PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY PLANNING:
YOUTH AND THEIR ALLIES DEVELOP HEALTHIER PRACTICES

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS
(Planning)
in
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(School of Community and Regional Planning,
Stream: Community Development Planning)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April 2001

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ABSTRACT

In the context of community development planning, this paper discusses youth activism around issues of social/environmental justice and population health. Through social science research methodologies and qualitative analytical approaches, including personal interviews, focus groups and participant observation, the study leads to findings related to (1) the various ways that youth organizations are contributing to healthy community development, (2) the enabling factors that facilitate this process and (3) the innovative strategies that youth and their allies can provide to community organizing and the theory and practice of participatory planning. Key theorists from the literature, namely Paulo Freire, John Friedmann and John Forester, orient the study's ideological foundation in critical theory. Recent models of social capital theory inform the development of a new framework for analysis of the findings, based on social capital. A data analysis within this model reveals the valuable techniques of social organization that youth and their allies are developing in their efforts to advance critical education and social change. These techniques are the practical organizational dynamics of an emerging civic culture that emphasizes the values of inclusion, respect, equity and solidarity. The thesis concludes with suggestions of its broader implications for health, for planning theory and practice and for the conceptualization and treatment of work in our lives.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................................ ii

TABLE OF CONTENTS ......................................................................................................................... iii

LIST OF TABLES ..................................................................................................................................... vi

LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................................. vii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ......................................................................................................................... viii

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 1
  1. Why Youth in Planning? ..................................................................................................................... 1
  2. The Disenfranchisement of Youth ...................................................................................................... 2
  3. Organization of the Paper .................................................................................................................. 5

CHAPTER II: RESEARCH PROCESS & METHODS .................................................................................. 6
  1. Researcher As Advocate .................................................................................................................... 9
  2. Research Questions, Objectives and Contribution ......................................................................... 9
     2.1 Contribution Statement ................................................................................................................. 11
  3. Research Scope and Methods ........................................................................................................... 12
     3.1 Scope ........................................................................................................................................ 12
     3.2 Methods ................................................................................................................................... 12
  4. Limitations of the Research .............................................................................................................. 17

CHAPTER III: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK & LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................. 19
  1. Youth Participation: End and Means ................................................................................................. 20
     1.1 Participation and Healthy Youth Development ........................................................................... 20
     1.2 Key Principles ............................................................................................................................. 21
     1.3 Community Youth Development ............................................................................................... 22
  2. Critical Theory in Praxis .................................................................................................................... 23
     2.1 Dialogical versus Antidialogical Theory ..................................................................................... 24
     2.2 Co-Intentional Education, Dialogue for Conscientization ....................................................... 25
     2.3 Youth and Critical Theory .......................................................................................................... 26
  3. Progressive Planning Theory ............................................................................................................. 27
     3.1 Radical Practice for a Good Society ............................................................................................. 28
     3.2 Critical Theory and “Planning in the Face of Power” .................................................................. 28
     3.3 Citizenship and Civil Society ....................................................................................................... 29
     3.4 Organizations as Instrumental and Sociopolitical Units ............................................................ 30
  4. Social Capital Theory ........................................................................................................................ 31
     4.1 Elements of Social Capital .......................................................................................................... 33
     4.2 Benefits of Social Capital ............................................................................................................ 34

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS - YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS FOR HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES .................. 36
  1. Child Poverty .................................................................................................................................... 37
  2. Culture and the Arts .......................................................................................................................... 38
  3. Employment .................................................................................................................................... 39
  4. Environment ..................................................................................................................................... 39
  5. First Nations Youth ........................................................................................................................... 40
  6. Globalization .................................................................................................................................... 41
  7. Housing and Neighbourhood Improvement ....................................................................................... 42
  8. International Children’s Rights ......................................................................................................... 43
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>International Human Rights Violations</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Leadership and Facilitation Skills Education</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Media and Technology</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Sexuality and Sexual Health</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Street-Involved Youth</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Substance Use and Abuse</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Youth In Care</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Youth With Chronic Illness/Disability</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Chapter V: Findings - Enabling Youth Activism</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Political Context</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Enablers</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Skills-Oriented Learning</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Youth Ownership</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Shared Responsibility</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Safe Space</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Adult Allies</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Financial Support</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Sincere Inclusion</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Common Languages</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Accessible Forums for Dialogue</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>Political Acceptance</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>Willingness to Confront Controversial Issues and Take Risks</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>Valuing the Process (as much as or more than the Product)</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>Considering Appropriate Representation</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>Consensus and Accountability</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>Experience in Planning and Organizing</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>Public Education</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Integrating Enablers</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Assignment of Rights and Duties to Actors</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>The Nature of Arenas for Interaction</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>The Rules of Interaction</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>The Role of Actors Within Interactions</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>The Presentation &amp; Self-Presentation of Actors and the Interaction Process</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>The Handling of Conflicts and Values</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>The Language of Interaction</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>The Building of Agreement, Compromises and Trade-Offs</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>The Sharing of Information and Resources</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Social Organization and Civic Culture – Interdependent Domains</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Youth and Social Capital in the Literature</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Re-Conceptualizing Theory</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>The Theory in Practice</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Assignment of Rights and Duties to Actors</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>The Nature of Arenas for Interaction</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>The Rules of Interaction</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>The Role of Actors Within Interactions</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>The Presentation &amp; Self-Presentation of Actors and the Interaction Process</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>The Handling of Conflicts and Values</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>The Language of Interaction</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>The Building of Agreement, Compromises and Trade-Offs</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>The Sharing of Information and Resources</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Social Organization and Civic Culture – Interdependent Domains</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Youth and Social Capital in the Literature</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Re-Conceptualizing Theory</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>The Theory in Practice</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Assignment of Rights and Duties to Actors</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>The Nature of Arenas for Interaction</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>The Rules of Interaction</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>The Role of Actors Within Interactions</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>The Presentation &amp; Self-Presentation of Actors and the Interaction Process</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>The Handling of Conflicts and Values</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>The Language of Interaction</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>The Building of Agreement, Compromises and Trade-Offs</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>The Sharing of Information and Resources</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Social Organization and Civic Culture – Interdependent Domains</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Youth and Social Capital in the Literature</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Re-Conceptualizing Theory</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>The Theory in Practice</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Assignment of Rights and Duties to Actors</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>The Nature of Arenas for Interaction</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>The Rules of Interaction</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>The Role of Actors Within Interactions</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>The Presentation &amp; Self-Presentation of Actors and the Interaction Process</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>The Handling of Conflicts and Values</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>The Language of Interaction</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.11</td>
<td>The Building of Agreement, Compromises and Trade-Offs</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>The Sharing of Information and Resources</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS ......................................................... 13
TABLE 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ............................................................... 15
TABLE 3: COMPLEMENTARY CATEGORIES OF SOCIAL CAPITAL ................ 33
TABLE 4: MEASURES OF SOCIAL CAPITAL ................................................ 34
TABLE 5: VANCOUVER CIVIC YOUTH STRATEGY OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES .... 56
LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR ENABLING YOUTH ACTIVISM ................. 55
FIGURE 2: CIVIC YOUTH STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION ................................. 56
FIGURE 3: DIMENSIONS AND DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL ....................... 76
FIGURE 4: MEASURES OF (STRUCTURAL) SOCIAL CAPITAL .............................. 78
FIGURE 5: EXAMPLES OF (STRUCTURAL) SOCIAL CAPITAL
          IN YOUTH COMMUNITY ORGANIZING ........................................... 80
Acknowledgements

To the youth and adults whose voices are heard here... for sharing your talents, convictions and hopes with me.

To the students and faculty at the School of Community and Regional Planning... for igniting the passion that dances in my intellect.

To my parents, Anne and Brian Ross, and to my sisters Alison & Stephanie and my brothers Paul & Adam... for loving and supporting me, no matter what.

And...

to the Youthfulness

in Us All.
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The spontaneous joy... the idealization not only of each other but of the whole earth which they regard but as a theater for their noble exploits, the unworldly ambitions, the romantic hopes, the make-believe world in which they live, if properly utilized, what might they not do to make our sordid cities more beautiful, more companionable?
~ Jane Addams (1909), The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets

Children and youth growing up on Planet Earth today face some of the most formidable challenges to health and well being of any generation since the dawn of humanity. Violence in the cities, massive disparities of income between rich and poor, urban environments that are cold and unwelcoming, a highly competitive job market, rapid destruction of biological diversity, threats to food security, and countless other realities unfold simultaneously in this critical epoch of human existence. Fostering a sense of hope amid the overwhelming task of seeking solutions to these complex health issues will only be feasible within entirely new and radical solutions adopted locally, regionally and globally. An essential component of these new solutions is citizen participation, because the involvement of a diverse spectrum of interest groups will be needed to consolidate pioneering and creative problem solving. In garnering the support and engagement of community stakeholders in a participatory manner, we cannot afford to disenfranchise youth, our newest leadership for the challenges ahead. This thesis aims to discuss the wisdom that our younger citizens have to offer in the process of community building and the implications of their wisdom for critical theory, social capital theory, and the practice of community development planning.

1. Why Youth in Planning?

Young people are imaginative, often idealistic, and they have the ability to contribute valuable insight to questions related to community development. Many studies have shown (Breithart 1995, Horelli 1997, Hart 1997, Salvadori 1997) that youth, and even young children, are as capable as adults of logically expressing what they need to feel comfortable, safe and engaged in their communities. Not involving their talents and creative energies in developing new solutions to ever-deepening community problems is as counterproductive as it is unfortunate. On the other hand, a "growing recognition that young people are a key piston in the twin engines of civic
engagement and community development” is expanding in the public perception (Karen Pittman, International Youth Foundation).

Youth participation in planning and community development is about a universal human entitlement to rights of citizenship. Citizenship can no longer be based on an age classification, where certain legal and political rights are awarded to a person on the eighteenth, nineteenth or twenty-first birthday. Recent authors have suggested that citizenship needs to be reconceptualized as ‘belonging’ (Higgins 1999). This belonging encompasses social and economic rights that all people share, allowing us to effectively participate as active members of the community. Furthermore, citizenship is a process of learning and identity formation that evolves within each individual over time. This process needs to begin at a very young age; we can then learn and practice early how to engage in responsible action that contributes positively to our personal and community environments.

The participation of youth, integrated with that of adults, is about valuing the assets that each of us can extend at every stage of Life. It involves an acceptance of the vast diversity of life experiences and ways of communicating that we bring to our interactions with others. It is good practice in the kind of society we wish to create, where everyone feels welcomed, included and empowered. The more that we can foster this worldview in our youngest generations, the more that they can grow into adults who continue working collectively for a better world. In order to avert the extermination of ourselves and all other beings on this planet, we are going to need entire generations of people working in solidarity to transform everything from the way nations are governed to the way we live with each other, in our homes and neighbourhoods, day to day.

Unfortunately, these changes will unlikely occur if most people remain oblivious about what the alternatives are in our search for “the good life” (Friedmann 2000). The evidence presented in this paper will demonstrate that youth organizations can be a good place to turn for new concepts about what the good life might look like. Some intriguing alternatives are being deliberated in the minds, hearts and actions of many young people today, which they eagerly share with us when we respect them enough to ask. In short, youth participation in planning and community development is a viable opportunity to create a healthy and sustainable world.

2. The Disenfranchisement of Youth

One of the most fascinating books that has influenced my understanding of youth in society from a systemic perspective — their marginalization in a world driven by capital interests and the powers of the elite — is James Côté and Anton Allahar’s Generation on Hold: Coming of Age in
the Late Twentieth Century (1994). These authors assert that youth as a life stage has become a part of social scientific terminology only since the entrenchment of the advanced industrial economy starting in the 1950's. The transition from childhood to adulthood is increasingly prolonged, a phenomenon that can clearly not be attributed to sudden evolutionary changes in the pace of young people's biological or intellectual development. This book adopts a political economy view of youth, an analysis revealing the structural forces that preclude the young person's capacity to live fully and freely in the public realm:

Young people are seen [in the political economy view] as constituting a class without power, which is disenfranchised economically, politically, and socially. However, in order to mask this disenfranchisement and to ensure that young people do not mobilize as a reaction against their exploitation, it has been necessary for the state to impose a long period of indoctrination into acquiescence and acceptance of existing power structures as normal, natural, good and benign. The state does this in capitalist societies because it directly serves the interest of capital and those who control it. This indoctrination is accomplished mainly through the education system, but other institutions such as the media also enter into complicity with it... these arrangements engender an alienation, especially from the essence of oneself as a self-determining, creative individual (25).

