.

Victoria stated:

Tim has definitely opened my eyes. I feel like a whole new world has emerged for me. When I started taking Tim's classes, I started doing so much more and I felt so good about it. We would tutor kids and go to elementary schools and sub into classes and be part of a gym class and things like that. I started looking for different jobs where I could interact with other people or little kids - just help out because I really like that. Well, I'm going into nursing. I just picked it. It was between teaching and nursing, and I just picked nursing.

Another theme that emerged in the interviews was how continued volunteering during their post-secondary education taught the students skills such as time management. An example of this realization was by Jack:

I've done a lot of working with kids ever since the summer after I joined Tim's program. I got involved with working with the kids in the summer camp and ever since then, I've always loved a summer job working with kids. I come from a pretty diverse community. I'm a northern-to-east-side of Parktown kid. Obviously, it's not the best circumstances for those kids over there but still, they're good kids, so good kids can come out of bad neighborhoods. The more you're involved, the more you have to prioritize your schedule and that's just going to keep me more organized, so you're like, "Oh man, I only have an hour to do homework," and so you actually sit down for that hour and do your homework because you know that's the only time you have for it.

Victoria explained, "I am playing softball in college and have found that it helps to stay organized. And definitely volunteering and just being involved with programs and organizations does the same thing."

**Competence after post-secondary education.** Competence was more prevalent in the final interview than it was during high school or during higher education. All participants conveyed competence. Interview questions addressed their academic trajectory since high school, their vocational interests, and inquired about their social circles, the characteristics of the people with whom they spent time, the activities in which they engaged with these people, and how the participants felt when they were with them. I have organized the responses below by academics and vocations, and characteristics of the participants' relationships with others.

*Academics and vocations.* All participants had completed four-year degrees with the exception of one associate degree in fire science, and one participant had enrolled in the United States Marine Corps. All degrees and vocations were service-oriented except for one participant, who had completed double majors in advertising and creative writing, and had gone to graduate school in both.

*Degrees.* Degrees ranged from four nursing degrees, one with a psychology minor; to social work (Emilia explains, "largely because of my experience in high school with Tim in the Your Life and Community leadership program"); to two sociology degrees – one with a concentration in Human Services and a minor in Ethnic Studies, and one with a certificate in criminal justice; to double majors in Social Welfare and Women's Studies; to medical lab technician; to rehabilitation psychology; to surgical technologist; to an elementary education major with a middle childhood-early adolescence teacher certification; to an associate's degree program in fire science.

*Graduate degrees and future aspirations.* Two participants were already enrolled in or had earned master's degrees in social work and in public administration. Other participants were investigating graduate programs, such as Rebecca:

I have been looking at graduate programs in sociology as I want to obtain a PhD and become a research scholar/professor at the university level. Ultimately, my interests lie within the sociology and social psychology pertaining to race, ethnicity, identity, and language. I am very interested in the development of racial and ethnic identity amongst adolescents, how members of certain racial/ethnic groups establish identity or group membership, as well as the relationship and perception amongst groups, particularly adolescents in middle and high school. I am also interested in the adjustment of immigrant youth, particularly adolescents, in educational contexts.

Jack, who was in the Marine Corps, stated the following:

I am presently a United States Marine Corps Officer. Upon honorably completing my time in the service, I plan to either use what special skills I learn in the Marine Corps in a comparable position in the civilian world, or continue on the course of becoming a physical therapist. I have always had the desire to serve and help people so I believe both serving as an officer in the military and becoming a physical therapist would allow me to satisfy those desires.

*Vocations.* Much of the conversation regarding confidence regarded vocations. The participants appeared very excited about their future careers. Sample comments are as follows.

Emelia said:

Currently, I work for the Department of Child Advocacy, investigating reports of child abuse and neglect. I also work part-time as a hotline supervisor for a crisis hotline serving youth and adolescents experiencing difficulties in their lives, specifically looking at the problem of youth suicide.

Evelyn shared:

I now work with the Department of Families and Children in the Bureau of Placement and Out of Residence Care. I enjoy working with children and families, and will most likely continue to work with families in some capacity for the remainder of my career.

Victoria revealed:

I knew that a nursing career could help many people. I recently discovered that I have a love as well for helping people get healthy and maintain that way of living. I am a personal trainer right now and taking the test that certifies me as a strength and conditioning specialist. I'm looking into further establishing a career in the health and wellness field and hopefully own my own facility to train a variety of people ranging from athletes to the ordinary person. Not set in stone but I have already talked to some people and we each are achieving something that would allow this to happen.

Jocelyn and Deke talked about their careers as a nurse in intensive care and as a firefighter and paramedic, respectively; both had felt they had found the perfect vocations and couldn't imagine doing anything else. Jocelyn said, "In the ICU, we see critically ill and injured persons. It is a job that is very difficult, hard, and exhausting but worth every minute. Zeke said:

Ever since graduating from high school, my academic trajectory has been to immediately enroll into an associate's degree program for fire science. To add to my vocation, I added a technical diploma and certification, as well as training to be a paramedic.

Not all transitions to higher education had been easy. A few participants had initially attended schools further away from home and transferred back home to attend more local schools. Jacqui had stopped out a few times:

I attended college right out of high school, but I found I was not completely sure of what I wanted to learn. I went back a couple of times, only with the same frustration. I finished up with a dedicated and committed mindset to finally get a degree.

Jacqui explained how part of her struggle was realizing that the careers she was drawn to, such as nursing, would actually be too difficult for her because she “cared too much about people and their well-being.” She decided that a better vocational fit for her was medical technology, where she could help people from behind the scenes.

The majority of participants were settling in and enjoying their jobs but Emilia said: I feel like a 26 year-old going through a quarter-life crisis. Career satisfaction is important to me and I have yet to find a job that I can truly say I want to stick with. However, I am glad that I refuse to settle for a position that I’m not happy in.

*Other themes.* There were some profound comments that reflected the participants’ current levels of maturity. The following are some examples. Alan stated:

Even though I graduated with a nursing degree, I find my vocation to simply be helping others in whatever capacity that I can. My last semester of nursing school was in public health and I really valued the experience and working with individuals about their health and how it relates to their entire being. I try to look at individuals holistically and as a complete being with many facets that make up who they are. I have learned that when you can have this paradigm, you can be more successful in helping individuals.

Rebecca commented:

I was the first member of my family to graduate from college. Through participating in the Your Life and Community leadership program, I was presented with many opportunities to volunteer in school settings. I didn’t even consider teaching as a

profession I'd want to pursue until my senior year in high school. Tim had set up a volunteering opportunity for me at an elementary school during one of my senior year semesters. I enjoyed it so much. I always knew I wanted to help others and with the experience of academic success providing opportunities for me, I wanted to help kids achieve and have access to those same opportunities I had. When talking with a teacher I admired and respected about my experiences volunteering at the school, he suggested that I go into teaching. He explained that I may not be able to completely address every issue my students had in their lives, but I would be able to make the impact I was seeking out. When I got to college, my desire to become an educator stayed the same but my reasons for becoming an educator changed. My freshman year was a year of extreme growth for me. Prior to learning about structures and systems of oppression, inequity, inequality, and injustice present within our education system, I was going to become an educator because I liked kids and wanted to help them. Now, I saw myself going into education in order to deconstruct and destabilize systems of oppression, inequity, inequality, and injustice that are present within the institution of education. Teaching became something bigger than me. Even though the institution of education is broken in America, I still see it as a place where my students can receive an education that is rooted in social justice, encourages critical thinking about the world, and addresses controversial issues such as racism, sexism, classism, and heteronormativity. It is through providing this kind of education that social transformation can be achieved.

***Social life characteristics.*** All participants conveyed appreciative levels of competence socially. They appeared to have learned to surround themselves with people who had similar

values, who supported them, and who were positive influences. There was a plethora of comments from each participant that reflected social competence. Alan said:

I have been friends with the same group of guys since high school, and we are all now college graduates and young professionals. We have similar struggles in our upbringings but find ways to lift each other up and realize how far we have come. We are also always honest with each other and know that we have each other's best interests in mind.

Emelia claimed:

The friends that I have made in my new town have similar goals both personally and professionally that I do. I have continued to maintain contact with my close friends and family back home as well. I feel as though all of my friends, nation-wide, believe in my dreams and goals for the future. When I am with my friends, near and far, I feel comfortable, encouraged and loved.

Evelyn shared:

I feel very accepted and comfortable when I'm with my friends and family. I spend time with people whom I trust, who appreciate, love, and forgive me when necessary. I have friends who are social work-oriented as I am, as well as some who are in business and technology. They are all different but wonderful.

Jacqui stated:

I surround myself with people who make me happy and lift me up. If they do not do that, I simply do not allow them into my life. I have friends from all walks of life, and when we are together we do things we both may enjoy.

Jocelyn said, "When I am with my friends, I am happy. I have a smile on my face and love being around people." Jack disclosed:

I typically like to surround myself with like-minded individuals: people who are positive and forward-thinking, with goals that they are striving to achieve; people who are active and competitive, which helps create a competitively motivational environment. When we are all together, we do things like working out, golfing, relaxing in social settings, as well as having fun at social events, such as baseball games, dances, etc. When I am with these people, I feel fully present and engaged.

Nigel explained:

The social circle of people that I spend time with is active outdoors men, who like to fish and camp. When I'm with this social group of people, I feel I'm always learning something new since I'm outside and meeting new people.

Rebecca commented:

My social circle consists of friends and close friends that I consider family. I'm not very close to family outside of my immediate family so when I talk about family, I include my immediate family members (sisters, brothers, parents, nieces) and my closest friends.

Most of my friends are female and either Black or Latina. Not to say I don't have friends who are White, it's just that the people I am closest to from college are people of color.

With my closest female friends, who are either Black or Latina, we are trying to establish a chapter of a multicultural sorority on campus.

Victoria claimed:

As well as some close friends from high school, many of my friends have the same interests as me and participate in a lot of the same extra-curricular activities. They all are kind-hearted, optimistic, driven, selfless, and genuine. We all look for the same thing, which is how to give back to others. A lot of them volunteer with me, attend church

functions, non-profit camps, and all have a mission to do well in the world and make a difference by giving back in some way. I can honestly say my friends make me feel like I can achieve anything. And to never forget to use my talents for the good of others. We stand by values to be selfless and humble no matter what we achieve or are faced with.

Zeke said:

The social circle that I involve myself with is a combination of friends and family. The friends that I tend to spend time with are people that I can have fun with and who support each other. It's not necessarily people who all share the same interests because I feel that is important to have a broad spectrum of personalities and to be open to people from all different walks of life. Due to my profession as a firefighter/paramedic, I spend a great deal of time with my co-workers. Not only do we work with each other, but we also live with each other and are a family. Camaraderie is extremely important and is crucial to have to truly build that trust and enhance our working relationship because we truly are responsible for each other's lives.

**Summary.** Competence was present during all time frames for all 11 participants.

Although this is not likely representative of the normal population, it is not surprising with these 11 students/young adults because they were selected for participation in the Your Life and Community leadership program based on their demonstration of, or potential for, leadership. Competence was most prevalent after higher education, then during post-secondary education, followed by in high school, which makes sense since feelings of competence would most likely develop over time as participants matured and had experienced more achievements.

## Confidence

**Confidence during high school.** The C of confidence is defined as “an internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy.” This C was prevalent throughout the journals. All 11 participants were either referred or self-referred into the Your Life and Community leadership program because they had exhibited leadership qualities or were seeking out leadership opportunities. Four participants were referred from teachers or coaches. Five participants self-referred based on the desire to become leaders. Nigel had been a youth mentee and was excited to give back, and Rebecca became involved for the tutoring aspect of the program because she wanted to be a teacher.

Most participants wrote that they relished the opportunity to speak out in class and have their peers respond, and to further engage in discussions. Some noted that they learned a lot about themselves; for example, Nick felt that he “became more outgoing and felt he learned that he had an entertaining personality.” A few participants recorded that they liked that the program granted them exposure to a different group of students and people than they would normally encounter. However, the biggest booster of confidence was working with younger youth.

Every participant communicated that the highest impact of the program was working with the elementary students. Half of the teens felt that learning and practicing leadership skills amongst their peers gave them confidence to be leaders for the children. They wrote about how engaging with their peers had made them more outgoing and confident, and how learning about leadership and then applying it through service had enhanced their skills. These students felt confident, participated in discussion, and relished their responsibilities as role models at the elementary schools.