The 'indoctrination' process and the prolonged coming of age are perpetuated by recent trends in education and labour force participation. The authors offer statistical analyses of the decline in wages and full-time employment for the fifteen to twenty-four demographic over the last decades. They also deconstruct the phenomenon of “credentialism”, which is based on the assumption that “the best way to prepare oneself for a job is through formal education training” (35). Young people today are facing “education inflation”; the number of credentials required to secure a good job is continually increasing. Essentially, to attain the qualifications now demanded for entry level work positions equal to those our parents landed, we are now required to remain in school far longer than they did. The ever more elusive opportunities presented to youth in the labour force – combined with the expectation of longer periods of academic training – account for prolonged economic dependency, reduced political rights and, consequently, extension of the age at which we are considered full-fledged adults. In fact, according to certain well-established legal definitions (i.e. of the World Health Organization, the Canadian Federal Government), I am now a 'youth' until I turn 30!

Côté and Allahar further argue that the process of disenfranchising youth by denying them power, rights and legitimacy has been coupled with their necessary exploitation in the economic system. Young people constitute both a source of cheap labor and a massive consumer market. The research of Canadian journalist, speaker and author of NO LOGO (2000), Naomi Klein, supports Côté and Allahar's arguments. In a recent speaking engagement at The University of British Columbia (November 2000), Klein poignantly traced the exploitation of young people in
the globalizing economy. At the behest of multinational corporations such as Nike, Gap and Coca-Cola, youth are forced to participate in an intentionally designed “production-marketing-consumption cycle”. Her talk synthesized the range of manipulated roles that youth play in the cycle. They are the producers of marketed goods in the export-processing zone sweatshops of the Phillipines, Guatemala, Thailand and countless other countries; they are the source of inspiration for “brand identities” and they are the market that imbibes them. And, they are the “brand ambassadors”, the underpaid vendors of branded products at the point of sale. Young people’s consumption patterns in Western society make the strategizing of the corporate branding industry worthwhile, since the underlying motives are not generally understood by the youth ‘subjects’ (...objects?). This industry creates a frantic demand for its products by appropriating the “powerful youthful desire to belong, to be part of a tribe, to fit in”. Klein attributes the new rise of youth activism to young people’s collective refusal to be indoctrinated and to their mutual will to expose the truth of their exploitation:

Perhaps, because we, as a society, have failed to protect our kids, they are learning, increasingly, to protect themselves, to carve out some unbranded spaces.

Of course, in the pervasive societal ideology, “youth activism” and “youth deviance” are fine lines. The media plays a major role in perpetuating a view of the young as at once vulnerable and dangerous. We often hear about the crimes and injustices committed by youth (creating a moral panic amongst the masses), and the bandaid solutions to these problems include the legalization of more “secure care” and more severe penalties for criminal activity. Yet rarely do we question the systemic causes underpinning the occurrence of youth crime. Through the lens of the political economy and the reality of increasing youth gang violence as an example, Côte and Allahar address this issue:

The dominant ideologies of racism and individualism serve to divide working-class youth so that they become blind to their shared interests as a group and fail to realize that they are being oppressed. At the same time, they embrace the values of their oppressors, such as competition and consumerism. As a result, capitalist enterprises are able to sell more Hip-Hop and designer clothes, jewelry, running shoes, haircuts, movies and videos, compact discs, alcohol, and tobacco, each product being tailored to a different age or ethnic group of the youth population (119).

When society’s economic system deliberately co-opts the young person’s sense of personal power and projects it onto material things, is it any small wonder that youth are driven to “lash out”? If adults were to critically view the reality of corporate exploitation in which today’s youth are submersed, they might gain a more responsible and compassionate perspective on rising youth crime.
Through his analysis of four youth movements in Germany, Israel, Britain and the former Soviet Union, Reuven Kahane (1997) argues that the perception of “postmodern Western youth behaviour” as deviant and meaningless is unjustified. In actuality, what this behaviour represents is young people’s search to find meanings and modes of self-expression that make sense in a rapidly changing and complex world. Kahane’s analysis reveals a code of informality underlying the new youth cultures. This code is found in patterns of interaction that express authentic symbols adopted by young people as they construct their identities and a place for themselves in the world. Notions of freedom, spontaneity, adventurism, and eclecticism, then, attain symbolic essence as young people integrate them into their code of informality. Recognizing that this ‘code’ exists will be useful in the analysis of youth organizations presented in this paper, and it can help in transcending the widely accepted stereotype of youth as a life stage characterized by irresponsibility, apathy and deviance.

3. Organization of the Paper

Chapter Two of this paper presents an overview of the methodologies I chose to gather the data for the thesis, as well as my personal biases and the overall limitations of the work. Chapter Three reviews the literature, first on youth participation and second on planning theory and critical theory as articulated by John Friedmann, John Forester and Paulo Freire. The relevance of these theories to youth in community development is discussed. The third focus of the chapter is social capital theory, with reference to the literature that most suitably embodies the interpretation of the theory as I apply it to my analysis of youth organizations. Chapter Four is an inventory of youth organizations. Some of the listed initiatives were surveyed as I came into contact with members of these organizations, and most of the others I learned of through brochures and internet searches. Chapter Five focuses on the key ‘enablers’ of meaningful youth participation. The enablers are outlined as a thematic presentation of the interview and focus group findings. Chapter Six constitutes the more interpretive part of the analysis. It elaborates on the ways in which youth organizations can inform social capital theory, an argument that is developed using data from the interviews and focus groups as well as through my participation in and observation of various youth-driven activities. Chapter Seven reveals the implications of the analysis for planning and community development, and it links these implications with the larger contexts of citizenship and health. The thesis concludes with some reflections on the significance of this topic when viewed through the lens of work. How do we define meaningful work and healthy working relationships in our lives?
I began my inquiry into the arena of youth participation two years ago. Since that time, my thinking about the subject and the approaches I have taken in my thesis research have evolved profoundly. For me, the sense that I needed to focus on youth came from the realization that in all of the Planning courses I was taking I rarely heard any mention of children and youth. The welfare of young people was not addressed in the planning and community development literature I was exposed to, except in the context of family housing and social service provision for single or low-income mothers. It seemed to me that the needs and well being of children and youth should be priority concerns in assessing the value of decisions affecting community and regional development. As a keynote speaker for the Canadian Association of Planning Students 2000 Conference, Dean of UBC Agricultural Sciences Moura Quayle explicitly articulated my own concern for young people: “With every planning decision that we make, we must ask ourselves – ‘How will this affect the children?’”.

In February 1999, I attended an evening forum held by the Planning Institute of BC: “Youth and Planning”. The major focus of this meeting was the skateboard parks that a number of the planners in the Lower Mainland, in partnership with highly organized groups of youth skateboarders, were instrumental in advocating for. I appreciated the participatory and collaborative approaches these planners took in working with the young people. One speaker made the notably poignant statement that “if you don’t have ways for kids to plug into the community, THEY WILL PULL OUT”!! It concerned me that the basic focus of this forum was skateboard parks, to the exclusion of other planning efforts involving young people, since youth that skateboard can hardly represent the diversity of youth interests that “Youth in Planning” might embody. However, the issue certainly exemplifies the growing commitment of community leaders to partner with young people in planning their own recreational spaces.

In March 1999, The Society for Children and Youth of BC held the first in a series of weekend workshops planned as part of its Child and Youth Friendly Communities initiative. The keynote speaker at the workshop was Roger Hart, an internationally-recognized geographer and child’s rights advocate who has written and spoken extensively about the implementation of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The language of Hart’s presentation
resonated with my intuitive sense about the importance of including not only adults in participatory models of development, but children as well. He asserted that children have the right to be "active agents in the construction of their own citizenship", and that it is the responsibility of the whole community to "improve channels through which children can articulate their own interests".

Shortly following this workshop, I began to network with some young activists and eventually became involved with Youth Driven, a coalition of youth representatives that acts as a networking and resource-sharing body for its member organizations. I have witnessed and participated in a number of initiatives undertaken by Youth Driven and its members, including the Youth Community Consultation at Evans Lake in February 2000, the second annual Youth Driven Youth Action conference in May 2000 at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre, and the drafting of a proposal to establish a central "HUB" through which Lower Mainland youth organizations can more effectively work as a collective activist youth community.

I have also experienced the dedication of many adult professionals (mainly in the social service sector) who believe that young people have the right to access transparent information and other community resources. An example of this was a forum held at Children's Hospital in May 2000, "Dispelling the Myths: Funding the Child, Youth and Family Sector". There were nine panelists at this event, including representatives from various government ministries, non-profit agencies and foundations. They offered the audience (of mainly young people) a long list of "tricks of the trade" that distinguish an outstanding grant proposal from a mediocre one. It is this kind of genuine response from adult leaders that enriches the youth community's capacity to organize. An important objective of this thesis is to address the role of the adult in creating and sustaining youth-adult partnerships in community-based initiatives.

A significant learning curve occurred for me during a month of travel in August-September 2000. I spent the first week of this adventure as a co-facilitator at the Students' Commission "Sharing Resources 2000" conference on child poverty, in Kemptville, Ontario. Assuming this role as part of a team of twelve adolescents, I learned more about my personal contribution to a group dynamic than I believe I ever have before. Collectively, the experiences of a number of the youth on my team represented most of the "at-risk" factors we associate with developmental delay, 'abnormal' behaviour, addiction and low self esteem. Although a mandate of youth voice was the underlying principle of the conference, I found that fostering this within my group as a whole was an incredible challenge, one that other facilitators certainly faced as well. At times, collective effort at the team level was only possible when I wielded my power to direct
specific individuals to cooperate with my personal vision of how we could effectively work together. I soon realized that some of these young people (a couple of them as young as fourteen) were not ready for the kind of participation that the conference was asking from them, and that it was okay. I experimented with a variety of group facilitation approaches. In the end, I believe the team was happy with what they got out of the conference. Using the resources available to them, they created a poster and produced a series of video clips depicting their perspectives on child poverty. The most important outcome for them was making friends and socializing with other teens, which in and of itself was an important learning experience.

Following the conference in Ontario, I went to Brazil to participate as a Canadian partner in a Community-Based Watershed Management project in Santo André, outside of Sao Paolo. The Project is a partnership between the UBC Centre for Human Settlements and the local government of the Santo André municipality, funded by the Canadian International Development Agency. Recently, the Youth Office of Santo André had joined with the Project, offering cultural and educational workshops to the youth in the pilot community. Although the short duration of my stay and my limited knowledge of the Portuguese language constrained my ability to comprehensively understand the youth component of the Project, I did gain some insight about the challenges that the Youth Office staff faced. The staff's 'interventions' took place with a group of young people who by our standards have very little. This tiny rural community is isolated from the amenities of the urban core. Young people who wish to continue their education beyond grade seven must take an extensive bus trip to a neighbouring town. Social, economic and educational opportunities are not readily available to the youth here. My experience in Brazil enriched my understanding of the connection between one's access to resources, sense of self worth and ability to participate in community life. For these Brazilian young people, youth participation would mean something much different than the conception we hold in North America.

"Youth participation", "youth engagement", and "youth voice" are buzzwords today. During the course of a thesis interview, a young woman expressed to me that she feels the attention paid to youth right now is in some ways "a consumerism thing and we're a fad because we're where the money is and...we're also sort of pawns in all these social issues and so that's being responded to by, by people like you, right?". Following this interview, I became disconcerted about the way I was approaching the question of youth participation as research, until I recognized the source of the discomfort and adapted my approach accordingly. One of the pitfalls we unintentionally fall into as planners, researchers and policy analysts is the objectification of the marginalized or disenfranchised groups we work for as advocates. Empowerment and tokenism
can be fine lines that we walk through our interventions on behalf of these groups. The pioneering critical educator and writer Paulo Freire, whose work will be discussed in Chapter Three, has stated that to do anything on behalf of others is equal to oppressing and silencing them.

1. Researcher As Advocate

The new direction in my own process occurred because I had been mislead to think of youth participation only as an end to be achieved through 'best practices’ established by benevolent, mainly adult community leaders and their institutions. My original research question was asking: “What are the facilitators and barriers of youth participation?” These questions are necessary and important, but they are only one side of the equation. Youth participation is also a means, where youth are Subjects who assume an active role in transforming their realities. And youth who are active participants in processes of community development and change have a great deal to teach all of society – peers and elders alike – about how to constructively work together for a better world.

It is necessary for me to state here that the thesis is in part a product of my personal biases, as a researcher who is also an advocate of citizen participation and, in particular, youth participation. I feel passionate about the subject and highly admire the work that I have seen emerging in the youth activist community. Its methodologies for organizing involve ways for people to feel inclusion and belonging in their environments, trust that their own unique gifts are needed for the work ahead, safety in being creative and idealistic, and love for the thought of making some small difference for the good of community life. In short, health is reconceptualized in this context from an exceedingly holistic perspective, which I also adopt in my own life and work. My shift in thinking over the past year, my realization that I am an advocate of my research topic, and my attempt to stand apart from my role as advocate so that I can be a thoughtful researcher have led to the structure of the thesis work as it is presented here. The following sections describe the individual components of this structure.

2. Research Questions, Objectives and Contribution

The research questions outlined in this section form a structure for analyzing (a) the content of the literature survey, interviews and focus groups that constitute the formal data gathered for the research, and (b) the observations and perceptions accumulated through my own participation in various activities over the course of the study.
1) **What are some of the ways in which youth organizations contribute to healthy community development?**

Chapter Four presents the findings related to this question. These findings establish that organized youth can be powerful agents of transformation and change in communities. The question is addressed by profiling a spectrum of youth organizations working in health issues of community concern, such as safety, culture, environment and education. My intention is to transcend the objectification of youth in research, demonstrating not *youth participation* as an end but, rather, how youth *are* participating as a means toward the ends of healthy community development and social transformation.

2) **As youth and their adult allies organize together in the community, what are some of the key *enablers* that, when in place, facilitate the inclusive and effective involvement of young people in the process?**

Chapter Five is a synthesis of the enabling factors of youth participation that emerged from responses to interview questions on the 'facilitators' and 'barriers' of youth participation. The ability to participate meaningfully and the feasibility of achieving desired goals are inextricably linked. Any factor that enhances young people's capacity for participation in community development also enhances the positive effects that their efforts can have in the community itself. Likewise, making way for the positive outcomes that can result from meaningful participation is impossible when insurmountable obstacles impede young people's ability to participate. This research explores the key *enablers* of constructive youth action in order to assist readers in being aware of some important factors to consider when organizing with youth.

3) **How are youth organizations creating and expanding social capital for community development?**

Chapter Six presents an analysis of the findings within a model grounded in social capital theory. The term *social capital* is being used increasingly in the social sciences to describe the more intangible factors that contribute to a community's healthy growth and development. It refers to the *relationships* between individuals and groups, the building of *trust* and *reciprocity* leading to collective action, and the *rules* and *norms* that govern strong communication networks. Social capital is highly suitable for characterizing the growing strength and solidarity of the youth movement. This strength and solidarity, in turn, increases the resourcefulness of this movement to affect meaningful change. The analysis will situate youth action within the social capital literature and illustrate how the strategic planning of youth organizations can make an unprecedented contribution to social capital theory.
4) What are the roles of the planner or community organizer in capacity building with youth for a healthier, more just and sustainable society?

Planners are appropriately situated to educate and raise awareness in the public arena by modeling a more inclusive planning practice. They also are in a unique place to foster intergenerational partnerships that can implement changes suitable to a wider spectrum of human development needs in communities. Youth-adult partnerships in community development planning are becoming more prevalent. These partnerships demonstrate that as young people apply their imaginations and experience in developing more creative solutions to community problems, so too adult community members learn novel approaches to doing collaborative work and benefit from mentoring youth in skill development. Analysis of the research data presented in Chapters Five and Six will reveal the implications of youth participation and youth-adult collaboration in the context of the formal planning process.

2.1 Contribution Statement

Through all of the changes and insights I gained in the process of developing this thesis, I realized that the fundamental contribution of this work to planning theory and practice would be the following:

To awaken community leaders, planners, and health professionals to the innovative forms of organizing being developed by youth organizations focusing on issues of healthy living and social, ecological and economic justice.

In approaching this contribution, the thesis process and analysis aims to fulfill a number of more specific objectives:

1) To highlight effective approaches that municipal planners, health planners and other community leaders (both youth and adults) can integrate into their strategies for community organizing and social capital development. My research seeks to identify ways in which people who wish to foster community health through collective action can effectively work together.

2) To alert readers to common challenges that youth and their adult allies face as they work together to increase the rights and powers that young people can exercise in their work and community life.

3) To synthesize, as a contribution to the community development literature and planning practice, useful knowledge and expertise demonstrated by the organized youth community. Many of the strategies that youth organizations are developing can enlighten, enrich and transform both planning theory and practice. Through my writing, I
propose to elicit an appreciation for the quality and merit of the pioneering work carried out by the youth that I have had the pleasure of coming into contact with through the course of my research.

3. Research Scope and Methods

The above stated questions serve as a framework for a comprehensive discussion of the research findings. It is hoped that the discussion will contribute relevant and useful knowledge to the field of planning. This section defines the scope of the research, the chosen methodologies for gathering the data, the limitations of these methods and those of the overall approach to the research.

3.1 Scope

As mentioned earlier, the life stage referred to as "youth" is being extended due to specific social and economic trends in our society. My purpose in gathering data was not to confine my sample to a strict age range. The youth participants in the majority of the interviews and focus groups were between sixteen and twenty-six, although a thirty-year old also participated in a youth focus group. The geographical boundary for the primary data collection was the Lower Mainland of BC (specifically the cities of Vancouver, Burnaby, and Richmond). However, the literature and internet components of the research draw in the experiences of youth initiatives from across British Columbia, Canada and worldwide.

3.2 Methods

In exploring the research questions, my analysis utilizes a number of well-tested social science research methodologies, which were approved by the University of British Columbia Ethics Review Board. These methodologies allowed for the collection of both primary and secondary data. The primary sources are personal interviews, focus groups and participant observation. Secondary sources include a review of relevant literature and internet sites.

1) Focus groups. The focus groups were conducted between June and November 2000. They involved between two and six youth and lasted from one hour to ninety minutes. The groups

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1 To protect the confidentiality of individuals and organizations that participated in interview or focus group sessions, their names will not be mentioned at any time during the documenting and discussion of these sessions.

2 Focus groups and interviews were conducted according to a general interview guide. Data from the focus groups also contributed to a related research project for The UBC Child and Family Project, with thesis committee members Dr. Penny Gurstein and Dr. Chris Lovato. I am grateful in this respect for financial support
were self-selected, and my ability to involve them in my research was dependent on time and availability. Each youth was paid a $20.00 honorarium for her or his involvement, and refreshments were provided. The sessions were tape recorded and later transcribed by a professional. Table 1 lists the specific questions that were asked during these sessions.

**TABLE 1: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

1) Please explain what your organization is all about, its mission and activities etc.
2) How does it function on a practical level? (What is the model for youth engagement that is applied day to day?)
3) What are some of the key elements of the organizational structure in place that work well? ("enablers")
4) What are the key aspects of your work that are problematic and that can be barriers to the achievement of the organization's goals?
5) Describe your ideal vision of how the organization would function if all of the barriers were constructively addressed.

The following list describes the four youth organizations that participated in focus groups:

- **Organization A – Community-Based Youth Health Advisory Committee**
  
  This group is one of seven "population health advisory committees" of a large regional health board. There are nine volunteer members on the youth health advisory, including four youth. The two youth participants we interviewed (a male and female, ages sixteen and nineteen, respectively) estimate that they volunteer twenty hours per month, although this fluctuates. The advisory collects the views of young people about health issues affecting them and advocates for the provision of more appropriate health services for this population. The committee has focused on issues such as mental health and racial discrimination. The mission of the advisory is threefold: "supporting the voices of children and youth being heard; working to ensure that health services to our population are accessible, and; working to ensure that children and youth are recognized as a priority in our health care system."

- **Organization B – Youth Support for Self Help Groups**
  
  This youth project is part of a larger Vancouver-based non-profit organization that provides support for the development of self-help groups in British Columbia. At the time we conducted the focus group (June 2000), four youth were in paid employment positions on the youth project; their work varied from full-time to part-time depending upon funding availability and each person's priorities. The focus

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from The UBC Child and Family Project, which allowed for the giving of honoraria to the focus group participants and the paying of a professional to transcribe the taped conversations.
group included three of these youth, one male and two females between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-five, whose involvement ranged from one to three years. The organization is funded by a variety of government, foundation and charitable bodies.

The mandate of the organization is to support the development of youth self-help groups and other initiatives for both youth and non-youth. Through facilitation-focused training workshops, the project works towards the objective of creating an open and constructive learning environment for youth. When we met them, the youth staff were pursuing core funding. This would allow them to become a recognized “program”, rather than a project with a fixed timeline.

**Organization C - Youth Public Art Group**

This organization is a community based public art initiative. The focus group was conducted with five youth in the organization, two males and three females between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-six, and length of time in the organization ranged from three months to two years. There were twenty-two people employed full-time in the organization when we met with the youth (June 2000), most of who are youth twenty-six or under. There is a “frightening list” of funders, including government (both federal and provincial) and private sources. The organization itself defines youth as thirty and under.

The goal of this organization is to explore different definitions of art and to focus specifically on youth involvement in public art. It has been stated that the overall mission is education. Education occurs on two levels, with members of the organization and with the public. Some of the specific activities include the creation of public art sites, community consultations to receive public input for the sites, poster campaigns, a sticker campaign, workshops, community mapping and outreach in high schools. A key aspect of the youth group’s activities is the inclusion of First Nations knowledge into aspects of the artwork.

**Organization D – Globalization Education Youth Group**

The fourth youth group we interviewed (November 2000) was formed through the efforts of eight young people who were active during the campaign against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) in 1998. Together they planned a conference on globalization, which later “rolled into” a permanent organization that was led by four paid staff members and fifteen volunteers at the time of interviewing. We conducted the focus group with one female and one male (both staff members, ages twenty-one and thirty, respectively).

This youth-driven organization educates other youth about issues of economic globalization through a series of six workshops offered to high schools and universities. The organization is gaining recognition at the provincial level, and in November 2000 two of the staff
members began an eight-month tour of British Columbia schools. Labour councils, unions and private sources fund the organization and its activities.

2) **Personal Interviews.** A total of nineteen interviews, five with youth activists and fourteen with "adult allies" of youth, informs the analysis. They were conducted between February and December of 2000 and lasted approximately one hour each. Eleven of the interviews were formally taped and transcribed. Eight occurred more informally, either in person or by phone, while I took notes. Table 2 outlines the questions that individuals were asked to address.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Please explain what your organization/initiative is all about, its mission and activities etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) How does it function on a practical level? (What is the model for youth engagement that is applied day to day?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) What are some of the key elements of the initiative or organization that work well? (&quot;enablers&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) What are the key elements that are problematic and that can be barriers to the achievement of your personal goals or the organization's goals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Describe your ideal vision of how you would work in this capacity if all of the barriers were constructively addressed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following is a list of the individuals who were interviewed:

**(Youth)**
- A young woman (nineteen-years old) who has been a volunteer member of the Civic Youth Strategy Core Committee (CYS), a staff member of the Youth Driven Youth Action coalition and has been responsible for developing many community-based initiatives.
- A young man (twenty-one-years old), also a member of the CYS Core Committee, heavily involved in Youth Week planning and has been responsible for developing many community-based initiatives.
- A young woman (sixteen-years old) who is partly responsible for developing the Meeting Our Needs program of the Vancouver Youth Voices coalition.
- A young man (twenty-years old), former member of the CYS, a founding member of a non-profit organization and active in many other community-based capacities.
- A young man (twenty-one-years old), former staff member at the McCreary Centre Society and heavily involved in implementing the Youth Health Program of the Children's and Women's Hospital of British Columbia.

**(Adults)**
- A social planner, City of Richmond
- A coordinator at Richmond Recreation Youth Services
- A coordinator at Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services, City of Burnaby
- Two social planners and a social planning analyst, City of Vancouver
Two former Child and Youth Advocates, City of Vancouver
Two community developers, Vancouver-Richmond Health Board
A community developer who worked many years with an organization for urban Native youth
A community developer/special projects coordinator for a provincial child and youth advocacy coalition of organizations
A program coordinator of a community-based organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning (LBGTQ) youth
A coordinator of a major youth environmental/social justice organization

Like the focus group participants, the individuals I interviewed were self-selected, and the youth were paid a $20.00 honorarium each. I believe that the justification for offering honoraria only to the young people was the most equitable, considering my budget. All of the adults I interviewed had gainful employment, while not all of the youth were in the same position. The adults included a variety of community leaders from Vancouver, Burnaby and Richmond: municipal planners, health planners, recreation coordinators and paid staff of non-profit organizations.