Although these teens felt that practicing their leadership skills amongst their peers increased their confidence to work with younger youth, the other half of the participants experienced reversed effects, writing that working with the children increased their confidence in a way that allowed them to open up to their peers. Rebecca wanted to be a teacher and her feelings of success in tutoring gave her confidence in class with her peers. However, unlike Rebecca, many of the teens did not go into the tutoring confidently and were surprised by the effect it had on them. For example, Victoria recorded that she took the program as a freshman because her coach recommended it but that she did not have confidence at first. She did not engage and knew she was projecting a flat affect. The content overwhelmed her and she was not mature enough to deal with it. However, working with the children was a natural fit for her; they told her they liked her smile, which made her feel like she had a fun personality and gave her confidence.

Jacqui recorded that she was trying to figure out where she fit in with different high school groups when she entered as a freshman. She did not feel confident in the program at first but gained confidence working in the elementary classrooms. She stated in her journal that “the children were always excited to see me and looked up to me - those days were always a confidence booster.” Her confidence grew so much that she re-took the class as a senior: “this time, I saw myself as a leader in discussions and modeling leadership in service.”

One of the more profound and telling comments was from Nigel, who wrote that he liked being around his peers and other leaders, and was quiet at first but became eager to participate. He noted that one of the best parts of the program was that if teens feel like they have leadership potential but are not confident enough to try these skills with their peers, they can try them out with younger youth to build their confidence, then go back to their peers and their communities.

In summary, confidence emerged as a predominant theme for participants in the Your Life and Community high school leadership program. Although it seemed that there were varying levels of confidence at the start of the program, written entries indicated that all participants felt they gained confidence while in the program through self-reflection, participating in class, getting positive reinforcement from their peers, adult leaders, and especially the children with whom they worked.

**Confidence during post-secondary education.** Confidence was present throughout the post-high school interviews. It appeared that the Your Life and Community leadership program had taught the participants that they could make a difference, primarily because of their work with younger youth. There were multiple comments such as Emelia's:

I learned from myself that I think I'm a lot stronger than I thought I was. I know I can make a change. This program made me more passionate and made me realize how much of an impact I have on people or can potentially have on people.

Jocelyn was surprised at her newfound confidence and stated:

I definitely didn't ever think I had confidence until I took Tim's leadership course. I never really saw myself sitting at a leadership camp working with a bunch of children, which I am, so I don't even know what to say. I'm so happy Tim asked me to do it.

Evelyn revealed, "Personally, I learned what I wanted to be or what I wanted to do, or just who I wanted to be or who I wanted to show other people I could be. That was a big thing for me."

Many participants incorporated working with the children into their responses, such as Jack's:

I learned that I love working with kids. I had no idea before I started working with them and every year, like I said, every summer, I just have to work with kids. It's a joy. And

even if I don't get a job working with kids, I'll volunteer, and I'll come out and see some of the old kids I know and everything. So, I learned that I like kids and I've learned that I have a lot of leadership potential in me.

Victoria shared:

Initially, I didn't know I was making a difference. I would be there, helping the kids, always having fun with them. But when you actually see like wow, they came from this neighborhood and now they're doing all of this? To volunteer and to help out other people, you realize that you really kind of change their lives a little bit. You know, make a big impact on it, definitely make a difference.

Victoria was also one of many participants who concentrated on how much they had learned about themselves:

Yeah, I feel like I've learned a lot about myself. Coming in freshman year of high school, I was mostly big into sports. That was my main focus - sports and school. But as I started seeing what I could do just by coming into a class and helping out, and even just cutting paper shapes out for kids - that's more than what other kids get. You're a role model to them, they look up to you, and that makes you feel good inside. It makes you feel like, "Wow, I'm actually changing this little kid's life. You're helping one kid so why not help as many as you can?"

Nigel revealed:

I think I learned a lot about myself and that I could be a great role model for people. I feel like even with any work, you can make a difference in anyone's life. For example, these quilts we're making, we're going to raffle them off and see if we can make a profit back

and get blankets for other people. You can impact so many families and kids. It's amazing.

**Confidence after post-secondary education.** In the final interview, I asked the participants what they liked about themselves and how they felt about themselves, along with their goals and visions for their futures. I have broken down the responses accordingly.

**Self-identity.** Traits that participants frequently noted that they liked about themselves were that they were personable, genuine, had good character, had passion for their jobs and to help others, had a willingness to learn, were loyal and caring, and were committed to family and friends.

A common theme that came across in the final interviews was how participants desired to help others. Two examples are comments by Jacqui and Victoria, who said, respectively, "There are many things I like about myself, my willingness to give, my positive outlook on life, my compassion for others" and:

Most people stop after school and rely solely on their expertise. My goal is to learn from those who have their mind set on helping others. Selflessness has shaped my whole view in life with the purpose of helping others in any and every way I can. Yes, I can say I love my confidence, pride, personality, kindness, or how I interact with people, but all of that is meaningless unless it's benefiting others.

Some participants were less proactive in their approach to helping others but simply concentrated on being kind. Nick said:

Above all else, I am comfortable in my own skin. I don't try to make people like me, because I know not everyone will. Instead, I make an effort to be kind to everyone while

being myself, and it has worked out very well. I get along with the vast majority of people I meet.

Another prevalent theme was how participants viewed themselves as positive and happy.

Nick stated:

In terms of what I like about myself, I'm happy that I just naturally enjoy living life.

While it is inevitable that there will be days that suck, I truly am a happy guy 95% of the time. It's hard to overvalue being happy in the life you live.

Nigel said, "Something I feel about myself is that I'm a very happy person and love the things I do." Zeke disclosed:

I feel very positive about myself and am proud of my accomplishments, milestones achieved, and obstacles that I have overcome. I feel that I consistently have a positive attitude and am able to be that person that people feel comfortable to communicate with. I am happy with the man that I am and feel that I can bring a silver lining to any negative situation.

A third theme that emerged from the interviews was the desire to continue to learn and work at life. Emelia communicated:

I constantly try to learn new things to make myself a better social worker, and a better person in general. I try my hardest to find the strengths in all of my clients and put myself in their shoes. I think that that is an essential part to helping people.

Jack imparted:

Honestly, I feel great about myself. I don't want to be seen as a narcissist, but I wish more people in this world possessed some of the qualities and mindsets that I have. I am a strong believer in self-development and in order to do this, we all have to learn more. The

more you learn, the more you can transfer what you learn towards improving yourself. I strongly believe in serving my country. Not only does that experience give you discipline and professional development that exceeds most civilian standards, but it also provides you with valuable skill sets and experience that you can take forth with you in your life.

Victoria shared:

I like many things about myself and the fact that I am not superficial. Over the years, I've met a lot of influential people in my life that I inherited a drive to learn as much as I can from. Because of this, I have seen positive growth in every aspect of my life. It reminds me that no one is perfect and you can keep growing and become very successful by the amount of knowledge and wisdom you allow yourself to take in.

Many participants brought up the people who had helped them. Jocelyn stated:

I am a very outgoing, independent, fun, smiling person. I expect a lot out of myself and have very high standards. I think this is what has gotten me so far in my life today. I feel good about myself. I think some of this comes from growing up with a lot of family around me. I have witnessed feelings and emotions that my aunts and uncles have gone through and used others' mistakes to learn from.

Zeke reflected:

Due to the situations that I was faced with as a child, I feel that I could have gone a completely opposite route, and I am proud of myself that I was able to take the high road and overcome the downfalls.

Victoria claimed:

I pride myself on holding key values and morals, which are to use my talents and gifts to impact that lives of others. Tim was one influential mentor that has changed my life in many ways. He has honestly helped me grow into the person I am now.

A final theme that emerged from the interviews was cultural and other identities. Nigel stated, “Some of the things that I like about myself is I have a very unique cultural background and I am family-oriented.” Rebecca said:

I love being Black. Although I am biracial, I proudly identify as being Black. I love being a woman and a mother. I have a beautiful 4 year-old son that I had after my freshman year of college. I also proudly identify as a scholar, sister, aunt, and friend.

***Goals, vision, and hope for the future.*** When asked about goals, visions and hope for the future, many participants discussed career advancement, graduate school, and leadership positions where they could effect change. Jack said, “Having a vision for your life resonates so strongly with me. If you don’t have one, how do you know if you’re ever doing the right things to take you where you want to go?” Rebecca shared that she wanted to be a professor and research race/ethnicity/gender & identity. Emelia disclosed:

My goals for the future are to gain experience in the field of social work and eventually work my way in to a supervisory position at a nonprofit or state or local government agency. I would like to use my public administration degree to change policies regarding child welfare in the future.

Victoria imparted:

I would love to be able to implement the core values I hold and what I was taught and intertwine it within my career. For example, if it was to open my own facility and train

other young athletes, I could see myself teaching them the same principles and values to use their talents and abilities for the good of others.

All participants said they were hopeful for the future and many planned to serve others. Alan expressed, “My hope for the future is to simply be an active member of the community. I am a part of and aim to make my community better once I leave.” Jacqui said, “I would like to make a difference in someone’s life and be remembered. My hope is to do something for others just like what Tim did for me.” Victoria revealed, “My goal for the future is to become someone like Tim, who used his vision and made a career out of it.” Jack stated:

A few of my goals/visions are to serve my country honorably as an Marine Corp officer, to create enough financial freedom and flexibility in my life so I have to opportunity to travel the world in order gain greater experiences and increase my circle of influence.

Many participants spoke about the desire to start families. An example is Nick’s declaration:

I also hope to someday teach my own children the things I have learned in order to help them live happy lives. First, just continue to be happy. If you enjoy your life and are kind to those around you, you’re doing alright regardless of everything else around you. Second, be good to those close to you. Third, be successful and enjoy your career.

**Summary.** Confidence was present in all 11 participants through all three time periods. Even when participants expressed that they were struggling with confidence, it was something that they were actively working on and gaining. The fact that this trait was so widespread amongst these participants makes sense since they were recruited to the Your Life and Community leadership program based on their leadership skills. Confidence was most prevalent during higher education, where participants could blossom and there was support. Confidence

was second most present during high school where, again, the participants had structured support. Whereas one would think that confidence would be most prevalent with maturity and following completion of post-secondary education, this was in fact when it was lowest, most likely because now participants were on their own without as much structured support.

## **Connection**

**Connection during high school.** The C of connection is defined as “positive bonds with people and institutions that are reflected in exchanges between the individual and his or her peers, family, school, and community in which both parties contribute to the relationship.” Although there was a strong presence of connection detected in all journals, the participants did not necessarily identify and expand on it in their writing. However, the importance of connection to their peers was apparent in some comments such as Nigel’s:

I have done tons of volunteering but I was really impacted by other teens volunteering and at summer camp. I looked up to the high school and college kids that helped out at the center and school. They were great role models.

The connection with younger youth was evident throughout the journals, which I alluded to in the previous section of this paper on confidence. An example is an entry from Evelyn: “If I told kids I would be there after school or at the community center, they would come - I was the draw!” In addition to their peers and the youth they tutored, comments also arose about the teens’ connection to the program director, as indicated by Nigel’s statement: “He has inspired me to become a leader and tutor for kids because I was once in the same shoes as those kids that I am now tutoring at the elementary school.” Additionally, there were some comments about the teens’ connections to the teachers with whom they worked. Emilia wrote, “It made me feel

appreciated when the teacher told me she was going to be sad next semester when she won't have all of the extra help we provided for her."

**Connection during post-secondary education.** Comments about connections at all levels - adults, peers, and younger youth - were prevalent throughout all of the post-high school interviews. Whereas the connection to the Your Life and Community leadership program leader (Tim) was more apparent in the high school journals, connections to all of the above, especially the children, were more evident during the higher education interviews. There appeared to be a transition from the role of follower (of Tim) to leader (of the children). I have divided my findings into three types of connections: those with the leader of the Your Life and Community program, those with peers, and those with younger youth.

***Program leader.*** The following comments were reflections of the students' connections to the leadership program leader, Tim. Emilia commented:

Tim is definitely my mentor. I just strive to be like him. I take everything he says to heart. I really look up to him and what he does and what he has done for the community. He has really influenced me as a person and I hope I can do that for someone someday.

Jack reflected:

It was my sophomore year in high school and I was best friends with someone already involved in Tim's leadership and service group, and he told me to come out one day and help with Thanksgiving. It was one of those "bag everything up and give a bag to the homeless" or something like that. We did that and it was a food drive kind of thing. I just went out there and helped one day and he was like, "Hey, do you want to come back and help another time?" I was like, "Of course - it was fun." Honestly, I'd never done any

kind of community service before then and that's when it started - my sophomore year and I've been going strong ever since.

Jocelyn spent a significant amount of time discussing Tim's influence during the interview:

I tutored, with Tim, elementary-school kids for the four years after I met him as a freshman. I don't think I ever really would have gotten as involved if I hadn't met Tim. Not even just through doing service, but the program itself helped me learn a lot about myself because of how Tim teaches with his quotes and all of his different tactics. I mean, he goes at it at different angles. Like, he just made me really grow into a better person - I think just because he's pointed out a whole bunch of different aspects about me. I don't know if he'd know this, but just how he approaches people just teaches you about yourself. I just feel so privileged that Tim would think of me as such a great person because I definitely never thought I really could make an impact like that. But I do realize it now and it's a really good feeling. There's the quote that says, "Each person can make a difference in someone else's life no matter what they do" or something like that, and it's so true. Like I said, it's just the little things - maybe just giving a kid that high five after playing rugby. They could go home and be just ecstatic about that. The smallest things could make such a difference, and I never ever realized that just those little things make such a great leader and they really do. Tim gives a million compliments a day and just those little things like, "I will never leave here without a smile on my face. I will never be here without a smile on my face." I think he's impacted me the most. I think he's been the biggest impact person that I've met since I was 14, 15 years-old, and for one person to impact your life so big, it's huge. I never thought I would really have somebody that I would look up to other than my mom and dad, and I definitely say that

Tim is definitely a person that I can look up to, and I never saw myself meeting such a great person that is such a good leader that you want to follow in his footsteps and be a role model like that.

**Peers.** Participants appeared to also value the connection they had with each other. There were comments such as Emilia's:

This program brought us all together and kept us all connected to each other as a community. We didn't necessarily hang out in high school but through this program, it brought us all together, and we're all still doing it. It keeps us in touch. I'm more aware now of what is going on in other communities through them.

Evelyn claimed:

I loved that my friends could be involved with the program, too. That was so awesome for me. It wasn't just that I had to interview for a certain job and then I was sort of isolated. Instead, I met new people and it was always exciting that I could get my friends involved, and it wasn't that I had to ask permission for someone to help come and volunteer somewhere – we were encouraged to bring people along. That was great. It was very, very open for friends and it was also community-friendly and family-friendly.

**Younger youth.** Students talked about connections to youth who were younger than them - both underclassmen in the same leadership program, as well as the youth they tutored and mentored. The following comment by Evelyn expresses how they often felt about younger students in the program:

I loved when we were seniors, I loved how energetic all of the freshman were, and how they really take to you as a mentor when you're a senior and they're a freshman, and as a senior and with freshman, you don't really get to mingle very much, at least not at our

high school, you didn't. You had separate lunch hours and separate classes, separate areas to hang out. So when we had to go and be together, it was so nice to see how energetic all of the younger kids were and how much they really wanted to do something. I think we have this notion that younger kids don't really want to do anything or they can't do anything, so to be able to see how much they wanted to do something is really impactful.

There were a plethora of statements reflecting an understanding of the importance and impact of the connections the participants had with the children they tutored and mentored. The following are a few of these comments. Jocelyn stated:

I figured out at 14 that there are a lot of different things going on here. But through those kids, I definitely saw that, and I saw not everybody is as fortunate as everybody else, and there are kids that are really sad, and just to give them a hug would help their day. Just pointing those things out was big.

Jack said:

All kids are different, obviously. I know that they need attention. That's the biggest thing. If you are just there, showing up and going through the motions, they're not going to get from you what you're there to give to them. So, you actually have to care while you're there. And they'll see that and they'll eat that up, and I think that's how you make the biggest difference to them.

Victoria was very verbose when it came to discussing younger youth:

Well, there are a lot of different kids and a lot of different behaviors and backgrounds, and it's just each kid has their own certain way of expressing themselves, and I think even if the kid is tough and comes from a rough family, they can still be themselves. I know some are sheltered and don't want to trust other people, but if you really show them

that you'll be there for them and they can trust you and all that, they'll start to open up and act like themselves, and they'll love it. I know at the community center, we had a couple of kids who were quiet and didn't want to participate in anything, and once you started talking to them, even making the littlest talk and having them say hi to you in the mornings - it starts progressing and then by the end of the camp, they were joining in with all of the other kids and making best friends. So I don't know - it's just really nice. Each kid has a different way to express themselves and you just have to find that. I learned that you definitely can get involved anywhere; you just have to ask and find the right place. And I just think this camp is great and it helps kids - even starting at younger ages. I know there are kids in this camp that are like, "We should go volunteer and we should talk about community service," and that's great. If I had had that, it would have been amazing. I think this program is really good for kids. They really reach out to other kids. Even the first day, no one knew each other and they're already becoming friends. So, I really like it and it's good. It's a good program. And Tim is a really good guy for creating it. And then, hopefully the younger kids will move up and start helping other people.

The theme of the significance of younger mentees developing into teen mentors was present in a few interviews. Emilia shared:

And I see these kids change, too, because when I was the peer mentor in high school, we were working with kids in middle school and elementary school. Now those kids, as they get older - they're doing the same things. They want to be what we were like. So now they're going through the program, and they're going through all of that and working their way to what we're doing now.

Evelyn claimed:

When we did our sports camp, we were mentoring the younger kids, or hanging out with them and being with them and stuff when they were doing the golfing and the tennis and all that kind of stuff, and then again when they grew up and they got older. As they became high schoolers, they would go back and start working with the younger kids and the elementary-school students and all that kind of stuff. So that was where we were sort of the beginning of that.

Jack reflected:

I have actually noticed that the kids are impacted by us - just our presence and our leadership ability and seeing how much we actually make a difference. There's actually one of the kids that went on a mission trip with us; his name is Ivan and he's currently a senior at the high school, and he's volunteering, he's doing all kinds of stuff, he's in the People Program, all kinds of stuff just because back then, four or five years ago, we were leaders to them, mentors to them, and now he's doing all of these great things and it's just awesome to see what you have helped start.

It appeared that the connections that formed with the children also impacted the teens in the Your Life and Community leadership program, and many spoke about their aspirations to continue service to youth in the future, beyond higher education. Jocelyn communicated:

I think I learned that I want to help kids. I definitely know I want to do something that's going to influence kids because I think the sooner you influence and impact a kid's life, the better they could turn out. Even if it's a pat on the back or saying, "Wow, you did an awesome job today." You know, just the little comments can make or break anyone's day, but I think especially for a kid going right into high school or transitioning from

different schools or any type of place, I think that impact is way more important because that impact can change their entire life. You know, you can go down the right path or the wrong path, and if you have someone to look up to and have a role model, hopefully, you're going to lead towards the better path.

**Connection after post-secondary education.** I asked the participants about their connections to their neighborhoods and communities; their roles in and connections to family; and their connections to their peers. I separated the results accordingly.

*Connection to neighborhoods and communities.* Participant responses were varied when asked about their connections to their neighborhoods and communities. Some answered the question more literally with replies that regarded non-profit organizations with whom they worked such as United Corps, ServiceAmerica, and a community center. Evelyn said, "Though work takes up a majority of my time, I help a nonprofit organization to reach out to local schools to create awareness about the risks and warning signs of youth suicide." Nigel stated:

When I was in grade school, I attended a program called Safe Home. They took us out to do different activities each day and helped us with our homework. There was a person there who I still have a strong connection with. He inspired and mentored me throughout the many years I've known him. He has included me in his organization by providing opportunities for me to give back to this community. For example, I have gone back and volunteered there and mentored children in grade school.

Victoria claimed, "I would say I am pretty involved in my community and I recently took on an internship at the community center. I also stay involved in the church community I attend." Zeke, who had become a fire fighter, articulated:

Connection to my community is important. I like to stay involved to ensure that my neighborhood maintains its safe and sociable reputation. I am also extremely involved in the community that my fire department serves. It is crucial for the public to know that they can rely on their fire department to quickly and professionally mitigate any emergency that they may have. This is done by continuously attending public relation community events. We also hold community involvement events such as fire department open houses. Sometimes the best thing that we can do is allowing the public to come in and take a tour of the station or ask any questions that they may have. Bottom line is that community involvement is very important for both my home community as well as the communities that I serve.

Some responses were more esoteric, expanding the definition of community to something more than just the place where one lives. Alan imparted:

I think that I am a part of many communities despite the location of my home. I am part of a dancing, sports, language, tutoring/mentoring, and academic community. My connection to my community is related to what I am passionate about and my sharing and learning with other individuals. I stay present in the community by engaging with others in dialogue, attending events, and volunteering.

Jack explained:

A part of my connection with my community is knowing how to interact with certain people in certain areas at certain times. It's a bit complicated to try and explain but in essence, I am connected with my community by my ability to adapt and interact with people in any place at any time.

Rebecca was not as connected to her place of residence, revealing:

In terms of my neighborhood - the area in which I live, I don't feel as connected. I feel like this American ideology of the "individual" and the obsession with that prevents a sense of collectivism amongst neighbors and people who live in the same area. It's very easy to get caught up in and I admit getting caught up in that mindset also.

Some participants still considered their community to be Parktown even though they were now living elsewhere. It seemed that the reason for this was that Parktown was the place that they had established connections they felt were valuable. Nick explained:

Currently, I don't really have much of a connection with my neighborhood/community. I like my neighborhood but I don't really feel close to it. To be honest, I still feel slightly like a tourist in my new state. I'm still a Parky at heart and though I've come to love living in my new city, it's not quite "home" for me.

Nigel revealed:

I feel like my connection to the community is still through Your Life and Community. In high school, I felt way more connected than I do now. I volunteered more. I spent a lot of my time outside of working and school to volunteer. I still maintain my connections there.

Many participants realized that they had not yet gotten involved enough in their current communities, were frustrated about this, and planned to become more integrated over time. Reasons were varied. Evelyn stated, "My current job takes me all the way around the state so my connection to my own neighborhood has slipped. I hope to be able to do some volunteer work soon." Jacqui shared:

I used to be involved a lot more in my community; I used to volunteer a lot of my time. I knew I made a difference then. Now, life has caught up to me. Being an adult sucks,

which is a terrible cop-out. I should make more time, more of an effort to be a part of my community. During high school, volunteering was a main priority, it made me feel great, now I feel slightly guilty, almost like I gave up on those kids I was mentoring. Now, I feel like I don't have much time to connect with my community or neighborhood.

Responses to this question made me realize that it would have been nice to have one more interview a few years after completion of higher education, once participants had a chance to become more involved in their new communities.

***Role in and connection to family.*** The roles the participants played in their families were paramount in their lives, especially now that they had completed their post-secondary pursuits. Situations were divided between the participants expressing appreciation for the support they received from their families and participants voicing how they play the role of supporter in their families. Examples of families that were supportive were prevalent. Alan said, "Family is very important to me and is a consideration in almost all of my major life decisions. My family is a big contributor to where I am in my life to date and I can never forget that." Emelia claimed, "My family is and always has been very close-knit. I know that they are always there for me and I can turn to them for any reason." Jacqui stated, "All in all, my family is my family and at the end of the day we would do anything for one another, and I think that is really all that matters."

Jocelyn declared:

I am so lucky to have such supportive parents and I cherish all the time I get to spend with them. My family is the most important thing to me and I am extremely lucky to have them all so close and in my life.

Zeke replied, "I love my family and although I live over an hour away, I ensure that I make time to visit and spend time with my family. My family time is a high priority on my list." Victoria expressed:

I am the second oldest and my family is very close. We rely on each other and know that family is one of the most important things in life. I am so blessed to have the family I have that supports one another no matter what.

Jack theorized, "Connection with my family is based on service to one another upon a basis of love."

Comments made that reflected the participants playing more of a supportive role were as follows. Alan said, "I am the oldest and the only male in my family so there are a lot of responsibilities that come with this role." Jacqui stated, "Whether it be biological or family you have met along the way - I play the role of keeping peace within my family." Nigel explained:

My role and connection with my family is that I'm always there for my parents. For example, my parents can't speak or write in English so I will go with my parents to places to translate for them whenever they need me to go with them.

Rebecca said:

I'm not as close with my biological family as I am with the family I created from my relationships with my two best friends from high school and my very close friends from college. In my real family, I am the "rock" - the therapist. When people in my family are having problems, especially my mother, I am the one that they turn to. This can make it difficult for me. I carry a lot of burdens, many of which aren't my own. I feel a lot of pressure from myself. I'm a first-generation college student. I also was a teen mother. I had my son at 19. Being the first in my family to go to college and then for me to get

pregnant so soon within my college career, my determination to finish and go above and beyond intensified. I want to make my parents proud. I want to give my younger siblings someone to look up to. I want to make my son proud also. He deserves the best and in order for me to do that, I have to succeed.