3) Participant Observation. Some of my conclusions in this thesis were developed as I participated in various youth conferences, forums and other activities. I have been attending meetings of the Youth Driven coalition fairly regularly for the past year. I co-facilitated at the Youth Community Consultation organized by Youth Driven and some of its member organizations in March 2000. I also facilitated a workshop at the May 2000 Youth Driven Youth Action conference, and the input from the youth who participated provided me with some useful insights. I have attended two weekend workshops on youth participation, hosted by The Society for Children and Youth of BC. I earlier mentioned my experiences in Ontario (Sharing Resources 2000 Conference) and Brazil (Community-Based Watershed Management Project). I documented my experiences for later analysis through observational notes that were written and recorded.

4) Literature Review. My review of the literature consists of planning articles, books, journals, government documents and world wide web sites. I conducted literature searches on-line using the University of British Columbia electronic journals website and the search engines Metacrawler and Northernlight. I chose keyword phrases such as “youth and participation” or “community development” and “youth organizations” to carry out the searches. The theoretical basis for this thesis is grounded primarily in the social capital literature and the works of three well-recognized authors, including a critical educator and two planning theorists: Paulo Freire, John Friedmann and John Forester, respectively.
5) **Internet Searches.** The www sources that I relied most heavily on were the sites of specific youth organizations, and the information I retrieved from a number of these sites is given in Chapter Four. The on-line search strategy was the same as above.

4. **Limitations of the Research**

While I chose these research methods for their utility in addressing the kinds of social issues considered in this paper, no research approaches are without their limitations. The intention of this section is to clearly articulate the biases that affect the depth and accuracy of my work.

Secondary sources of information, although essential for supplementing and validating the development of the thesis arguments, are inherently biased by the views of their authors. They account for a great deal of the 'evidence' presented in the thesis, yet this kind of evidence is often difficult to verify. An attempt at exploring secondary sources from a wide range of perspectives can, however, establish a comprehensive and balanced framework of analysis.

The primary weakness of individual and focus group interviews is that they cannot be generalized. In this case, the opinions of the people I interviewed certainly do not reflect those of the entire population, and they may not even reflect those of other individuals within the same organizations. My focus groups posed a particular problem in that I had hoped to solicit the experiences of the youth in the selected organizations, yet in at least two sessions not all of the youth were able to participate. Since I have analyzed the results of the focus groups as they were conducted, key individuals were unable contribute their perspectives about their organizations; the dynamic of the group responses would also have unfolded differently if everyone was present.

Further, subjectivity directly affects any interview process. The selection of the people to be interviewed, the choice of interview questions and the interpretation of the results are unavoidably biased because I was the interviewer, the writer, and the designer of this project. The interviewees also present themselves in a subjective way. Research is not undertaken in a vacuum or by a machine. All of our human intentions and perceptions will naturally be played out in any academic exercise. And, as I mentioned earlier, I recognize that my own biases as an advocate of youth participation will undoubtedly have affected the distancing of myself from the research process in my role as researcher.

What I recognize to be the greatest limitation of this thesis is that there are so many amazing, talented, inspiring, wise young people engaged in wonderful community work that did not have the opportunity to participate in my research. In Vancouver alone, the number of progressive and innovative youth organizations is phenomenal, and I wish I could have given all of
them the chance to share their experiences for the purposes of this study. Of course, given the limitations of time and space for a Masters thesis, I was only able to interact with a small percentage of the organized youth community in this process. So, if anyone from Dash to Dawn or YouthQuest or the Mid-Town Youth Action Circle or any other youth organization reads this paper and feels they had something to say about all this and got left out, please be aware that I'm sad I didn't have the chance to speak with you!

A final limitation of this paper is its design. The trade-off in writing a Masters thesis acceptable to the academic community is that my work is inaccessible to much of the youth population, the very Subjects of my research! The language is replete with incomprehensible words (like 'replete' and 'incomprehensible') and full of jargon terms like 'conceptual framework' and 'planning process'. The presentation is boring (it's not colourful or artistic or graphic). Mostly, it's just too long! In short, I have just committed the fundamental error of progressive planning practice (alliteration works here): I am 'advocating for' a civil society group (the term 'civil society' will be explained later), and because I am advocating for rather than with the group, its members end up being tokenized (again). I hope to have the opportunity to rectify (oops — I mean 'fix') this problem in the near future. I would like to reduce this big paper into a smaller one. It will be more concise, to the point. All jargon removed that doesn't have a footnote to go along with it. Colourful. Something you can read on the bus on your way home from school or work. Just a few words to make you think a little bit and maybe talk to a few folks about. Isn't that what a thesis is supposed to do, anyway?
CHAPTER III:
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK & LITERATURE REVIEW

When power becomes a dirty word, so that no one can name it or talk about it,
then those who seek it can operate without controls on their behaviour.
If we want to make the flow of power truly equal,
then we have to understand it.
~ Starhawk (1987), Truth or Dare
[quoted in J. N. Kuyek (1990), Fighting for Hope: Organizing to Realize Our Dreams]

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the ideological approaches to planning and community development that influence my thinking about the subject at hand. There are a number of theorists that engage me through their clearly articulated visions of power—its underpinning of the roles and dynamics that unfold between individuals and groups, and its mutability in response to chosen forms of communication. Those communication methods that address and challenge established power imbalances are inherently participatory, action-oriented and critical of the status quo. They represent styles of democratic education, with the goal of creating a society in which people are empowered to critically learn, experience inclusive decision-making processes and work together in a respectful way. Democratic education for change needs to be a primary focus of all planning approaches today, and the sustainability of this movement depends on ensuring young people’s participation as quintessential in the process.

The work of Paulo Freire, specifically the writings of Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970), grounds itself in Freire’s understanding of the dynamic of oppression as created between oppressed peoples and their oppressors. His life’s work focused on uniting with the oppressed to transcend this reality through liberating approaches to education. Freire’s thinking set the stage for a new movement in education and planning, known as critical theory. His work is highly relevant in the realm of participatory community development and is supported by the progressive planning theories of John Forester and John Friedmann. These theories describe our responsibility as educators, planners and/or community developers to think carefully about how we communicate with people and how we facilitate the forums through which change can take place.

Youth participation in community development is fundamentally about fostering citizen engagement in a genuinely democratic society. The process takes place through the making of a
collective agreement. We agree on the responsibility of those aware of their relative position of power in the public domain to work for the right of every person to grow and develop accessing similar power. This agreement can happen in small family or neighbourhood units, in schools or community-based agencies, even in whole communities. What matters is that we continually strive to understand citizenship as a process that occurs over the life span and to foster an ever-broadening capacity for young people to be citizens who contribute their ideas, skills and talents for the purpose of the common good. This chapter serves to assist the reader to understand the essential link between youth participation and citizenship.

Youth participation is facilitated through the planning and pedagogical approaches to be discussed. But youth participation itself is also generative; it produces positive development responses in the broader community and society. One of these responses involves the consolidation of healthy social organization. In my experience, an appropriate analytical framework for interpreting this kind of organization is social capital theory. Active youth participation generates, supports and facilitates the existence of social capital – an essential characteristic of healthy community development. In turn, critical learning and progressive planning are methods of supporting and facilitating youth participation.

1. Youth Participation: end and means

I begin the conceptual framework by deconstructing the idea of youth participation: why it is important for young people and communities, what its central tenets are, and the commonly recognized approaches that support it.

1.1 Participation and Healthy Youth Development

For youth, the process of participating in community initiatives has multiple benefits, including that of promoting population health and well being. We know, for example, that young people who learn from their own agency, who are active in decision-making and who believe they can contribute to making change are less prone to depression, hopelessness and suicide (Kaufman and Flekkoy 1998). Howe and Covell (2000) reported that an age-appropriate increase of participation in classroom decision-making counteracts the risk of increased school-related behaviour problems and decreased school motivation in adolescence. The Indiana Prevention Resource Centre (IPRC) at Indiana University has shown that youth participation can be considered a prevention primer in drug-related health initiatives. The involvement of young people "helps to shift the responsibility for preventing alcohol, tobacco, and other drug problems away
from professionals and agencies to the community, which is the best vehicle for implementing comprehensive prevention efforts” (IPRC 2000).

Essentially, youth participation gives young people the opportunity to develop important skills that protect them from making unhealthy lifestyle choices. This assumption is supported by the McCreary Centre Society, one of the leading organizations developing effective strategies for youth involvement in British Columbia. McCreary reports on work of the University of Minnesota Division of General Pediatrics & Adolescent Health, which demonstrated that “youth with strong social connections were less likely to engage in activities such as drinking and driving, violence, early and unprotected sex, and drug use” (McCreary 1999).

Other positive social and developmental outcomes of youth participation include open-mindedness, personal responsibility, civic competence, moral development, and a sense of self-esteem and efficacy (Checkoway, Finn and Pothukuchi 1995). Participation is part of a critical thinking, problem-solving and experiential approach to learning. Through this approach, young people learn how to make sound decisions, collaborate with others, negotiate procedures of group organization, and consider multiple perspectives on controversial issues. In short, they gain their own understanding of citizenship and develop roles for themselves as part of a democratic society.

1.2 Key Principles

The principles of youth participation have been written about extensively by a host of youth advocates and youth-directed/youth-serving agencies. These principles are continually adapted and refined as more young people participate in forums — planned events in schools, research projects, conferences and workshops, or community-based organizations, for example — where their voices are given legitimacy and power. The McCreary Centre Society adopts the definition of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA):

Meaningful youth participation involves recognizing and nurturing the strengths, interests, and abilities of young people through the provision of real opportunities for youth to become involved in decisions that affect them at individual and systemic levels (1995).

The CMHA outlines a series of broad strategies that should be considered by adults who wish to foster youth participation in their organization or initiative. These strategies are presented in Appendix A. Most of the authors who cite the fundamental principles and strategies for youth participation emphasize the following elements:

1) **Ownership** — activities should provide young people with an ability to see themselves in the process;
2) **Informed choice** — youth should be given clear and transparent information about what they are participating in,
3) **Skills-building** – participatory activities should give young people opportunities to acquire valuable learning and skills;

4) **Short-term timelines** – youth need to be able to work towards goals that are achievable in the short term, since their commitment and participation naturally fluctuates, and youth initiatives are often characterized by high turnover rates;

5) **Developmental appropriateness** – a fifteen-year old will require a different level of adult guidance than a twenty-one year old;

6) **Focus on real issues** – activities should address issues and concerns relevant to the young people’s lives; and

7) **Accountability** – mechanisms need to be established that ensure accountable decision-making on both sides of the partnership between adults and youth.

Hart et al (1997) suggest that the youth organizations best able to engage and sustain the participation of young people share a few important characteristics. The young people clearly understand that they are needed and have valuable resources to offer. They also have the opportunity to assume a variety of roles within the organization, transitioning between ‘expert’ and ‘apprentice’ in these roles. Another key feature of these organizations is that they allow for a rich and complex participation of young people in multiple cultures and identities, defined on their own terms:

...the construction of youth culture symbols, rituals, and meanings is referred to as “necessary symbolic work” – mental, emotional, social, and physical activity that is like clay for identity formation...Since this identity work is authentic and effortful, youth need freedom to create symbolic forms and meanings and to contrast these emerging forms with the existing forms of established, adult, mainstream culture...Thus, youth organizations need to allow the formation of certain aspects of youth culture, which means they must be flexible enough to allow members to form symbols and rituals, and to infuse existing rituals with new meanings... (Hart et al 1997, 38).

This emphasis on cultural identity cannot be underestimated, nor can it ignore the incredible **diversity** of cultures and identities that comprise the broader youth community. Hart asserts that adults need to allow an organization’s culture to be deeply informed by youth; I would also stress that, as this culture develops, it ideally will aim to represent a spectrum of cultural values appropriate to the group. This aim supports the uniqueness of every youth member and allows each to identify with the organizational environment, feeling a sense of ownership through his or her participation.

### 1.3 Community Youth Development

*Community Youth Development* is a concept that recognizes the healthy development of youth and healthy community development as inextricably linked. It captures a unified vision of the essence of youth work (McCreary 1999) and merges the fields of youth and community development “into a new and larger context of youth in community in which young people’s
developmental needs are addressed and they are important, contributing community members” (CYD Journal 2000). Following are the central tenets of this approach:

- Key for the healthy development of youth and community is youth participation.
- It is through partnership with adults that young people are best involved in their own development and that of the community.
- Partnerships lead to more than material improvements, as youth offer energy, hope, joy and love, creativity, life experience, commitment, resilience and youth perspective.
- To build a culture that values democratic participation, the entire community must have opportunities to grow socially, politically and spiritually.

Speaking as Director of the International Youth Foundation (IYF), youth development expert Karen Pittman discusses the major principles behind young people “in A.C.T.I.O.N.”: articulating, critiquing, teaching, implementing and negotiating successful solutions to shared challenges (IYF 2000). Community youth development increases the likelihood that a community’s programs and services will better respond to youth needs, leading to healthier youth who grow into healthy adults — adults that have the insight to respond compassionately to the next generation of young people’s needs. This approach fosters in young people a belief that they belong to the community, and the community to them. It subsequently promotes a conscious sense of responsibility and stewardship to the community (McCray 1996). Community youth development suggests a paradigm shift, breaking down many of the barriers that have traditionally prevented young people’s involvement in community life. It also embodies a number of keystone approaches to working with people that have unequal access to power in society. These approaches are elaborated in the theoretical planning and education literature, and explicitly in the writings of Paulo Freire, John Friedmann and John Forester.

2. Critical Theory in Praxis

Paulo Freire (1921-1997) is considered a revolutionary educator who has had an unprecedented impact on educational philosophy in many parts of the world. In light of the power relations that mediate between adults and young people in our society, his work merits special consideration within a discussion of youth participation in development and change. In the editor’s introduction to Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter, McLaren and Leonard (1993) describe what they refer to as Freire’s politics of liberation, which is “essentially about doing on the basis of a language of hope. His humanist philosophy...centers on the ontological vocation of humans to become more fully human” (3). It is this humanistic vision that guided Freire in his work with

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3 The World Book Dictionary defines ontology as “the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of reality”. The “…ontological vocation of humans…”, then, refers to our on-going pursuit to understand ourselves and our roles as part of a larger social and ecological context, hence “to become more fully human”.

peasants in the Northeast of Brazil during the country's national literacy campaign in the early 1960's, and later throughout fifteen years of exile when he worked in Chile, Europe and Africa. His approach centres on two key realms of human interaction that are relevant for the topic of this paper: dialogue and collective action. Freire's conviction was that meaningful dialogical encounters give rise to a particular circumstance, or a praxis, within which every human being is capable of critically engaging the world (ibid. 1).

2.1 Dialogical versus Antidialogical Theory

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire establishes the dichotomy of what he calls dialogical theory and antidialogical theory. The antidialogical approach creates oppressive circumstances in which the oppressor-oppressed duality exists, the framework for the violent treatment of one group by another. Teacher-student relationships commonly exemplify the antidialogical approach. In this case, the teacher submits the student to a form of education Freire terms the banking method of education; the teacher deposits information that he or she deems correct or true in the minds of the students, leaving them with little or no freedom to question the process or substance of their learning. The banking method is highly akin to the traditional forms of education that still dominate in our school system today. Students learn through the absorption and regurgitation of material arbitrarily selected by teachers and administrators. This material is generally decoupled from the students' local circumstances and environment. Freire uncovers the damaging effects of student-teacher relations in many societies, which deny the student the right to inquire:

Any situation in which some individuals prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence. The means used are not important; to alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects (66).

The basis of antidialogical theory and banking education lies in killing creativity, curiosity and any investigative spirit in the students (Gadotti 1994).

The final chapter of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* outlines some of the characteristics that distinguish antidialogical theory from dialogical theory. The former consists of (a) conquest, (b) divide and rule, (c) manipulation and (d) cultural invasion, creating a praxis in which oppression can flourish. The elements of dialogical theory are extremely useful for the purposes of this paper and in understanding the approaches that enable and foster youth participation:

1) **Cooperation** is underlain by essential communication, and it leads dialogical Subjects to focus their attention on the circumstances that mediate them and challenge them in order to transform them (pp. 148-153).
2) **Unity for Liberation** involves "cutting the umbilical cord of magic and myth" that binds the oppressed to the world of oppression. They achieve solidarity through cultural action, which depends on historical and existential experience within the social structure (pp. 153-156).

3) **Organization.** Revolutionary leaders act as witnesses to the struggles of the people and join them in an educational process in which leaders and people together experience true authority and freedom to transform the mediating reality. Witness requires consistency between words and actions; boldness to confront risk; radicalization leading both the witnesses and the ones receiving that witness to increasing action; the courage to love; and faith in the people, since witness is made to them (pp. 156-160).

4) **Cultural Synthesis.** In contrast to cultural invasion, the actors who come from "another world" to the world of the people "do not come to teach or to transmit or to give anything, but rather to learn, with the people, about the people's world". It resolves the contradiction between the worldview of the leaders and that of the people without denying the differences between the two (pp. 160-164).

Dialogical theory lays the foundation for a new praxis, one in which the people can together form a critical consciousness of their mediating reality, understand their collective identity and transform their reality in action.

**2.2 Co-Intentional Education, Dialogue for Conscientization**

A process of educational liberation is necessary to supercede oppressive circumstances. Liberation cannot take place, however, if oppressed groups enter the struggle as objects in order to later become human beings. Unfortunately, this approach is common in our treatment of young people. We seem to justify our banking method of education on the assumption that children and youth are human becomings rather than human beings. A "revolutionary leadership" that recognizes young people as human beings now must practice what Freire terms co-intentional education:

Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators. In this way, the

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4 According to Freire, a "revolutionary leadership" is needed for a liberating education. This leadership may be part of the oppressed group or it may emerge from the oppressor group. In the latter case, individuals who become conscious of the oppressive praxis and their role in it choose to humbly unite with the oppressed. It is the responsibility of such individuals to spend extensive time learning about the praxis in order to be capable of working appropriately and sensitively with the oppressed and their struggle, abandoning all procedures characteristic of the oppressors.
presence of the oppressed in the struggle for their liberation will be what it should be: not pseudo participation, but committed involvement (51).

A "revolutionary effort" to transform these structures meaningfully is impossible if it designates its leaders as *thinkers* and the oppressed as mere *doers*. Freire describes a liberating approach to education as one in which teachers and students together create a praxis that directs reflection and *action* at the structures to be transformed. The basis for a co-intentional reflection-action process is dialogue, grounded in the primary foundations of love, humility and faith. Dialogue, then, becomes a horizontal relationship leading to mutual trust between the dialoguers.

The learning that takes place in this atmosphere makes *conscientização* possible. The idea of conscientization was a key aspect of critical theory, although in the late 1980's Freire abandoned the concept due to his concern for the widespread subjective misinterpretation of its meaning (Gadotti 1994). The term was often interpreted as purely 'becoming conscious of reality', whereas for Freire conscientization could not unfold separately of the transforming action. Through the process of organizing themselves, the oppressed achieve the most important step in their liberation: awareness of the political, social and economic circumstances that oppress them. Only through practice and engagement in problem solving can the people awaken to the injustices present in their realities.

### 2.3 Youth and Critical Theory

Freire makes a distinction between systematic education, which can only be changed by political power, and educational projects, which should be carried out *with* the oppressed in the process of organizing them. It is educational projects that constitute the foundation of youth participation, and in the course of this thesis I will illustrate many examples of these types of projects. In a recent book, *Youth Development and Critical Education: The Promise of Democratic Action* (1997), Richard Lakes broadly examines his research of organizations in which young people work in coalition with adults on community health initiatives. He profiles projects that engage youth in neighbourhood improvement, economic development, health and wellness, and artistic expression, among others. With youth participation as their focus, these projects embody critical theory in action:

...educational reconstructions where loving and caring adults enter into intergenerational learning communities [.] follow the Freirean dictum to reify history, culture, and struggle...By engaging in real-life projects that address their lived realities, youthful participants and caring adults voice their concerns, frame the problematics of their oppressive circumstances, articulate the images, thoughts and feelings of their marginalized sub-group, and choose strategies which engage peers in neighbourhood activities that are positive, meaning-making events. With proper adult guidance, youths have the potential to design, plan, and organize
projects for social change in learning communities that give voice to ongoing cultural struggles (Lakes 1994, xii).

Through community-based educational projects, adults and youth together experience a dialogical learning process, critically evaluate the circumstances and their roles within them, and cooperate to transform the mediating reality.

In Richard Shaull's (1996) foreword to Pedagogy of the Oppressed, the writer makes special reference to the movement of young people in today's society. This movement reflects the kind of conscientization of oppressive circumstances and the struggle for societal transformation that is the basis for Freire's theory:

Especially among young people, the new media together with the erosion of the old concepts of authority open the way to acute awareness of this new bondage. The young perceive that their right to say their own word has been stolen from them, and that few things are more important than the struggle to win it back (16).

Freire's theory explicitly upholds the word as the basis for dialogue. For him, to exist humanly is about being able to name the world, and thereby change it. He believes that naming cannot be the privilege of a few, but must be everyone's right. Nor can anyone say a true word for another person:

Those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word must first reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of this dehumanizing aggression (Freire 1970, 69).

This is the struggle that Shaull refers to, that of youth reclaiming their right to communicate with a language they are comfortable with and to transform the "bondage" that infringes on this right. Examples of language, dialogue and communication in the organized youth community will be illustrated frequently in this thesis, complementing Freire's critical theory with practical and contemporary approaches – in practice.

3. Progressive Planning Theory

Fundamentally, critical theory is rooted in respectful dialogue and transforming action. In these aspects, the progressive planning theories of John Friedmann and John Forester support Paulo Freire. Strategizing about forms of dialogue is currently recognized as one of the most important tasks of the planner who intends to join in solidarity with communities for the work of transformation and change. The task is also paramount in light of the many and varied roles the planner will fill that require thoughtful communication: facilitator, mediator, translator, educator, messenger.
3.1 Radical Practice for a Good Society

John Friedmann, progressive planner and theorist, published his book *The Good Society* in 1979. Very much aligned with the central arguments of Paulo Friere's theory, *The Good Society* centres on the paths to achieving the common good through dialogue and action. Rather than trying to describe a utopian vision of what constitutes the Good Society, Friedmann affirms that each person will have his or her unique conception of the Good Society in mind. The task is to understand that it is “in its practice that we may join and merge the separate realities by which we live into a shared experience” (4). Friedmann’s book is highly accessible to a wide spectrum of readers, yet it is directed primarily to the work of the social planner.

Friedmann insists that “[it] is only through its practice, that we can learn about the Good Society. *The Good Society is a learning society*” (75). The action itself is the catalyst for learning. To facilitate a process whereby meaningful learning can occur amongst a group of social actors, the social planner must commit to a radical practice that informs and is informed by a critical consciousness developed in action. In choosing radical practice, the social planner “does not wish to dominate but liberate the other into a practice of her/his own” (68). Radical practice is the practice of the Good Society and is composed of four interconnected processes: (a) the formation of social values, (b) the construction of appropriate theories of reality, (c) the devising of political strategies, and (d) the carrying out of collective action (see Appendix B). In radical practice, members of a group are led to collective action through a process of dialogue and the consciousness of a mutual struggle.

3.2 Critical Theory and “Planning in the Face of Power”

In his 1989 book *Planning in the Face of Power* (1989), progressive planner and critical theorist John Forester provides a fascinating analysis of the roles that need to be considered by the planner who aims to unite critical theory and planning practice:

...a critical theory of planning practice can be empirically based, practically fitting, and ethically instructive, too... A critical theory of planning helps us to understand what planners do as attention-shaping, communicative action... When planners recognize the practical and communicative nature of their actions, they can devise strategies to avoid problems and to improve their practice as well (138-140).

Forester’s theory emanates from a political economy perspective, similar to the work of Côté and Allahar, which I discussed in Chapter One. That is, it recognizes that “political-economic power may function systematically to misinform affected publics”. There are a number of different forms of misinformation this power can wield, which lead to what Forester terms unnecessary
communicative distortions. The responsibility of the planner is to address misinformation as well as recognize his or her own capacity to create misinformation; planners, too, are in positions of power because of their technical knowledge, socio-economic status and/or political contacts.