Zeke described:

My connection to my family is huge. At a young age, my father essentially abandoned my mother, sister, and me. Due to this, I was not only a big brother but also assumed the role of being the father and the man of the house. Because of this, my connection with my mother and sister is extremely strong and is a bond that can never be broken.

***Connection to peers.*** Comments made by participants with regards to connections with peers regarded identification of friends who held the same values, were positive, and could support one another. Many were long-term friendships. Jocelyn said, “The people I surround myself with are all positive people in my life.” Rebecca shared:

My peers and I share the same hobbies and interests. I feel very connected to them. I make conscious choices in who I surround myself with. It’s important to me that the people I’m around experience growth and are also driven to be successful, however they define that for themselves.

Alan reflected:

I would say my peers are very similar to me or that I am very similar to them. I have had the same circle for many years, and we find ways to support each other’s endeavors and remain present in each other’s lives. We have many of the same interests but also support each other’s different hobbies. We have been able to acknowledge our strengths and strategize ways of improving our flaws. Our connection has remained strong, and we

value our forward-thinking because not many young adult males are in the same places we are today with some of the starting points we have had to overcome.

Jacqui expounded:

I have strong relationships with the peers in my life. I think it's vital to have these people to lean on. After all, they are the people who may understand you the most and understand what you're going through better than anyone else.

Some connections were specific to roles friends played as "family," or friends who were from similar backgrounds. Rebecca asserted:

I love my circle of women of color who are empowered and who provide me with the support I need to be the best person I can be. I provide the same for them. I take pride in that, and those relationships I take very seriously.

Emelia said, "Because of my family situation, I have had to rely largely on my peers for support and encouragement." Zeke proclaimed:

Close friends are basically family in my book. My connection with my peers is equally important as my connection with my family. It is important that I can rely on support from my peers and vice versa. As I mentioned earlier, my connection and camaraderie is especially important with my fire department peers because we truly are a family.

There were also a few participants who found it difficult to maintain close friendships once they starting working. Jocelyn said:

After starting my career, I found it a lot more difficult to stay in touch with friends. When seeing your peers in classes, it was a lot easier to make plans. Now we fight for time to get together since we all have conflicting work schedules.

Jack stated:

In a way, I am connected to my new peers in a similar way that I am connected with my neighborhood and community. I understand the personality of the individuals I am in contact with and I build rapport, not by changing who I am as a person, but simply by catering the interaction in a manner where they feel comfortable being themselves, which in my eyes helps us build a stronger connection than if I did not do this.

A surprising response from Nick was:

As far as my connection to peers goes, it's a little more complicated. While I get along with most everyone I am in contact with, I don't form close connections with many people. Part of that is based in my general distrust in people initially. I know it's a negative characteristic of mine, but I assume that most people will put themselves before others, and until I see otherwise, I keep people at arm's length. I tend to rise to leadership positions sooner rather than later. Part of that is confidence, but I believe that being a good communicator and organizer are equally important.

**Summary.** The C of connection followed the same pattern as that of confidence for many of the same reasons. Connections were solid during high school, emerged even stronger during higher education, but suffered once the participants completed post-secondary education. Higher education lent itself to maturity, structure, and support, which enabled students to make connections. High school offered the same advantages. However, once participants were on their own as young adults, there was less structure provided to form these connections.

## **Character**

**Character during high school.** The Five C framework refers to character as “respect for societal and cultural norms, possession of standards for correct behavior, a sense of right and wrong, and integrity.” Character was mentioned by the director of the Your Life and Community

leadership program in his description of participants (see Methods section), and was interpreted in the writings of many of the participants by me, the reader, but was only self-identified once in the high school journals when Jocelyn wrote, “I feel comfortable speaking up in class because I see myself as having strong character and convictions.”

**Character during post-secondary education.** Unfortunately, there was no interview question that directly addressed character. As a result, comments reflecting this “C” were infrequent, although the presence of character as a valued trait in participants was implied during the interviews. The most obvious examples were statements such as Emelia’s:

I’m more aware of what problems there are and how people are trying to correct them. I took a lot for granted when I was in the leadership program, and now I realize I do not do that. I think I’ve definitely been changed. I didn’t realize it. I guess I just never thought about how well I had it and how well my friends had it, and until you work with some of these kids, you just don’t understand.

The most poignant story I heard was Evelyn’s:

When I was in middle school, I think I saw what women want and I was like, “THAT is what I want to do. I want to be in advertising and move to New York City. I want to be this kind of like top woman agent kind of person and kick some butt.” I dreamed about that for so long, and then I got to high school and I started working with Tim, and when we worked with kids, I could not imagine being the person that those little children, like if they walked by a TV or they saw something and you know, they got influenced so much that they had to have a thing of lip gloss or something like that to find their life. And I couldn’t imagine being the person who was responsible for that. I would much rather be the person who’s like, “You know what? That doesn’t really matter, let’s do

something else. Let's find a different way, and let's get you out of whatever it is that you're in right now that you're unhappy with and lead you down a different path." It made me so sad to think about it. That was definitely a life-changing point for me.

**Character after post-secondary education.** For this trait, I inquired about the participants' personal values; integrity by asking how the participants thought others would describe them; and moral commitment by what the participants perceived as their responsibility for making the world a better place.

*Personal values.* Values that were repeated by participants were honesty, integrity, loyalty, compassion, respect, communication, dependability, humor, kindness, selflessness, trustworthiness, and being genuine for themselves and others. This comment by Emelia was typical: "After my education, I see now that my personal values relate to the importance of human relationships. I value integrity and trustworthiness as it relates to creating strong bonds between people in families and in the workplace."

Happiness was brought up a few times as an important value. Jacqui said, "Overall, I think happiness is a value of mine. If things aren't making you happy, make a change. I am a firm believer of that." Rebecca stated, "Doing what makes me happy is important to me. Seeing those I love and care about pursuing what makes them happy also means a lot to me."

Another value that emerged a few times was treating others as you would like to be treated. Nick said:

When I was kid, my parents hung a small, framed crocheted panel in our staircase. The stitching wrote out the Golden Rule – "Treat Others as You Would Like to Be Treated." I believe that abiding by this one rule will make you a better person in nearly all facets of life. Be kind, be helpful, be positive, don't judge, and be accepting of people who live life

differently than you. All of these behaviors are derived from simply treating people like you'd like to be treated.

Zeke declared:

One of my primary values that I believe in is to treat those as you wish to be treated.

When you give respect, that respect should be reciprocated. One should be compassionate to others and be able to put yourself in another's shoes to truly understand what others may be going through.

Jack made a profound comment about the value of time:

Most of all, I value time. Time is the most precious gift you can give to anyone. Your life is made up of many experiences all occurring in time. So every moment you spend doing something or spending time with someone, it's essentially like you are giving them a piece of your life.

Other compelling comments were by Rebecca, who mentioned that she valued personal growth, and Nigel, who stated that his strongest personal value was being able to provide for his family.

***Integrity.*** When asked how they thought others would describe them, participants used the following words: warm-hearted, kind, charismatic, open-minded, honest, empathetic, loyal, strong-willed, good friend, nice, strong, independent, happy, hard-working, driven, compassionate, motivated, confident, determined, and resilient. One of the common traits that participants mentioned was that they were "open," didn't "sugar coat things," and "what you see is what you get." A sample of this was a statement made by Nick: "And those that I work with as a leader would say I am fair, loud, and cool-headed." Other similar traits were "stubborn, competitive, and forward-thinking." For example, Victoria asserted, "I think I hold my values very high, stick to them, and portray them everywhere I go as I go forward in my life."

Another set of qualities that surfaced in the interviews pertained to the ability to display optimism and happiness. Participants described themselves as “smiling and funny,” and “positive and charismatic.” Zeke said:

I think that anyone would tell you that I’m a positive personality and have the ability to brighten anyone’s day. I believe they would also say that I am easy to talk to and am that person that is there no matter what. I would give to anyone the shirt off my back.

Finally, a few participants inferred that they thought others would comment on their resiliency. Jack claimed, “From what I know, the people close to me describe me as an anomaly. Most are curious as to how I have gotten to this point in my life and how I was able to overcome non-ideal circumstances.”

***Moral commitment.*** When moral commitment was discussed, the interview responses became lengthy, and responses were more individualized. Although all participants felt it was their responsibility to improve the world, some planned to do so by working on themselves, some planned to help other people, some proposed to work in their communities, and some intended to evoke change through their careers.

Remarks reflecting moral commitment at an individual level were statements such as Jacqui’s:

I think we all owe it to the world to make ourselves better. If everyone made themselves a better person, the world would sort of correct itself. Then we could work together on the damage that people, as a whole, have done to the world.

Jocelyn stated, “I think that the littlest things make the biggest difference. A smile, a ‘hello,’ even holding the door open for someone can change their day, making their world a better place.” Nick explained:

First I'd say the Golden Rule is my initial responsibility. It requires next to zero effort, yet makes all the difference in the world. Second, I believe that you should help others less fortunate than you and if possible, use your strengths. Are you a stronger reader? Help others learn to read. Do you have a particular skill or trade? Be up for doing some work on the cheap to help someone in need. But more than anything, just be kind to one another.

Examples of statements reflecting the desire to help through community work are as follows. Alan said:

I believe that I should do whatever is within my power to make positive changes in the world. I think every small action helps and being present in your community is important for this change. As a college graduate, I also feel it's important to use my resources, networking abilities, and knowledge base to help guide communities into creating the changes they wish to see. In my experience, I think that my responsibility for making the world a better place is to improve the lives of children and adolescents by ensuring the safety of youth, and providing services to families to strengthen familial support and relationships, and educate families about positive coping skills.

Many participants planned to carry out moral commitment through their careers. Victoria expressed:

I believe that my responsibility is to spend my life helping others in some way. I will always give back throughout my whole life no matter what my career is in. I believe that should be everyone's responsibility. Even if it's the slightest change, they all add up and count.

Jocelyn replied, “I feel that my responsibility for making the world a better place is through my profession. As a nurse, it is my responsibility to help others get better and succeed in their health.” Rebecca declared:

Knowing what I know about oppression and other systems and structures of inequality, inequity, and injustice, for me to not do anything to try and change that would be a waste of my education. It would be an extreme disservice. I have to strive towards social transformation, making the world a more equitable place. It sounds so corny and cliché but what Ghandi said is true – “one has to be the change they wish to seek in the world.” As a teacher, I want to inspire my future students to do the same.

Jack reflected:

My responsibility first of all is to serve in the duty of protecting my country. Then it is also my responsibility to leave every person and every place I encounter better than it was before I came. I know realistically I won’t be able to succeed 100% of the time, but I still believe it’s a responsibility for me. It is also my responsibility to share with people in this world that I encounter all the positive knowledge and experience I have gained throughout my life so they can choose what is important to them and hopefully make their situations better through enlightenment.

Zeke acknowledged:

By being a firefighter/paramedic, I hope to improve the lives of all those that I come in contact with. I also feel that besides my profession, by just being a good person, I can improve someone’s day and even though that may be a small change, it is a change nonetheless. One of my favorite quotes is “to the world you may be one person but to one person you may be the world.”

Overall, character was much more prevalent in this interview than the high school journals and post-high school interview. Participants seemed more introspective and had gained a broader perspective, along with confidence, on where they fit into the world and the impact they could have on others and their communities.

**Summary.** Journal entries did not mention much about character during high school; this “C” was most prevalent during the final interview once participants had completed higher education. The gradual increase in focus on character over time reflects maturity in that the older and wiser participants became, the more character they exhibited.

### **Caring and Compassion**

**Caring/compassion during high school.** Caring and compassion are defined as a “sense of sympathy and empathy for others.” Next to confidence, the most predominant “C” was caring/compassion, which came across as a theme in all 11 journals. In fact, most of the writing reflected a sense of caring; this is where the teens really opened up and were quite verbose. The class, movies, and tutoring parts of the Your Life and Community leadership program appeared to have the most impact on bringing out a sense of compassion in the teens and were written about the most. I pulled out journal submissions regarding the program’s class, movies, and tutoring.

**Class.** Entries concerning the class were more generalized, such as this one by Nigel: “I decided to take this class and do something with it, use it, lift up and encourage others like it has for us. Leaders find a way to do this without others even noticing.” Emilia wrote:

The stories we work through in class have made me think of life in a way I haven’t before. The point is that all of us can use our one life to make a difference; living a life that matters is different for everyone.