Thoughtful communicative action signifies the planner who recognizes that “[w]hat ‘flows’ in the [planning] analyst-other interaction is not simply information, but responsibility – and the ability to respond – as well” (17). Confronting the knowledge of the structural political and socio-economic forces that underpin human relations, the critical planner’s primary concern must be to anticipate and reshape mediating dynamics of power and powerlessness:

Thus, the strategies that are appropriate under decision-making conditions of severe structural distortion and inequality are restructuring strategies: strategies that work toward effective equality, substantive democratic participation and voice, and strategies that work away from the perpetuation of systematic racial, sexual and economic domination” (60-61).

Forester echoes the theories of both Freire and Friedmann when he asserts that “communicative ethics” in planning combines practical action with political vision.

Aiming to provide comprehensiveness, sincerity, legitimacy and accuracy of information, the planner can advocate for a more inclusive and transparent planning process. Two important tasks of the critical planner are:

(a) to enable informed participation that recognizes citizen rights while being “skeptical of the purported benevolence of established interests” that could reap heavy profits from any proposed projects, and

(b) to establish trusting working relationships with community-based organizations and other constituencies, supporting coalitions as issues develop.

It is important to be aware that these tasks are applicable and relevant for any adult or youth leader striving to facilitate meaningful youth participation in an organization. This theme will be returned to in Chapters Five and Seven.

3.3 Citizenship and Civil Society

In a recent book, *Cities for Citizens* (1998), John Friedmann’s perspectives about the Good Society converge on the notion of civil society. Friedmann defines civil society as “those social organizations, associations and institutions that exist beyond the sphere of direct supervision and control by the state” (21). He asserts that civil society is a reemerging force in the construction of a new citizenship, creating a path of urban and regional development that searches for “the good life”. The good life is embodied in the quality of human relationships, rather than in the materialism of consumer society. By situating Friedmann’s theory in an analysis of youth organizations working
for systemic change, we see youth as an integral sector of civil society, mobilizing communities to recognize and fight for a meaningful and good life.

Civil society groups are becoming a dynamic force in the political arena as they elaborate a "politics of identity", reclaiming their members' social rights as citizens. The work of the planner in supporting this movement is to be "passionately engaged in a transformative politics for inclusion, opportunity for self-development and social justice" (34). This transformative politics speaks to the work of all allies of children and youth who understand citizenship as representing the story of a lifetime. Starting from a very young age, we each have skills and knowledge that can serve in the work of community building:

Creating opportunities for self-development forms a politics that aims at the removal of artificial obstacles that limit each person's chances to develop her or his innate abilities to the fullest possible extent (ibid.).

The planner who works from this premise is cognizant of a relationship between citizenship rights and a person's sense of responsibility towards the community. By supporting the enterprise of civil society groups in the community, the planner also expands the space where healthy human development is recognized as inseparable from the planning process.

### 3.4 Organizations as Instrumental and Sociopolitical Units

John Forester's critical perspective in *Planning in the Face of Power* situates the planner's work within an organizational context, offering a critical analysis of organizations as forms of communicative action. Recognizing the role of people as communicative actors challenges the 'apolitical' nature of two traditional views of organizations. The first of these, the *instrumental view*, understands organizations as "efficient mechanisms or organisms with integrally related and coordinated parts" where the structure is an "idealized flowchart of functional relations" (Forester 1989, 68). The second is the *social view*, which "focuses on the ways organization members sustain more or less meaningful relationships every day" (69). A critical view of organizations both integrates and builds on the instrumental and social perspectives:

According to this view, organizations are structures of practical communicative action, and thus they not only produce instrumental results but also reproduce social and political relations...Every organizational action or practical communication (including the nonverbal) not only produces a result, it also reproduces, strengthening or weakening, the specific social working relations of those who interact (71).

Given this communicative and political environment, the planner needs to be skilled in exploring organizational "intelligence", which includes anything from reporting and information systems to formal and informal precedents to relations with the press. In short, a critical analysis
of organizations is about understanding the function of daily planning interactions. The planner can then address those organizational strategies that perpetuate hegemonic power imbalances and foster those that build solidarity and healthy relationships within and between organizations:

...as cooperation and trust are developed, so are practical intelligence networks and bases of future coalitions (73).

It is logical to conclude that Forester’s critical approach to organizational dynamics in Planning in the Face of Power foreshadowed the emergence of social capital theory in the 1990’s. Critical theory provides an excellent theoretical background to the ever-expanding body of work on social capital. The following review of the social capital literature reveals its affinity with the critical perspectives of Freire, Friedmann and Forester. As the chosen analytical framework for my research data, social capital is a synergy of critical theory and organizational practice, evoking a new appreciation for the work of youth as participants in community development and social change.

4. Social Capital Theory

In its broadest sense, ‘capital’ refers to those goods or ideas from which something else can be created or developed (Coleman 1999). The term social capital is used increasingly in the social sciences as a means of describing some of the more intangible factors that influence community capacity for positive development and change. Social capital facilitates the effective mobilization of other forms of capital, namely physical and human. The concept of physical capital is embodied in the tools, machines and other equipment that allow people to work productively. Human capital can be understood as the knowledge and skills that individuals bring to productive activity. Just as investment in physical capital increases infrastructural or technological capacity, investment in human capital (through education and training, for example) increases the knowledge and skills that individuals can bring to the workplace.

Social capital is necessary if we are to apply these other forms of capital for the purposes of collective action. In effect, the modern concept of social capital refers to the relations between individuals and groups (Roseland 1998). Applications of social capital are diverse; the theory is subject to wide interpretation and is used in different ways – often divergent or inconsistent – to explain countless examples of collective action. This section will attempt to clearly outline my interpretation of social capital for the purpose of my study, and it will assist the reader in anticipating the usefulness of social capital as applied to youth engagement in processes of community organizing.
One of the seminal works on productive social capital is Robert Putnam's (1993) *Making Democracy Work*. In his comparison of economic development between northern and southern Italy, Putnam found that the northern region has been richer for centuries, despite having been on a relatively equal level of economic development as the south early in the 1900's. Putnam argues that northern Italy has a higher level of community cohesion resulting from four community features (Campbell & Jovchelovitch 2000):

(a) the existence of a dense range of local community organizations and networks;
(b) high levels of participation or civic engagement in these networks;
(c) a sense of equality and solidarity with other community members, contributing to a strong and positive local identity; and
(d) generalized norms of trust and reciprocal help and support between community members, whether they were friends or strangers.

It is important to establish in this review of the literature on social capital that the term is most commonly applied to economic development. Wilson (1997) argues, however, that social capital theory is useful “whether the focus is community economic development, community social development or strengthening local democracy” (745). In respect to the youth demographic, acknowledging the relationship between the social and the economic is paramount. All youth participation in the formation and maintenance of social capital is about acquiring important skills in leadership, organization and communication. These skills subsequently enhance a young person’s assets and personal resources for participation in the workforce and other economic activities.

Social capital constitutes “the pre-existing elements of social structures, which social actors can use to obtain their objectives” (Rydin & Pennington 2000, 161). Groups of people can make far more productive and efficient use of the physical and human capital available to them if there is agreement about how to coordinate their activities. A number of possible dynamics lead to this agreement:

(a) when the group decides to follow the leaders’ initiatives,
(b) as the logical step in a process of mutual learning about how to best work together, or
(c) based on “the evolution or construction of a set of norms or rules that define how this activity will be carried out repeatedly over time…” (Ostrom 1999, 178).

The outcome of the agreement can be viewed as a social structure into which people may invest (time and effort) and from which support and solidarity may be drawn.

Campbell & Jovchelovitch (2000) draw a strong link between social capital development and Paulo Friere’s notion of conscientization. Conscientization occurs when members of a marginalized group are able to “‘...‘state’ their identity in a way that asserts recognition of their
needs and interests [to themselves and] other sectors of society (265)”. A prerequisite of the consensus required to make a clear statement of group identity is the establishment of specific communication channels, such as those described in social capital theory. Subsequently, as further action and organizing unfolds within the identified group, social capital can be enhanced and augmented. Conscientization, then, is both created by social capital and builds upon it as the group organizes around its collective objectives. Campbell & Jovchelovitch’s interpretation of conscientization is aligned with Freire’s own application: it is through active participation in a shared arena of struggle that a social group gains awareness of who it is, what it wants and how it wishes to be identified in the future.

4.1 Elements of Social Capital

In my literature review of social capital, I found two particular models that provide clear and meaningful analyses of what constitutes social capital. Uphoff (1999) makes a useful distinction between two interrelated subsets of social capital: structural and cognitive. Structural forms of social capital are observable and externalized in social organization. They are mutually understood roles, rules, precedents, procedures and networks that contribute to cooperative behaviour. Further, they represent the institutional processes that complement cognitive social capital. Cognitive forms of social capital are shared norms, values, attitudes and beliefs that are reinforced by culture and ideology. Table 1 compares and contrasts these two forms of social capital.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Structural</strong></th>
<th><strong>Cognitive</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sources and manifestations</td>
<td>Roles and rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networks and other interpersonal relationships</td>
<td>Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures and precedents</td>
<td>Attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social organization</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal linkages</td>
<td>Civic culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical linkages</td>
<td>Trust, solidarity, cooperation, generosity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations that lead to cooperative behaviour, which produces mutual benefits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cognitive social capital, then, can lead to explicit patterns of interaction — or structural social capital — that allow people to organize effectively to achieve objectives. In fact, this process may
be necessary in order to translate shared feelings of trust and goodwill into cooperative behaviour (Dhesi 2000).

A second model, articulated by Rydin and Pennington (2000) considers the importance of institutional design and redesign in creating social capital. Institutions are designed and redesigned through ‘measures’ that shape the ways in which community actors will interact over time. The authors divide these measures into two categories, illustrated in Table Four:

**Table 4: Measures of Social Capital**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Matters</th>
<th>Norms and Routine Practice of Interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• the nature of arenas for interaction</td>
<td>• the language of interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the role of actors within interactions</td>
<td>• the handling of conflicts and values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the assignment of rights and duties to actors</td>
<td>• the building of agreement, compromises and trade-offs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the rules of interaction, including monitoring and enforcement</td>
<td>• the presentation and self-presentation of actors and the interaction process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rydin and Pennington 2000

In comparing this model with that of Uphoff (1999), I have concluded that Rydin and Pennington’s analysis can be interpreted as a more refined characterization of what for Uphoff is the structural category of social capital. The two models are valuable as analytical tools for this study. In Chapter Six, I revisit these models and synthesize them in order to present the framework for a concise analysis of the thesis findings.

**4.2 Benefits of Social Capital**

What, then are the effects of social capital formation? Serageldin and Grootaert (1999) cite three positive influences that social capital can exert on development outcomes. The first is information sharing. Individuals and groups that are linked by social capital can exchange and disseminate sufficient, accurate information that allows for appropriate and effective decisions to be made. The second benefit is activity coordination. Associations with high levels of social capital create “a framework within which individuals interact repeatedly, enhancing trust among members” (48). Finally, social capital impacts on a group’s proficiency to make collective decisions. Collective decision making can build greater efficiency and equity into an organizational structure. The value of individual voices are recognized in the process, and participants then have an interest and a stake in the outcomes of any decision. This, in turn, “provides an incentive for improved coordination in the management of local public goods, increasing productivity for everyone” (49).
Campbell and Jovchelovitch (2000) attest to the health promoting effects of social capital. Communities with high levels of social capital are more likely to perceive they have power over their everyday lives. As a result, they have the confidence to take control of their health “through health-enhancing behaviours, or through the speedy and appropriate accessing of health services” (262). The authors also point to the supportive environment of communities rich in social capital, a context within which “people can collectively re-negotiate social identities in ways that promote the increased likelihood of health-enhancing behaviours” (ibid.). The emphasis on social identity runs counter to the traditional information-based model of health education, which attributes healthy behaviour to individual rational choice. Drawing the link between social capital and health underscores the growing recognition that people are influenced to make healthy choices as a function of their participation, as citizens, in a social grouping that values health and well being.

What this research study seeks is to testify to the invaluable contribution that youth organizations can provide to the body of work on social capital theory. The analysis in Chapter Six will present evidence of both cognitive and structural forms of social capital formation, generated by the organized youth community. The values, beliefs and solidarity of this group have led to the thoughtful construction of institutional linkages, roles and procedures of collective organizing in its struggle to advance social change and community health. The chapter will apply the research findings to social capital theory – as a useful framework for making sense of the data – based on Uphoff’s (1999) and Rydin and Pennington’s (2000) analyses. Implicitly, the analysis also bespeaks many of the keystone concepts embodied in the critical and progressive planning theories: co-intentional education, dialogue, radical planning practice, critical consciousness and civil society.
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS FOR HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

It is essential that we focus on activism as a fundamentally creative, positive, and proactive process, in which problem solving is secondary to the artistic, visionary, grounded process of making the world healthy, sane, and joyful.

~ Christopher Childs, former Greenpeace National Speaker, from "The Coming Generation of Creators", Chapter 12 in The Spirit's Terrain: Creativity, Activism, and Transformation

This chapter is in inventory of youth organizations and initiatives. The purpose of including this information is to demonstrate the broad spectrum of issues that young people are addressing proactively in today's society. The chapter presents findings related to the first research question:

What are some of the ways in which youth organizations contribute to healthy community development?

Descriptions of the activities profiled here were collected through the literature, internet searches, brochures and/or personal discussions with members of the organizations. They are based primarily in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, but some are national organizations, and a few are US-based or international. The programs are listed according to the primary issue they address. It is important to note, however, that the majority of these groups, if not all of them, bridge many of the issues listed here and more. An essential characteristic of organized youth today is their awareness of the natural interdependency of the various issues that they focus on. Poverty, for example, cannot be separated from racism, nor can globalization from human rights violations, nor technology from the environment. These youth are alert to the imperative of adopting holistic approaches to development that acknowledge social justice, ecological health and economic equality as the fundamental tenets supporting the well being of all people and the planet we inhabit. These three tenets function in tandem. An imbalance in one area is reflected in an imbalance of the whole.

A commitment to address the issues as interdependent is reflected in the growing partnerships and coalitions formed between groups that focus on distinct issues. It is the interaction of perspectives across sectors that deepens the richness of youth activist work. Many youth working in organizations understand that by collaborating with each other, they share
knowledge and skills that increase their capacity to raise awareness, educate and affect change. Examples of this type of partnership or coalition building are given in Chapter Six.

Following are nineteen issues, each illustrated with one or two examples of a youth organization/initiative with that issue as a particular focus. By viewing it collectively, we see that this list represents an unprecedented transformation of the way that we understand health. Health is created and sustained at the levels of individual, community and society. The programs below cover the entire spectrum, starting from the building of self-esteem in the young person and broadening to tackle the larger systemic causes of human conflict. The distinct visions that these groups articulate intersect at the goal of achieving the common good. “The common good” is fundamentally about health – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health – for individuals, their communities and the Earth ecology with which they share their environments. The initiatives I profile in this chapter are working to create the common good and to challenge that which discounts or threatens it. The health areas that they work in are:

- Child Poverty
- Culture and the Arts
- Employment
- Environment
- First Nations Youth
- Globalization
- Housing and Neighbourhood Improvement
- International Children’s Rights
- International Human Rights Violations
- Leadership and Facilitation Skills Education
- Media and Technology
- Mental Health
- Racism
- Sexuality and Sexual Health
- Street-Involved Youth
- Substance Use and Abuse
- Violence
- Youth in Care
- Youth with Chronic Illness/Disability

The issues are listed in alphabetical order, and when available an internet address is provided for the initiative(s)/organization(s) under each issue.

1. Child Poverty

The Students’ Commission (www.tgmag.ca) is a national non-profit youth organization based on the “four pillars” of listen, respect, understand and communicate, and it works to:

- Ensure that young people’s voices are heard.
- Provide youth with the tools to express their concerns, ideas and opinions.
- Enable young people to take action in their own communities.

This organization has spent the past few years with a direct focus on child poverty in Canada. Sharing Resources 2000, the Students’ Commission’s largest program to date, aimed to “find, engage and support at least 2000 youth in doing 2000 community projects that address the issue of poverty and work to equalize access to resources”. This goal was accomplished, before
the end of the year 2000, through national conferences and local project support offices in St. John's, Montreal, Winnipeg, Saskatoon and Vancouver. The SR2000 conferences were a way for Canadian youths to network with one another. They also could learn about and practice ways of using different media as tools to build education and awareness. Local Students' Commission projects include anything from web pages to safe houses to literacy programs to car washes to anti-poverty workshops.

The Students' Commission partners with other organizations on joint initiatives. By collaborating with countless local, provincial and national organizations, for example, the Students' Commission is heading up Health Canada's Youth Engagement Centre of Excellence for Children's Health and Well Being. Tiny Giant Magazine (TG Mag) is the Students' Commission's corporate sponsor. TG Mag is a multimedia production company that combines "the expertise of multimedia and education professionals with diverse young people to create unique and highly effective programs that students understand and are motivated by".

2. Culture and the Arts

Vancouver Youth Theatre (VYT) has been training young actors since 1983, and it now has over 300 members. At VYT, young people work "in a creative partnership with adult theatre professionals to create and produce original plays which reflect the ideas and concerns of today's youth". Each year, VYT presents over 150 performances of scripts designed by the youth themselves with their adult mentors. Some of these are Will the Real Canadian...?, Teen Parents, Minor Reality, Kids' Writes and Courage. VYT's acting programs include two focuses: Playbuilding and Acting for the Camera. The more advanced programs tour elementary and secondary schools throughout the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. VYT has won numerous awards, including a 1999 grant from the Department of Justice of $35,000 for Breathing Together, a play presented in schools and communities about students' personal experiences with increasing racism and violence among Canada's young people.

collective echoes (www.collective-echoes.com) is a community based public art organization. The goal of the organization is to explore different definitions of art and to focus specifically on youth involvement in artistic expression. It's flagship project, public:untitled, is a means to achieving four key mandates of the organization: to empower young artists to become cultural leaders, to educate the public about the role youth play in healthy communities, to engage communities in the creation of public art, and to create learning opportunities for people to acquire skills and explore ideas as cultural innovators. A specific example of one of the projects comprising public:untitled is Watermark, a public art piece in the Cedar Cottage neighbourhood of
Vancouver. It involved the local community in its conception, creation and installation. A series of workshops held with community members assisted them in learning the technique of stencil fabrication, as well as expressing their ideas about their community and their place within it. The stencils are currently being transferred by the same participants, as beautiful ground-painted murals, to four designated corners of the neighbourhood.

3. Employment

Street Youth Job Action is a non-profit organization sponsored by the Family Services of Greater Vancouver. It is designed to give street-entrenched youth ages thirteen to twenty-five “the skills, self-esteem and support needed in order to integrate into society in a positive manner”. The organization develops creative means of employment through community service projects and partnerships with Vancouver’s business sector to create flexible, temporary and part-time employment for young people. The long-term goals of the organization’s work are best described in its mission statement:

We believe [that] providing a flexible work environment and a focus on small successes enables the youth we serve to build self-esteem, therefore increasing their full-time, permanent employability, and acceptance into training or educational courses...We strive to change a common negative perception of street involved youth by demonstrating their willingness to work and desire to contribute to their community.

For the businesses that hire youth through this service, all paperwork and Workers’ Compensation Board logistics are arranged by Street Youth Job Action. Interested businesses fill out a ‘job order form’ and fax it in. On the day of the job, required Street Youth Job Action workers are sent, and when the job is completed the business signs a work sheet that the youth take back to their organization. Street Youth Job Action pays the worker(s) immediately and invoices the business for the work done. The rate of pay is $11.00 per hour. The youth earn $7.80 per hour and the remaining $3.20 is allocated for job creation initiatives and administration costs.

4. Environment

The Environmental Youth Alliance (EYA – www.vcn.bc.ca/eya) is one of the oldest youth driven organizations in Vancouver. It maintains as its focus “the improvement of our urban environment through grassroots action.” EYA is dedicated to the fields of urban environmental restoration and social justice, and it has been recognized nationally as well as locally for its work. Members of EYA work together to create gardens that community members can use for food production and to reintroduce native flora and fauna back into the city. These green spaces have also been utilized as opportunities to model innovative sustainable technologies, such as
composting solar systems, greywater recycling and solar energy. All of EYA's programs focus on youth community involvement.

One of EYA's major projects is the *Youth Garden*. This project began in 1993 in an area of the city that was once a diverse coastal ecosystem and in the last century became a "city dumping ground of alternating layers of garbage, industrial waste and sand". The site has now been rehabilitated and is an ecological space where youth have the opportunity to learn and build consciousness about organic gardening. The Youth Garden has a herb garden, a native edible plant garden, and a passive solar greenhouse. A pond has been created in an effort to restore what was once a wetland area, and it now supports local bird and aquatic species. Many young people have had the opportunity to collaborate on this project, including youth from community groups, high school students and street-involved youth. The *Eco-pavilion* has recently been built on site and is the first Vancouver building to be granted a permit for its state of the art environmental systems. It was constructed by a group of EYA women learning construction skills. Building materials included selectively harvested wood from Gabriola Island and the WildWood forest on Vancouver Island. The pavilion is used for seed storage, food preparation and educational workshops.

Action for Solidarity, Equality, Environment and Development (A SEED - [www.seed.net](http://www.seed.net)) is an international organization linking youth groups and individuals in North America, Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America and Japan. A SEED was initiated by youth in response to the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, and it "aimed to forge alliances among young people committed to social and environmental justice". The organization targets the structural causes of the environment and development crisis, campaigning on free trade agreements and international financial institutions.

A SEED's objectives include:

- Initiating and coordinating actions and campaigns on environment, development and social justice issues,
- Promoting discussion and dissemination of information about critical emerging issues among youth groups,
- Empowering local groups and grassroots organizations through trainings, joint projects and knowledge sharing,
- Establishing partnerships between various organizations and worldwide, and facilitating international cooperation and networking.

5. **First Nations Youth**

The United Native Youth Alliance ([www.unya.bc.ca](http://www.unya.bc.ca)) was formed in 1989 to address Aboriginal urban youth issues due to the growing numbers of young people leaving reserves for the city. Although it began as a single pre-employment training program, the organization now offers a wide range of programs and services that continually expand "to address the ever-
changing and unique needs of Native youth”. UNYA works under the philosophy that youth involvement in youth service development is needed for the formation of effective delivery models; as a result, UNYA has mandated youth participation on its Board of Directors. Some of the diverse initiatives of this organization include:

- **Aries Project** – an alternate school for street-involved Native youth between 13 and 18 who want to leave the street and need life skills training, alcohol and drug awareness, academic learning and group support.
- **Aboriginal Ways Accelerate Youth (A.W.A.Y.) Program** – a five-month pre-employment program.
- **Outreach Program** – a prevention program for Aboriginal youth 11 to 17 who are at-risk for entering street life. Outreach workers support youth in community centres, local schools and families.
- **Aboriginal Youth Safehouse** – for 16 to 18 year olds.
- **Two-Spirited Youth Program** – support for gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, trans-gendered and questioning Native youth.
- **Native Youth Drop-In Centre** – a healthy and safe space for 15-24 year olds.
- **Alcohol and Drug Prevention Counselling**

6. **Globalization**

Check Your Head (www.checkyourhead.org), the “youth global education network”, is a non-profit organization created by youth for youth, to raise awareness about how the global economy functions. It is concerned with the effects of globalization on all aspects of our lives. Check Your Head supports youth in becoming more actively engaged citizens in their communities around issues like consumer choice and corporate power. It offers workshops to schools and post-secondary institutions, addressing topics such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), genetically modified foods (GMO’s), culture jamming and sweatshops.

Check Your Head also partners with a range of community organizations to offer special events, such as conferences, theatre, and book launches. Along with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), the Council of Canadians and others, Check put together a conference held at Langara College, “Doing Democracy”, in November 2000. From the fall of 2000 until June 2001, two members of the organization are travelling around the province of BC offering workshops to schools and interested community groups.

Initially entitled the “Globalization and Women Project”, Globalize This! was envisioned by the Students’ Commission and Check Your Head with CoDevelopment Canada (CoDev), and it is co-funded by CoDev, the Status of Women Canada and CIDA (the Canadian International Development Agency). The purpose of Globalize This! is “to build a provincial campaign on
women and globalization through locally-driven campaigns led by young women in British Columbia communities”.

Some of the objectives of Globalize This! include:

- Increasing public awareness around issues of women and globalization;
- Empowering young women to take action in their communities;
- Connecting young women with the World March of Women 2000 activities; and
- Developing mentoring relationships between young women and between young women and activists in women’s centres and labour organizations.