However, when it came to reflections on movies and tutoring, the teens were very loquacious.

*Movies.* Movies appeared to bring out contemplative comments such as Rebecca's:

If you have faith in humanity, nothing can get in the way. Just because some people or situations are bad, never give up. A lot of people will give up when things get in their way. But the bad people are outnumbered.

Some entries were more explicit, such as Jocelyn's:

We watched a movie that had an impact on me at how hard they had to work to become part of a team. All of them went through a lot of hard situations. They had to stand up for what they believed in and follow their hearts. They knew racism wasn't right so stood together to make the change, then others followed. It took a long time but with people believing, it finally paid off.

A movie about a person with a disability brought out this comment by Jacqui:

People with disabilities are sometimes the most able-bodied. They push themselves more and make more of an impact because they fight for people like themselves. It just goes to show that kids CAN make a difference, whether they are able-bodied or not.

One of the more lengthy journal entries was by Rebecca:

One of the things I heard that stayed with me was Chris Stevens from Northern Exposure, who said, "Well, you know, the way I see it, whether you're here for four more years or four more weeks, you're here right now, you know, and I think when you're somewhere, you ought to be there because it's not about how long you stay in a place, it's about what you do while you're there - and when you go, whether that place is any better for your having been there." Many people are quick to overlook those they feel are hopeless instead of helping them, which causes one's perception of society and people in general

to become something that's bad. When one thinks of hopelessness, they think of misfortune. You can't view the world as a place filled with it. People fail to realize that we can grow as people, as a nation, as a country, and even as a community if we take the time to recognize and help those who are hopeless. The world would be a much better place if people were more compassionate. Instead of pity, people should be compassionate, which is to actually care and do something other than just to say "that's so sad" and move on with their lives.

Zeke wrote:

I was set on making a positive impact for good even before this class and was already active in the community and had decided I wanted to be a fireman because of the service they do in the community. The Julia Witherspoon and Chris Gardner story really impacted me. Julia was a police officer. That in itself is service to the community. But she used a hardship in her life to create a non-profit for young kids to give them what she didn't get. Chris chose to make money as a stock broker but his way of giving is the financial support he gives to organizations that helped him. Firefighting is a service to the community but I can do more and I want to do more.

Another entry by Zeke reflected:

Nothing happens through wishing. You have to look at the cards you are dealt and work with them. It takes hard work and dedication and you, and only you, are in control of where you are going and where you want to go. You may not be in control of where you started or how you were raised but it is your full control in what lies ahead. For people who use the excuse that they were dealt a bad hand of cards: "you may not be dealt a royal flush but you can bet big and win big." What I mean by this is simply work with

what you have. Opportunities are created and are often not given. One cannot just expect good fortune to fall into their lap. They must work hard and strive and if they have disadvantages, then that's that much harder they will have to work. Emanuel worked with what he had and now is an inspiration to others.

**Tutoring.** The tutoring aspect of the Your Life and Community leadership program appeared to have a tremendous impact on revealing caring and compassion in the teens.

Comments such as Alan's were abundant:

I feel a sense of pride in helping others. I see a need in kids for attention and with attention, they can get more done. This program should be spread throughout Parkview so that all kids can get the attention they need.

Nigel, who had been on the receiving end of the Your Life and Community leadership program and had been mentored and tutored by older youth, shared:

I give time during and after school to the school I grew up in. I understand the value of mentoring time from personal experience. A lot of kids are struggling today. They don't have support in their home to succeed in school or life. I didn't understand the term "Developmental Asset" at the time, but the after-school program and summer leadership camp were great supports (assets) for me. I really liked this class – and I like being a leader in my own community. I am trying to be an asset and a role model with the hope that the kids I help will grow up to help others. I hope for the evolution of a leadership pipeline model. My parents are uneducated and do not speak or read English. I wish they could help me with my school work. I feel at a disadvantage with homework but they give me support, shelter, drive, cook, and care for me. Most importantly, they give me love. My parents' dream is for their kids to pursue higher education so they can live a

better life and help their own children. This has become my motivation - my parents. When I struggle in school, I tell myself not to give up because I know my parents have worked hard to get me here. I took this class to help kids understand that they are not alone and that there is always help available. Just like when I struggled with homework, I got help after school. I picked after-school programs where I could go on field trips to learn new things. One of the most important things about these programs was that they gave me inspiration and hope for a better future. I want kids to look up to me like I have looked up to my tutors. This class has taught me the importance of being a good role model, giving back to my community, and that I really can make a difference.

In some cases, the tutoring influenced career direction. Rebecca wrote:

I love this class and am sorry it is ending. Tutoring has made the biggest impression on me and I will now do an independent study. I have learned about leadership and service. In this program, we hear about service, we see it, and then we get to do the service. We learn about how each of us can use our life for good - that even as one person, we still can make a difference. We talk about making a difference and using our teen status for good. We learn that we may invest in lives but not see the outcome of the seeds we planted. Watching the teacher, I realized what an opportunity to change so many lives and make the community stronger. I want to go to college to be a teacher or social worker. All these stories will stay with me and are inspirational.

Victoria implied that she understood the lessons of the class and how they applied to her and her community. She cared about making a difference. She participated in the tutoring, mentored before and after school, was on the summer camp staff for seven years, and worked at

the local community center. She took the class three different years. The class and service made her realize she wanted to go into nursing. She communicated:

I signed up for this class to be able to help and tutor elementary students. I thought it would be fun, but I didn't realize how much we would help the teachers and the students. The kids thought of you as a friend helping them. They look up to you so you always have to set a good example. I didn't know *how much* it would impact the teacher and class. The teacher and class were always so happy to see us walk through the door. We helped by taking kids and helping them one on one.

Evelyn helped out in multiple classrooms because a teacher told her she was a good leader and encouraging to the children. She wrote that she "understood the value of encouragement and was able to lift the spirits of the students who were struggling in the classroom setting." Evelyn also worked at camps and after school. If she told kids she would be there after school or at the community center, they would come, and she realized she was the draw. She recorded:

If we cannot come up with a better method of helping each other, instead of punishing each other, then we are no better than the ones who get caught doing what society thinks is wrong. We should learn to appreciate and use people we look up to gain wisdom and help better ourselves. The neighborhood and the people around us do not define who we are. They can teach us and we can learn from them, but we are who we are and no one can change that. I learned that communities and people have a way of surprising us when we least expect it, and if you learn to grasp that unexpectedness and learn from it, you can see the world with entirely new eyes. I wish that more people would have drive and determination; the world would be a better place because of it. We're all always learning

from each other, and whether you're 70 years-old or just a 16 year-old boy, your lives can change because of the encounter.

The teens seemed to understand the effect of their tutoring on the younger youth.

Rebecca wrote:

When we go to tutor, I feel the kids start to look forward to the future and maybe do the same thing that we are doing for them. It's like we are preventing behaviors that could cause children to drop out of school later in life. We give these kids some sort of hope, which means a better society. The children look up to us like we are older siblings. We are given an opportunity to work with children who are at risk of going in the wrong direction. We are addressing the problems that start when children are young. If we don't do something to prevent children from going down the wrong path, then those same troubled kids will become troubled adolescents. At the same time, it gives teens an opportunity to be more involved in the community. It gives us a face that is viewed as positive because society views us as being irresponsible and carefree. Kids are at greater risk during the summer so if they are able to participate summer programs, they are at less risk. Communities should sponsor and create more programs like this.

Emilia reflected:

I found out the key to living a life of meaning versus a meaningless life. I got a lot out of working with elementary children and tutoring. I learned through leadership that kids really look up to teens and we should be aware of this and use it as a platform to do good. With regards to helping at school - teachers asking us to come in to give the kids more attention, and teachers appreciating us, and kids so excited to see us was the best.

**Caring/compassion during post-secondary education.** Like during high school, all participants demonstrated caring and compassion during the post-high school interview. However, there was a difference in the maturity levels of the participants and I noted that at this stage of their lives, they appeared to realize how “well they had it.” Many participants felt that they had taken much of what they had in life for granted. Examples of these feelings of relative privilege are revealed in remarks such as Emelia’s:

You know, I’m really working in some impoverished places, so hearing these stories from the kids and just how badly people have it and how well I have it – I realize how well off I am with my family and my support system. I just have sympathy for everyone now. I don’t take things for granted anymore.

Victoria articulated:

Yeah, my whole life, I guess I took things for granted but I definitely am privileged with a shelter and stuff, and some families don’t even have that so to make a big impact on some person’s life is just amazing. I didn’t really notice a blanket could change someone’s whole life. It’s really nice.

Some participants gained caring and compassion through empathy because they had had similar experiences as the people they were helping. Jack revealed:

It was a really good time. I’d never done any kind of community service before then, and that’s when it started my sophomore year, and I’ve been going strong ever since. I go and volunteer and try to bring my presence to help kids see that even if you did come from a not-so-good circumstance, you can still make something out of yourself.

Other participants had had support systems at home, and gained caring and compassion through comparing their situations to those of others. Jocelyn reflected:

I have continued to do a variety of service in college and still tutor elementary-school kids, which is a lot of fun. I just learned how we take so much stuff for granted. And even working in an after-school program, there's children there whose parents are either just leaving them there as a daycare service because they don't want to pick them up, or maybe they really are at work. But there are always those kids that are just left there. And once I see that, I just realize how fortunate I was to have a mom and a dad at home. And then I worked in communities that aren't so privileged, and there are kids that really struggle with feeling left out or feeling neglected and stuff. Those are the kids that I want to reach out to the most because I know as a person, I took that for granted because I always had my mom and dad there, no matter what. And then doing this work, I just realized, wow, this is ridiculous because these people have nothing, and I have all this stuff at home, and I have so much stuff I can give, and just being able to reach out to somebody that you have no idea who they are - it just makes you feel like a better person. But I think for sure before the leadership program, I was very selfish. I did not realize what I had until I saw somebody in a worse situation. And so that was a big eye-opener. It's a really cool eye-opener. It's definitely something I never would have had without this program.

Many participants credited the Your Life and Community leadership program with introducing them and exposing them to a world they didn't know existed. Jocelyn remarked:

I think I finally realized that Parktown has a huge homeless population, a huge shelter population in our town that I'm thinking is so great, so perfect, and it's not. There are a lot of obstacles that people face every day in our town and I never would have noticed them if Tim hadn't pointed out, "Hey, we're going to go tutor these kids because they're

just struggling a little bit.” “Hey, we’re going to go put food baskets together because people need food for Thanksgiving.” I don’t think I ever would have branched out of that box of thinking that everything was so perfect and great if I wouldn’t have met him. I’m sure I would have figured it out by the time I was 17, 18 years old, but I don’t think I would have ever figured it out when I was 14.

The other theme that arose was that participants were surprised at how much they enjoyed service. Victoria relayed:

Well, this program definitely changed my life. I mean, just by doing things from tutoring to actually doing service projects like making quilts for people. It just changed me in a different way. I always want to help people, no matter what. Before it was just, “Oh yeah, I think I’m going to go volunteer” and now it’s, “Yes! I get to go help people!” I just feel different now. I like it a lot. I feel like even with any work, you can make a difference in anyone’s life. For example, these quilts we’re making, we’re going to raffle them off and see if we can make profit back and get blankets for other people. You have the ability to impact so many families and kids. It’s amazing.

Emma shared:

I think the most enjoyable part of this program is always trying to help someone, no matter who it is - you’re always trying to reach out to something and someone. I think that’s a big component of this program. No matter what you do, you’re always trying to impact someone else’s life - not just yours. I think reaching out to anyone is just a great part of this program.

A similar theme was the personal growth that occurred as a result of the leadership program. Evelyn exposed, “I think I learned to be more patient with people - with kids, for sure.

As we got older and progressed further into the program, you definitely see a difference in other people and that's important to look for." A profound statement that revealed the influence of service on personal growth was Emelia's: "That's the biggest thing - to make a change in someone else's life. And I think that in itself is changing my life, too."

**Caring/compassion after post-secondary education.** To assess Caring and Compassion after higher education, I asked participants what they cared for. In general, responses regarded caring for themselves, their families, pets, and friends. Many stated that they had learned to care for themselves by staying healthy through working out and eating right, and keeping good relationships with family and friends, in order to give them strength to care for others. Participants also discussed showing compassion for others through caring about their occupations. Typical responses were those such as Zeke's: "I have a great deal of compassion and care for a lot. I care for myself, my family, those around me, and especially the patients that I treat while at work." Rebecca said, "In order to make a difference I have to care for people. I have to love them. Even those who disagree with what I believe in. If it weren't for compassion, my desire to be an educator wouldn't exist."

Some remarks were geared more toward attaining social justice at the community level: Emelia noted, "I want to make the world a better place by achieving social justice and striving towards social transformation. I am always looking for ways to help others or improve the community through being active in my community." Rebecca affirmed, "I strive to create spaces for people (men & women) and youth of color to be fully human, to be recognized, and validated." There were also more philosophical responses about caring for the world, such as Alan's: "I care for the wellness of all humans." Nigel summarized, "It's everybody's

responsibility to make the world a better place. It's just a matter of getting everybody to that point of recognizing it."

A few participants appeared to be struggling with accepting the fact that they cared so much and had less control over outcomes than they desired. Jacqui stated:

I care for everything, too much, most of the time. I am very in touch with my emotions. Things that don't even involve me make me feel for other people. I haven't figured out yet if this is a good thing or a bad thing.

Nick claimed:

I am passionate about people and life. I deeply care about peoples' feelings. I care for the well-being of those around me. I want them to be happy and healthy. But the world doesn't work that way, unfortunately. And while you do your best to make life a positive experience for everyone you come in contact with, you can't let the negatives in life, especially things you can't control, get you down.

A response that I did not anticipate was by Jack, who declared:

To be honest, I feel like my compassion is limited. It pretty much consists of family and friends with whom I'm most compassionate. Although there are many times that I feel compassion for others, I feel that this is something that I can be more aware of and attempt to provide more of when necessary.

Jack is also the participant who had developed positive self-identity because of his rise above challenging circumstances and didn't "want to be seen as a narcissist" (p. 105). His journal entries and other interview responses reflected feelings of caring and compassion so it was unclear to me where this response came from. However, Jack appeared to be very disciplined and it is possible he had higher expectations of others and when these were not met, his level of

compassion was impacted. It could also be that at this point in his life, Jack was choosing to concentrate on those with whom he was close, like family and friends.

**Summary.** Although caring and compassion were existent in all 11 participants during all three timeframes, they were most prevalent during higher education, then high school, and were least present when the participants became young adults. Initially, I found this result surprising but what I noticed was that as they completed their post-secondary education, the participants gravitated to their inner circles and concentrated more on their families and friends. It seemed as though they became a little less grandiose in their efforts to help the world and for the time being, preferred to focus on their own.

### **Contribution**

**Contribution during high school.** The Sixth C of contribution, “post-secondary education and continued leadership and service,” appeared in the high school journals primarily as a desire to engage in future contribution. Most teens documented that they planned to continue giving back through service. Some entries were simple, such as Evelyn’s: “I loved the class. I love the program. I love giving back.” Other writings were more articulate, such as Nick’s:

The stories in the class bring up a lot about race and different classes of citizens. We learn about it and the service allows us to experience it. When this semester ends, I want to be involved with the leadership and service components of this class. I want to continue to step outside of what I know.

Two other entries that exemplified the desire to engage in future service were by Zeke and Victoria, who wrote, respectively, “I like giving to my community and I know this is what I want to do with my life,” and “My life has changed because of this program. Doors have opened for me, and I think they will in the future because of my being involved with all of this.”

A few participants reflected on the Your Life and Community leadership class. Evelyn journaled:

This class brings everything together. It makes you want to be a better person. It makes you want to find some way to give back. The design is to make us think through our own life. The journals make us think through who we are and where we want to be. The class pushes you to want to be more and do more. I know not everyone gets the same thing out of class but I think the people in here that have leadership potential are moved to action. Those leaders will find ways to continue to give back in the future.

As I described earlier, the Your Life and Community leadership program did result in many teens considering service-related careers. For example, Emelia recorded that the class gave her a deeper understanding of herself and why she loved service; the two together made her realize she wanted to go into social work.

**Contribution during post-secondary education.** One of the most telling comments about how the Your Life and Community leadership program influenced post-secondary education and service was Emilia's: "Everyone who took this class and graduated, and moved on from this program - we're all still involved, and all of us are in college now."

At the time of the post-high school interview, all but one participant had continued with service during higher education; the one participant who had not stayed involved was looking forward to making time to become more engaged in service again. All participants stayed in touch with Tim, stayed connected with each other, and many had gotten others involved in service activities at their respective post-secondary institutions. Some of the organizations with which students worked during higher education were a Family Help Center, Center for Rape Support, Community Development Center, Mobile Meals, volunteering at a nursing home,

highway pick-up, campus clean-up, tutoring elementary-school kids, and hospice. Many participants also took on leadership roles during higher education, whether they assumed formal positions such as those on sorority councils, or informal roles as facilitators of campus service activities. Three themes emerged during the higher education interviews: service, leadership, and self-reflection.

*Service.* There were a plethora of comments about engagement in service while in higher education, such as Emelia's: "I mean, we're still doing it. We are all volunteering when we can."

Victoria said:

I guess I've never really graduated because I've always stayed with the program. Our softball team is really big on volunteering and community service. In the summer, I keep working at Tim's camp, and I'm going to be a sophomore next year, so I hope to stay involved with all of these kids and come back again. It just feels good helping people.

Evelyn stated:

I am still doing volunteer work and I applied for a job, and the job I would be doing is working with high schoolers and sort of getting them on track to college, and the financial the responsibilities that go along with that and all that kind of stuff. I like that. I like working with kids a lot, and I like feeling like I'm making a difference. That's important.

Numerous participants emphasized that they had been experimenting with different types of service and were thinking about what they ultimately wanted to do, exemplified in comments such as Emelia's:

I love working in the community so I'm kind of torn between working with communities and working with kids. I worked with kids in the leadership program and now I am working in the community, and I like both. I will try to do both.

**Leadership.** Several of the participants used their leadership skills to encourage their peers to become involved in service. Statements such as those by Emelia and Victoria, respectively, reflected this leadership: "I've been trying to get my friends from college, my new friends, to come out and see what's going on. I can only explain it to them but they don't really get it," and:

Because I made the softball team and I came from a whole community of softball, my friends and family, they look up to me now. I sometimes help out with practices, or tell them things that other teams wouldn't know but that you should know when you get older. I go back and help little kids out and the other softball players just think it's so cool. And last semester, I took a leadership course and it just taught me what I should value, and how I should look at things and perceive different things in different ways, so I like to keep growing that way and then I can help others grow, too.

**Self-reflection.** One of the practices that the Your Life and Community leadership program fostered was self-reflection. Many of the participants continued to engage in self-reflection, even though it was no longer mandatory like it was during the high school program. Emelia shared, "I do this every week. It's me thinking about what I'm doing and how I'm helping other people. It's really important to me now." Victoria claimed:

I do some self-reflection. I know it helps a lot, like reflecting on what you do and how you can get more out of yourself. I think I do most of that sometimes; how I can change and how I can do certain things, and how I can make them better.

Jocelyn acknowledged:

I really liked how Tim made us keep a journal. I think that did help me with getting to know myself better because I still have the journal and I actually read it before camp started, and I'm just sitting there like, "Wow, why would I write something like that?" You just read things and you're like, "What were you thinking?" I'm 16 and, you know, you definitely learn a lot more through the quotes that he used and what I wrote then - well, I don't think I would write that now, but I definitely liked that aspect of the class a lot. I have to admit, I don't journal now but instead, I take time and sit outside and read. And I think that just helps me wind down and just figure myself out.

Jack avowed, "Honestly, everyone in every experience should reflect on it because that's the only way you're going to learn. If you make a mistake, you're not going to make it twice and that sort of thing."

**Contribution after post-secondary education.** To determine the role of contribution in the participants' lives once they had completed their post-secondary endeavors, I asked how they took care of themselves, and what they felt they contributed to their families and communities. In addition, I asked if they felt they contributed to institutions of civil society such as schools. I categorized the participants' responses accordingly.

*Self.* All participants were aware of how important it was to take care of themselves. They claimed that they ate well, exercised, tried to get adequate sleep, and made time for loved ones. Typical responses were such as the following by Jack:

I feel that I take care of myself very well. I consume foods that studies have shown have lifelong health benefits when consistently ingested. I also have good hygiene and groom regularly because I understand that your physical appearance has a large impact on

everyone's initial impressions of you, whether it's some random person on the street or a potential employer, everyone judges either consciously or subconsciously.

Nigel said, "I take good care of myself by being outdoors and playing sports, eating well, then getting plenty of sleep." Rebecca stated, "I believe in spiritual, mental, and physical health, and I try to maintain it all." Emelia claimed, "I take a great deal of pride in caring for myself. I participate in activities that benefit my well-being, like hiking and doing yoga." Nick shared:

I take care of myself by just doing things that make me happy. That doesn't mean neglecting my responsibilities, but making sure to set time aside to do what you want to do. Just even spending time with my girlfriend and my dog. That keeps your spirits up and makes even the things you don't want to do not seem like a problem at all.

Rebecca declared, "I learned the hard way that it's okay and very necessary to take time for myself. I allow myself to do things to make myself happy, like reading books, spending time with friends, and shopping!"

Some participants were still working hard at making themselves a priority. Jacqui communicated, "I try to take care of others too much, which is totally contradictory to my statement of trying to make myself better, I know." Jocelyn shared, "I think I sometimes put others before myself. Sometimes I have to remind myself to take care of me, too. I think I can do a much better job caring for myself, which is something I am working on." Rebecca confessed, "Being kind to myself is key because it's so easy for me to beat myself up over small things. I'm not perfect at that, but I'm getting better with it."

Other ways that participants felt they took care of themselves were by communicating effectively, having others available to whom they could talk, and sticking to their goals. Evelyn recognized, "I like to exercise, speak my mind, and take responsibility for my actions and not

blame others.” Alan disclosed, “I try to communicate and not to hold on to too much bad stuff because I have seen that it can impact my health in a negative way.” Zeke shared, “I have a strong support system of people that I know I can confide in no matter what the situation.” Rebecca added, “Sticking to achieving the goals that I set for myself is another way I take care of myself.”

**Family.** The majority of participants felt that they contributed some type of support to their families. Although a few young adults contributed to their families financially, most of the support was emotional in nature. Some participants mentored younger siblings, while others helped parents with tasks around the house, or gave them rides to the store or doctor appointments. Victoria avowed, “I show my younger siblings anything is possible - you just have to work hard.” Rebecca asserted, “I set high expectations for loved ones and I owe it to them to be honest with them.” Jocelyn explained, “I help my parents out a lot with things around our house, rides to the store or doctor appointments. I am a companion for my mom when my dad isn’t around.” Nigel revealed, “My contributions to my family are the support I give them and always being there to help with translation for my parents.” The participants who were nurses helped their families with health advice. Jocelyn expounded, “I think I am a huge aspect to my family. I get phone calls all the time asking me what could be wrong health-wise. I am a reference for my entire family.”

Many participants felt that they contributed support, love, and caring to their families. Rebecca communicated, “I feel I contribute hope, strength, and love.” Nick responded, “Just loving and supporting my family as best I can. I talk to everyone in my direct family at least once a week, and I support them and give them a shoulder to lean on whenever they need it.” Jack replied:

This is a tough question. I would like to say I provide a solid support system for them. I try to be there for them whenever they need me for anything. Although I'm the youngest of four siblings, I have been told that my entire family looks up to me in some way or another. Upon further thought, maybe that means I provide my family with hope for a better future, or just the honor and pleasure of seeing someone close to them succeeding.

**Community.** All participants saw themselves as contributing members of their communities, if not in practice, then at least in spirit and desire. Some participants were actively involved in a variety of activities. Victoria said, "I feel like I am always willing to help out and volunteer to make my community a better place. Whether that means serving food on a holiday, or making food boxes, or even participating in events to raise money." Many of the young adults worked with children, which they said was something with which they felt comfortable because of their past experiences tutoring and mentoring children. Emelia articulated, "I believe that I contribute knowledge and seek to educate my community about social issues specifically involving the community's youth." Evelyn expressed, "I am caring for children in and out of home care." Nigel conveyed, "What I have contributed to my community is help in mentoring kids."

However, since many participants had just recently completed higher education and begun new jobs, much of what came out in the interviews was disappointment that they were not doing more at the moment. Jacqui shared, "At this point, not much. I'm basically just a working member of society. I hope to change that." Nick lamented, "Right now, my community contributions are limited. I am a good and considerate neighbor, polite to those in my neighborhood, and just do neighborly things like hold doors and what not. But that's about it at the current moment." Jack reflected:

I do provide my community with an example of how you can overcome surmountable odds and be successful. Having a vision for success in your life, whatever that may be, formulating a plan and working hard to follow that plan no matter what your circumstances, can and will lead you to success, and this is something I believe I've demonstrated thus far in my life. I also volunteer when the opportunity to do so presents itself, but I could always do more to seek out opportunities to give back to my community.

A few participants mentioned that they felt that they contributed to their communities through the professions they chose. Rebecca imparted:

Although I am not “physically” active in terms of volunteering and being present within my community, I feel like through the career path that I'm pursuing, I am able to contribute to the positive portrayal of women of color, mothers of color, and educators who are passionate about social justice.

Zeke disclosed:

As I mentioned previously, being a firefighter/paramedic means contributing a great deal to my community and understanding that I am prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for a stranger if that means saving another's life. I go above and beyond for the community to maintain its safety and well-being.

***Civil society institutions.*** When asked specifically about contributing to civil society, responses were similar but more specific. Most participants desired to contribute, and planned to become more involved in civil society institutions, but were not doing so at the moment due to the fact that they were still establishing themselves in new jobs. Jack revealed, “I want to

contribute to civil society, whether that is through my successes, my service, or my overall impact on this world.” Jocelyn expressed:

I would love to get back into contributing my time to something and people in need. I have to find something again that I am a believer in and do so. I feel that it is hard to find and do this just right out of college. You have to know people or someone to help you find areas to contribute to. I would love to get back into tutoring, or educating people about minor health topics.

Emelia explained:

I am not sure if I already contribute to institutions of civil society. However, I do aspire to do so in the future. I think that I envision increasing awareness on a larger level about the issues involving youth and the vulnerability of children in the child welfare system. I also would love to attempt to improve education policies and child welfare policies for local, state, and federal governments.

Evelyn stated, “I hope that one day the Family Home Program will be a part of every school district so that parents can have the support they need to help their children through school. Maybe I can help with that.” Nick shared:

The work I did with my youth leadership program and courses is something I’m still proud of. Whether it was reading with kids in the classroom, supervising field trips during the summer, or just hanging out with them, letting them be goofy kids, I strongly believe I made a positive difference in their lives. I also had similar responsibilities in another community program where I led summer-school classes for kids that needed a little extra preparation for kindergarten. I also believe I made an impact there, and I would’ve been ill-prepared for such duties if it was not for my previous youth mentoring

programs. I have a desire to be a youth soccer coach someday. I have a good deal of experience and knowledge of soccer, and combining that with the leadership skills I learned from my past leadership positions gives me the tools to connect with kids as a positive role model.

Rebecca expressed:

My consciousness of systems of oppression and structures of inequality, inequity, and injustice present within “civil society institutions” puts me in a position to try and change them for the better and to confront them through education. I come to them with the understanding that nothing is ever “neutral” politically or socially. It is through the decisions that I will make as an educator that is going to determine how and what I contribute, whether that’s through confronting issues head-on, or if it’s being passive and allowing systems of oppression and structures of inequality, inequity, and injustice to continue to flourish.

Victoria disclosed:

When I took an internship at a community center, I realized how much that made a difference to the kids. Just being with them and helping them out, even with the little things. Also, tutoring at schools makes an impact that most people wouldn’t realize. Tim allowed me to do that, and you get the opportunity to become a role model for many kids and young adolescents. That feeling is amazing and I look forward to it again.

Zeke alleged:

As of right now, I do not directly contribute to schools other than attending various schools and providing fire safety for children. In the future, I want to become a fire/EMS instructor, where I will be able to give back the knowledge that I have received in this

line of work that I absolutely love. I want to be able to pass along my teachings and inspire others.

**Summary.** There was no consistency amongst participants with regards to an emphasis on contribution during the three different periods. Contribution, as I defined it, appeared to be most prevalent during higher education, followed by completion of post-secondary endeavors, and was least present during high school. The fact that it was not predominant during high school makes sense since contribution is a result of development of the other Five Cs. However, contribution dropped in prevalence amongst the participants once they had completed higher education. Again, I believe this is due to lack of structure once they were in the real world, but that it was also secondary to a change in priorities once the young adults were on their own. Instead of having situations presented to them where they could contribute, they were forced to seek them out. Their goals were to get jobs. One notable outcome was that the careers of all but one of the participants were service-oriented. Once working, especially in new careers and jobs, it became more challenging to fit service into their lives. As previously mentioned, the participants also appeared to see the world a little less idealistically and sought to concentrate on taking care of themselves, their families, and friends. However, the stage had been set and if participants were not contributing to their communities and civil society at the time of the interviews, they expressed the desire and intentions to do so once they had more time.

### **Other Key Findings**

My loose deductive analysis allowed me to be open to identifying and exploring themes outside the Five C framework. The finding that surprised me the most during the high school timeframe was how many years the teens were involved in the Your Life and Community leadership program, even though it was only a one-semester class. I pulled each of the following

statements from 10 out of the 11 journals: “I volunteered at schools and at camp during the summers;” “I took the class multiple times;” “I started sophomore year and never stopped;” “I took the class for three years;” “I took the class twice and worked for three summers;” “I volunteered during and after school with kids for three years;” “I helped in after-school programs, mentoring at a community center, and was a teen leader at the high school for three years – from sophomore to senior;” “I took every advantage and worked at the camp for eight years;” “I was involved in the summer program for eight years;” “I was in the program for 10 years.”

A theme that arose periodically at the end of the higher education interviews was what the participants felt was the “best” part of the Your Life and Community high school leadership program. The following are some of the more insightful responses. The first statement by Emelia blends the Cs of confidence, caring/compassion, and contribution, and highlights the growth that occurred during the program:

One thing I thought was really cool about working with Tim and what he did for us is that it was never about how old we were. It was never about us being kids. I mean, obviously, Tim treated us like we were children because we were. You know, 13 or 14, but it was always that for most of your life growing up, it's you have to do this and then you can get to this point in your life, or you have to go to school and then you can go out into the real world and make money, and such and such. But Tim's program was always like, “Well, you can do it right now. You can make a difference right now. You can change things right now.” There was never a waiting period. And I think that's what was really important for us to be able to hear - actually, to hear that at any age. Even now, it would be great to work with someone who's like, “You can do anything you want right now.”

But as young adolescents, that's really important to hear - and to know that you can make a difference, and it doesn't mean that you have to become president right now, but you can volunteer and make a difference in someone else's life right now.

Jack thought the adult leadership was the most important aspect of the program:

I would say the adult leaders in the program are definitely the most valuable component because if you don't have good leaders, then the kids don't get as much out of it. Like I was saying earlier - modeling leadership is pretty much the whole point. You want to bring in good people that are going to make a huge impact on these kids and hopefully guide them in the right direction.

Victoria felt that the central feature of the leadership program was its ability to enable youth to become comfortable with service and then to continue it as part of their lives:

So, I took the classes during the school year and then during the summers, I would volunteer and do the activities Tim had for us. I would just volunteer the whole summer, and then sophomore year was the same thing, and then my junior year, I worked at the community center, which is kind of the same thing. And then senior year, I still stayed involved. And on and on, I'm still doing it.

A theme that emerged in the final interview was that most of the participants chose careers that would allow them to serve others. Another strong theme that surfaced during this interview was how important it was for the participants to surround themselves with close friends and family who were positive, made them feel good, and supported them.

### **Summary of Findings**

In summary, the Cs of confidence, connection and caring/compassion were evident throughout the journals, whereas competence and character were less noticeable. It appeared as

though the 11 participants all embodied leadership potential in high school, some with more confidence than others, and were already caring and compassionate people. The Your Life and Community leadership program further developed these qualities through a curriculum that challenged the teens to evaluate and reflect upon their own experiences; to broaden their understanding of and respect for others; to gain exposure to a wide range of individuals who have made a positive impact on their community; and to begin to consider their own potential to provide meaningful service. The curriculum was delivered via lecture, movie, guest speaker, readings, writing, journaling, and class discussion, but the most valuable mode of delivery seemed to be through movies, followed by discussion and journaling. The consequential connections to peers, director of the program, the children they tutored, and their teachers instilled more caring in the teens and gave them increased confidence, along with a desire to continue to contribute.

A major impact of this high school leadership program appeared to be service. The class was influential, the movies seemed to be an effective venue to inspire teens to contemplate their lives, but the tutoring in the classrooms, and tutoring and mentoring after school, seemed to have the largest impression on the participants' desire to give back. The program appeared to pull everything together for the teens. Zeke's journal entry demonstrates the intersection of "Cs:"

I lived with my sister and mom. My dad was an alcoholic and drug addict. I became introverted and shy. I hit a fork in the road - I needed to either travel the road of my dad or take the high road and persevere. I got good grades and never drank or used drugs. I can honestly say that the class had a profound impact on me. I became more *confident* in myself, and found that I had an ability to *connect* with my peers as well as students I was

mentoring. I don't feel that I would have found this inner ability had it not been for this class.

Applying Lerner's "Big Three" criteria for optimal Positive Youth Development programs, the Your Life and Community leadership program seemed to encompass all three: positive adult-youth relationships (director of the program, elementary-school teachers, adult leaders at the summer camp), life skill-building activities (delivered through the curriculum), and opportunities to use these skills (tutoring and mentoring).

During the higher education interviews, all Cs were present and were more strongly represented than they were in the high school journals. As I deconstructed the data, it was difficult at times to classify comments into the individual Cs because many times, the boundaries between them were blurred and comments could fall into multiple categories.

The themes that were recurrent in the post-secondary interviews were the influence of the Your Life and Community leadership program in pursuing higher education, major and career choices, continued service, the self-perpetuating nature of the program from one generation to the next, and the importance of self-reflection. In addition, as the teens left high school and home, many of them gained an appreciation for the comfort of their lives relative to those with whom they got to know during service-related activities. Their perspectives and values appeared to shift from having more of a focus on themselves to thinking more about others and their situations.

The influence of Tim and other adult leaders was evident throughout the interviews, and the leadership skills that the participants had developed in high school were utilized in higher education to sustain their involvement in service, and to get others involved as well. It was clear that adult leadership was highly valued by the participants, but there seemed to be less of a

reliance on the adults and more of an emphasis on becoming mentors themselves; the participants expressed that their adult role models had enabled them to become better leaders. What surfaced was that the leadership program had formed a foundation for the participants as they continued on with their lives after graduating from high school.

It appeared as though at the point in their lives that the second interview took place, right after completion of higher education when they had just begun new jobs, the participants were channeling their passions into taking care of themselves, their families, and friends. The desire to engage in community service was embedded and the plan was to serve their communities, but many participants were having difficulty finding the time. There were a few participants who were struggling with not putting others first, and some were actively engaged in their communities but were in a transitional stage between completion of higher education and “real life.”

In terms of the presence of the “Cs” during the final interview, after completion of higher education, competence and character seemed to be more present as young adults, whereas confidence, connection, and caring/compassion appeared to be weaker than during post-secondary education and high school. It makes sense that character would not be as strongly identified by participants early on because they might not understand its meaning as teens; it is also logical that competence would develop with time and experience. It seemed that once structured support was withdrawn, such as the support that was provided in high school and higher education, confidence and connection dropped slightly in prevalence, and the participants’ emphasis on caring and compassion became their families and friends. However, it is also likely that given more time, these Cs would have become more predominant.

Perceived levels of contribution were lower after post-secondary education than during it, but higher than in high school. It is presumed that contribution is an outcome of the other Five Cs, so it is reasonable that this quality would come later for the participants. The fact that it was more present during higher education than afterwards may, again, be a result of the lack of structured support once participants completed post-secondary education, and due to the chaos that ensued once they started their new jobs. Participants expressed a desire to contribute to their own lives, their families, and friends, and an intrinsic desire to contribute to their communities once they were more settled.

## Discussion

This final chapter reviews how participation in a high school leadership program was perceived to contribute to post-secondary opportunities and service by youth and young adults who were traditionally-marginalized. I begin by discussing how my study contributes to the larger bodies of research on traditionally-marginalized youth, developmental systems theory, and positive youth development (PYD) leadership programs. I then shift the focus to how my findings relate to elements of my conceptual framework. Finally, I highlight areas for further research, and conclude with practical implications of this study.

### Research Context

This study contributes to the larger bodies of research on traditionally-marginalized youth, developmental systems theory, and positive youth development leadership programs by merging these bodies together in an investigation that follows 11 traditionally-marginalized youth and records their perceptions as they participate in a PYD high school leadership program and move on to, and complete, higher education.

As I discussed in my literature review in Chapter 2, studies have shown that traditionally-marginalized youth are at risk of being less engaged in school and having higher drop-out rates than the national average, leading them to participate in unsafe behaviors and less likely to contribute to society (Dishion et al., 1999). Developmental systems theory shifts the emphasis from prevention of risky behaviors to the promotion of healthy behaviors (Lerner, 1992). This “positive youth development” can be depicted through the “Five C’s” of competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring/compassion (Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2000). Research has indicated that when youth manifest these Five Cs over time, a Sixth C of contribution is more likely to emerge later in life (Lerner et al., 2011). Lerner, von Eye, Lerner,

Lewin-Bizan, and Bowers (2010) describe this Five C developmental journey as “a trajectory toward idealized adulthood,” and the Sixth C of Contribution is defined as “integrated and mutually-reinforcing contributions to self, family, community, and institutions of civil society.”

Research suggests that leadership programs can be successful in developing the Five Cs when they incorporate the “Big Three” features of positive and sustained adult-youth relationships, skill-building activities, and opportunities to use these skills in service activities (Lerner, 2004). The majority of studies on PYD leadership programs have involved elective programs such as 4-H (Lerner, 2005). The 4-H study that features the Five C framework follows youth in 5<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades, and the sample of participants is not nationally-representative. My study expands research on PYD leadership programs, applying the Five C concept to traditionally-marginalized youth who participate in a school-based leadership program, and records their insights from high school into young adulthood.

The school-based Your Life and Community PYD leadership program I investigated fulfills the aforementioned Big Three components of PYD leadership programs, with the provision of on-site adult role models, supportive peers, and a safe, caring, and stimulating environment (Greenberg et al., 2003). This program incorporates curricula *about* leadership and opportunities to then *practice* leadership (Putnam, 2001). In addition to offering a class that emphasizes life skill-building themes, The Your Life and Community leadership program facilitates reflection (Laken & Mahoney, 2006). Leadership was practiced through cross-age tutoring - a well-proven means of providing service that benefits older and younger youth, as well as teachers, by boosting self-esteem in older youth, providing role models for younger youth, and granting teachers an opportunity to have someone in the classroom with whom their students can identify (Gaustad, 1993; Thorpe & Wood, 2000).

I discovered that traditionally-marginalized youth with leadership potential perceived immense benefits from the Your Life and Community PYD leadership program and displayed growth in the Five Cs from high school into young adulthood, developed from followers into leaders, and went on to post-secondary education and continued service (the Sixth C).

### **Connecting Findings to the Conceptual Framework**

Developmental systems theory (Ford & Lerner, 192) served as a lens to inform my research; I used the Five C conceptual framework to operationalize the positive youth development that stems from this theory. Employing the Five C framework to code for competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring/compassion proved to be an effective means of substantiating PYD.

Two themes have consistently emerged in developmental systems theory research (Lerner, Lerner, von Eye, Bowers, & Lewin-Bizan, 2011). The first premise is that there is a combined role of individual (internal) assets and ecological (external) assets that facilitate positive youth development and eventually, engaged citizenship. I found that, along with support from the Your Life and Community leadership program, most participants in my study had family support (ecological assets). Only two participants came from challenging situations. Zach had an abusive father but supportive mother and sister, and Nigel's parents did not speak English but were emotionally supportive. These contextual characteristics, combined with the participants' personal characteristics (the Five Cs), helped facilitate PYD.

The second claim is that individual and ecological assets in adolescence can dictate longitudinal manifestations of PYD and societal contributions. I found that the participants in my study had personal characteristics of caring and compassion before they started the Your Life and Community leadership program, but the program helped cultivate and develop these

qualities. Combined with adult-youth and peer connections, and gaining competence in leadership skills through opportunities to practice them, these qualities led to increased confidence, which resulted in continued engagement in contribution and service. Whereas competence and character continued to grow after higher education, confidence, connection, and caring/compassion decreased slightly once the participants' support structures were withdrawn.

Although the Sixth C of contribution was not as strongly represented through community service when participants became young adults, they did appear to be focused on taking care of themselves, their families, and friends, which falls under the Lerner, von Eye, Lerner, Lewin-Bizan, and Bowers' (2010) definition of the Sixth C. In addition, all but one participant said they chose service-related occupations as a result of the Your Life and Community leadership program, and all participants conveyed aspirations to serve their communities once they were more established in their jobs.

In summary, by recording participant reflections and perceptions through high school, higher education, and into young adulthood, I was able to observe individual assets through the Five Cs and ecological assets through comments about family and the Your Life and Community leadership program, transform into longitudinal manifestations of PYD and contributions in young adulthood.

### **Implications for Future Research**

While my findings from this longitudinal qualitative research study suggest that a positive youth development leadership program that is offered in schools and involves cross-age tutoring can help develop the Five Cs in traditionally-marginalized youth and lead to the Sixth C of contribution in young adulthood, more research is needed to better understand these findings.

First, although the Five C model posits that in order to develop into healthy adults, adolescents require both individual and ecological assets, the “Cs” only represent individual characteristics, making it difficult to code for the specific contexts in which the individuals are situated. Since it is these individual-contextual relations that place youth on thriving trajectories across adolescence and into adulthood, it would be useful to add “Cs” to the model that represent ecological assets.

Participants in my study revealed that as a result of the Your Life and Community leadership program, they pursued post-secondary education, chose service-related careers, contributed to themselves, families, and friends, and aspired to serve their communities; however, my last interview took place right as they were beginning their young adulthood lives. Conducting one more interview when participants were settled into their new lives to determine their levels of community contribution would help confirm full development of the Sixth C.

While reading the journals and conducting the semi-structured interviews allowed me to capture participant views and perceptions, future research could benefit from gathering data from outside parties such as family members, peers, teachers, and adult leaders. In addition, more consistency between questions asked in each of the data sets would grant responses that could be more easily coded.

Finally, for this study, I selected participants who had remained in contact with the leadership program director and therefore cannot be generalized to program graduates who had not stayed connected, nor can it be assumed that all program directors would be as effective as Tim. The Life and Community program exercised service through cross-age tutoring; it would be interesting to study the impact of other service activities. In addition, participants were referred or self-referred into the Your Life and Community leadership program, implying that they likely

had leadership potential already (individual assets); future research could remove these selection biases. Participants also came from predominantly supportive families; it would also be noteworthy to see how the program could benefit participants with different ecological assets.

### **Implications for Practitioners**

By describing how a leadership program that emphasizes positive youth development and utilizes cross-age tutoring was perceived by traditionally-marginalized youth and young adults, my research shed light on ways that schools can help both older and younger traditionally-marginalized youth succeed in terms of pursuit of post-secondary education and continued service. This investigation followed youth with leadership potential and recorded their perceptions as they matriculated through the Your Life and Community high school leadership program and developed into community resources through higher education, career choices, service, and leadership.

My research re-affirms the potential of cross-age tutoring (CAT) to benefit older youth, younger youth, and teachers, and CAT could be readily available through school, to which all youth have access (Thorpe and Wood, 2000). The developmental skills gained from CAT have been shown to empower youth to feel more connected to the future and to think about their potential roles in society (Grossman & Rhodes, 202). Given that CAT is relatively easy to implement and has a history of success, schools should consider adopting cross-age tutoring and mentoring programs, especially for traditionally-marginalized youth. Although CAT can work with any youth, it appears especially promising for traditionally-marginalized youth because it can incentivize both older and younger youth to learn, building self-esteem in the teens while giving the children role models from similar backgrounds; this win/win situation inevitably assists teachers as well.

Implementing positive youth development leadership programs and cross-age tutoring does not come without challenges. At a district level, a system-wide culture where PYD is valued and supported is critical. School districts may need to carve out time for reform; institute accountability measures, programming, and professional development; and infiltrate a culture of acceptance and support by all stakeholders, including educators, families, researchers, and policy-makers (Greenberg et al., 2003). At a school level, there are challenges regarding transportation between the older and younger youths' schools, and coordination of schedules between the two groups of teachers and students.

Another set of practices that had been previously studied and proven to be impactful in youth development were reflection, journaling, and discussion (Martinek and Schilling, 2003; Grothaus, 2004; Lakin & Mahoney, 2006; Connor & Strobel, 2007; Billig & Weah, 2008; Billig, 2010). Reflection was a critical part of the Your Life and Community leadership program and facilitated self-awareness and understanding throughout the development process.

## **Conclusion**

In this dissertation, I attempted to determine how participation in a high school positive youth development leadership program was perceived to contribute to post-secondary opportunities and service by youth and young adults who were traditionally-marginalized. What I learned through these participants' perspectives and experiences was that traditionally-marginalized youth who have leadership potential can benefit immensely from a leadership program that facilitates adult-youth relationships, involves activities that build leadership skills, and grants opportunities to then use these skills. The youth I observed from high school into young adulthood developed from followers into leaders, and proceeded on to post-secondary education and continued service. These two outcomes are what I defined as "success" based on

research that has shown that traditionally-marginalized youth can be less engaged in school and have higher drop-out rates than the national average, leading them to participate in risky behaviors and less likely to contribute to society.

Although the participants in this study fell under my definition of traditionally-marginalized because they were of color and/or low SES, they encompassed individual and ecological assets that others in this group may not possess. In addition, their ties to the Your Life and World leadership program leader were a strong influence throughout their development; it cannot be assumed that other program leaders would have the same impact.

In this study, I ascertained that one way to facilitate service is through cross-age tutoring and mentoring. This means of service is a long-lost practice that touts advantages for teens, children, and teachers, and is readily available through school, to which all youth have access.

Using the Five C framework to code for competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring/compassion proved to be an effective means of substantiating positive youth development but did not account for the importance of the context in which the participants were situated. The resultant Sixth C of contribution was not as strongly represented as expected when participants became young adults immediately after higher education; they were contributing to themselves, family, and friends, but less so to their communities. However, participants relayed that they chose service-related occupations as a result of the Your Life and Community leadership program, and conveyed aspirations to serve their communities once they were more established in their new jobs and young adulthood lives.

In conclusion, the experiences of the traditionally-marginalized youth in this study reflected positive youth development as they participated in the Your Life and Community high school leadership program, proceeded on to higher education, and pursued further service.

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## Appendix A

### Semi-structured Interview Protocol for High School Program Graduates

1. When did you graduate from the World of Change program? Have you graduated from high school?
2. If you are a high school graduate, what have you been doing since graduation?
3. If you are employed, what do you do? Did this program influence your choice of jobs? If so, how?
4. If you are still in high school, have you been engaged in activities outside of school since completing the World of Change program? If so, what?
5. Did this program impact you? If so, how?
6. Did you learn anything about yourself from this program? If so, what?
7. Did you learn anything about the younger youth you tutored? If so, what?
8. Did you learn anything about your community? If so, what?
9. Do you feel you can make a difference in your life? Others' lives? Your community? If so, how?
10. Are you currently involved in community service? If so, in what capacity?
11. Have you pursued leadership skills and opportunities since graduating from this program? If so, please describe.
12. Do you still engage in self-reflection? If so, how?
13. What were the most valuable components of this program?
14. Were you involved in this program as an elementary or middle-school student who received tutoring or mentoring? If so, did you desire to be involved in this program once

you got to high school? Did you look up to the high school youth with whom you worked as role models?

## Appendix B

### Semi-structured Interview Protocol for Post-secondary Education Graduates

#### Competence

1. Academic: Please describe your academic trajectory since high school.
2. Social: Please describe your social circle-characteristics of the people you spend time with, activities in which you engage with them, how you feel when you are with them.”
3. Vocational: If you are in school, in what vocation are you interested? If you are out of school, what is your vocation? For both, please describe your choice.

#### Confidence

4. Positive Self-identity: Describe what you like about yourself and how you feel about yourself.
5. Goals, vision, and hope for the future: What are your goals and vision for your future?

#### Connection

6. Neighborhoods and Community: “Describe your connection to your neighborhood and community, if any.”
7. Family: Describe your role in and your connection to your family, if any.
8. Peers: Describe your connections to your peers.

#### Character

9. Positive Values: What would you describe as your personal values?
10. Integrity: How do you think people would describe you?
11. Moral Commitment: What do you perceive as your responsibility for making the world a better place, if any?

#### Caring/Compassion

12. Compassion: What do you care for, if anything?

#### Contribution

13. Self: How do you feel you take care of yourself?

14. Family: What do you feel you contribute to your family, if anything?

15. Community: What do you feel you contribute to your community, if anything?

16. Civil Society Institutions: What do you feel you contribute to institutions of civil society, such as schools, if anything? If you do not currently contribute, do you have aspirations of doing so in the future? If so, what do you envision?