In September 2000, fourteen women ages sixteen to twenty-one from small BC communities attended their first of two weekend workshops in Vancouver. These workshops included presentations and interactive working sessions with various youth and adult community leaders from a host of organizations focusing on issues affected by globalization. The following are examples of some of the sessions that comprised this event:

- **Corporations in Our Heads** (Headlines Theatre)
- **Land Claims and Aboriginal Rights** (Aboriginal Women’s Action Network and Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre)
- **In Pursuit for a Just and Lasting Peace** (Forum and fundraising event for the Filipino Women’s Centre)
- **Poverty** (End Legislated Poverty)
- **Media** (Pro-choice Action Network, Co-op Radio)
- **Fair Trade Alternatives**
- **Young Women Taking Action on Globalization** (HIJOS, Political Prisoners in Mexico, Native Youth Movement)

As a post-workshop event, the Globalize This! project was able to sponsor a young Nicaraguan activist from the Maquila Solidarity Network (MSN) to come to Vancouver and speak on her experiences. Sabrina Miranda has been one of the leaders in organizing a network of women who work in export-processing zone factories in Nicaragua. Through workshops and training sessions, MSN gives female workers opportunities to develop leadership skills and the resources to resist male-perpetrated violence in their homes. In addition, MSN has been instrumental in successfully advocating for new labour legislation in Nicaraguan export-processing zones.

7. Housing and Neighbourhood Improvement

YouthBuild USA ([www.youthbuild.org](http://www.youthbuild.org)) traces its roots back to 1978 when some New York City teens expressed an interest in renovating abandoned buildings. After they successfully gained the support of some adult trainers and raised funds, they were able to renovate a Harlem tenement. This began a coalition of groups interested in supporting young people in housing restoration endeavours, and ten years later the YouthBuild Coalition became national. YouthBuild
now has 145 operating programs in 43 states. The basic philosophy of the organization is that “the positive energy and intelligence of young people need to be liberated and enlisted in solving the problems that face our society”. Since the founding of the Coalition, US federal legislation has been passed to fund YouthBuild annually. Between 1993 and 1998, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development administered $193 million to the organization.

YouthBuild assists youth ages sixteen to twenty-four who are unemployed to acquire construction skills, fulfill a high school education, and receive leadership training while they rehabilitate or build new housing for homeless and low income people in their communities. They spend part time in school and part time on the job site over eleven months. Since 1993, more than 2000 units of low-income housing have been reconstructed or built by the YouthBuild students. The organization has a Leadership Development Program in which students can learn to be advocates for local issues of concern to them. The youth participants also share in the governance of their own program through an elected policy body.

8. International Children’s Rights

War Child (www.warchild.ca) is an international organization raising public awareness and vital funds for children around the world affected by war. War Child focuses on issues such as child soldiers, displaced and refugee children, landmines, child-run households and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In Canada, War Child has partnered with The Student’s Commission on a project they have called Generation Peace. The project supports youth from across the country in developing their own initiatives to help children in war affected areas, through music, art, film, drama and other forms of entertainment. Generation Peace is able to sponsor fifty youth projects across the country with help from the Canada Millennium Partnership Program, Chum Television and other corporate sponsors. The Generation Peace project works with a Youth Advisory Board, comprised of youth representatives from different communities across Canada interested in peace and human rights.

War Child is “building a growing repertoire of Canadian musical supporters”. In conjunction with the International Conference on War-Affected Children, held in Winnipeg from September 10th-17th, 2000, War Child organized a concert that drew over 80,000 people and raised more than $300,000 for the cause. War Child Concert 2000 featured performances by headliners The Tragically Hip and special guests Chantal Kreviazuk, Maestro and Angélique Kidjo.
9. International Human Rights Violations

The children of former survivors of torture, political prisoners, exiles and people who disappeared or were executed during the 1976-1983 military dictatorships in Latin America founded HIJOS ('children' in Spanish – Children for Identity and Justice, against Silence and Oblivion) in 1993. HIJOS created a space for those children, now young adults, to share their experiences and express themselves. HIJOS gradually expanded throughout Latin America to young people affected by violent repression against popular movements from the Cold War to the present day. The main goals of HIJOS are to support the children victims of government violence, to demand justice for people responsible for human rights violations, and to reconstruct the collective memory of Latin American countries.

HIJOS now has a chapter in Vancouver of about twenty members. HIJOS continually works to build awareness of the Latin American dictatorships through presentations and videos in schools and universities. They work closely with other human rights organizations to locate abducted children, create visibility in the media and organize campaigns. Reconstruction of collective memory is another focus, and HIJOS Vancouver is working to build databases of films, books, documents, testimonies, interviews and newspaper coverage. One of its focal activities is the campaign to have the School of the Americas, based in Georgia, shut down. This school has trained over 60,000 military since the late seventies in combat, anti-insurgency tactics and torture. Many of the perpetrators of human rights violations in Latin America were students at the School of the Americas.

The Filipino-Canadian Youth Alliance was formed in 1995 when a number of Filipino-Canadian youth met through the Philippine Women's Centre and realized that as young people they collectively felt an urgent need to organize. The organization strives to educate other Filipino-Canadian youth about historical issues around Canadian immigration, economic policies and racism (among others), to work in solidarity with other organizations with an ethnic orientation, and to mobilize for political action. Currently, one of the Alliance's important roles is as a partner in and lobbyist for "The Purple Rose Campaign", an international movement that aims to stop the sex trafficking of Filipino women worldwide.

10. Leadership and Facilitation Skills Education

The Youth Project Team of the Self-Help Resources Association of BC (www.vcn.bc.ca/shra/youth) is "committed to helping youths develop their own Youth Circles in Vancouver" and offers a series of youth-focused facilitation skills workshops for youths and non-
youths. These workshops, called “Facilitate This!”, run for a total of four days over two weekends. The series’ themes include: Facilitation 101, Facilitating Group Process, Facilitating Youth Voice and Facilitating Safety. The Youth Project workshops are available to existing youth groups, to youths that are interested in starting their own groups and need some practical skills training, or to adults who are interested in learning how to work more effectively with young people.

The Project is involved in a number of other initiatives. Eye Spies, a course in photographic expression, was held twice weekly in the summer of 2000, offered to young people who were interested in photography but could not afford to own a camera or develop film. The youths that took part brainstormed about different issues relevant to them and then created visual representations of the issues. The Youth Project has also partnered with the United Way on various initiatives. The Project was instrumental in initiating a Vancouver YouthNet (see “Mental Health”). Currently, the facilitation manual the Project developed for its workshops is in a dissemination phase, giving more skill access to a broader range of people through a “train the trainer” approach.

The Youth Action Network/Action Jeunesse (YAN - www.youthactionnetwork.org) is a youth initiated and directed non-profit organization. YAN “aims to create and promote social development and public policy initiatives for Canadian youth through research, human resource development, public education, advocacy and regional co-operation”. Formerly World Affairs Canada/Canada Mondial, YAN’s objectives include:

- Providing information and tools so that Canadian youth can be informed and engaged in world issues,
- Influencing public policy through education, networking and information exchange,
- Strengthening international co-operation, emphasizing linkages with other youth oriented NGO’s,
- Addressing major issues with emphasis on human rights, environmental awareness and community enhancement.

The cornerstone project of YAN is Youth Week, a celebration of youth, their achievements and activism, held annually in May in many parts of Canada. YAN also works on concrete “tools” for equipping youth with ideas and support, including the “Youth Action Connection” newsletter and Forum magazine. The Resource Action Centre is a library and database set up to “inspire organized and informed action”. It holds resource information on fundraising, legislation, politics, international development, environment, social justice, media and human rights.

11. Media and Technology

The Youth Voice (www.theyouthvoice.net) is “dedicated to empowering Indiana youth through technology to voice their ideas for social change to community leaders and policy
makers”. This organization’s website is ‘one-stop shopping’ for young people in the State of Indiana who wish to find out how to have a voice in their schools, their communities and the political system, using technology as a tool to do so. This site connects youth with each other through chat rooms and facilitates easy access to the real people behind the political structures that govern local communities. Youth often lack the kinds of resources that help them to hold their political representatives responsible and accountable to youth issues. By typing in a zip code, a youth (or anyone!) will instantaneously receive:

- the names and bios of the politicians that represent them in congress,
- recent legislative votes that affect young people (for example, an amendment to the Juvenile Justice Reform Act), and
- regional media contacts that can be useful if a youth wishes to take political action in that specific area.

12. Mental Health

A psychologist and a psychiatrist from the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario initiated YouthNet (www.youthnet.org). The two professionals were commissioned to do a survey about the needs of youth in the area of mental health. Two major themes came out of the survey:

- Youth would rather talk amongst themselves about their mental health concerns;
- Youth don’t trust the system.

The organization that was born as a result of this survey now conducts approximately 250 focus groups each year in Ontario alone. In each focus group, two trained young adult facilitators initiate a dialogue with young people about mental health issues that affect them. The initial phase of the focus groups involves asking the youths what they think or feel when they hear the terms “mental health” and “mental illness”. The young people then participate in a safe and open dialogue about the stressors that affect them, how they are coping with the stressors, and how they would change the health system to better reflect their needs. The youth also have the opportunity to share with their peers their own knowledge about the resources available to young people and where they can find support: counsellors, crisis lines, drop-in centres etc.

YouthNet now has six satellite organizations in different parts of the country, with Vancouver potentially being the seventh. One of YouthNet’s mandates is to make policy recommendations to health care providers, although the organization also supports a variety of other youth initiatives. Support groups and the YouthFax bimonthly bulletin are two examples. With support from YouthNet, a young woman in Quebec initiated a special program for street youth, youth in crisis and youth in care; her inspiration from the program came from her own realization that snowboarding helped take her mind off her problems. A local ski hill became her
partner, agreeing to charge only $4.00 a night for a lift pass and a snowboard rental. With the experience it now has, YouthNet’s Youth Advisory Council (YAC) is approached by many different adult-led groups for feedback on whether their documents and policies are “youth friendly”.

13. Racism

The Urban Youth Alliance (UYA – www.uya.bc.ca) is a “youth run dis-organization” based in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. UYA is a safe space for youth to meet and organize events. It offers free phone and computer access and opportunities to contribute to a community-run magazine and website. “Oppressed youth” can go to UYA for life-skills training programs. The organization holds workshops on topics such as racism, poverty and housing. Between September 1999 and April 2000, UYA hosted an Anti-Racism Project that included discussion groups, workshops, a MediaWatch, the “Art Against Racism” event, opportunities to participate in rallies, and the development of an anti-racism magazine and a website. The project continues its activities and works to raise awareness of the systemic factors perpetuating racial and ethnic power imbalances, with a focus on the Canadian context. Some of the workshops UYA offers to address specific issues around racism include:

- History of Racism in BC/Canada
- History of Colonization
- Immigration Policy in Canada
- Institutional Racism
- Media Awareness
- How to Combat Stereotyping
- How to Be an Ally
- Hate Groups / Hate Crimes

On March 24, 2001, the Urban Youth Alliance, in conjunction with the Broadway Youth Resource Centre, hosted a hip-hop youth performance show for the International Day for the Elimination of Racism. This was an opportunity for youth of colour to express their experiences of racism through performance, spoken word, art and dance.

14. Sexuality and Sexual Health

GAB Youth Services at The Centre provides support, information and referrals to lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgendered and queer (LGBTQ) youth and their friends and families. GAB offers four weekly drop-in sessions that are safe places for LGBTQ youth to socialize and plan for special events. The organization also offers PrideSpeak, an on-going interactive workshop by youth for youth, to schools and other youth-serving agencies. PrideSpeak addresses issues of sexual orientation, gender identity and homophobia, the goal being to “provide accurate, non-
judgmental information by having LGBTQ youth speak out about their experiences”. GAB also is a place where any young person experiencing discrimination because of her or his sexuality can receive one-on-one support and advocacy intervention.

The Youth Community Outreach AIDS Society (YouthCO – www.youthco.org) is a non-profit agency run by and for youth, and it is Canada’s only AIDS service organization working to address the needs of both HIV positive and negative youth. Following harm reduction and health promotion service delivery models, YouthCO provides support, outreach and prevention education to peers infected and/or affected by HIV and AIDS. YouthCO is based in Vancouver and serves the Canadian Pacific Region of BC. Members of the organization believe that promoting physical and emotional health and awareness in young people is a means to preventing HIV infection as well as prolonging the health of HIV positive youth. Some of YouthCO’s specific programs and initiatives include:

- **Speakers’ Bureau** – innovative education to youth in Lower Mainland schools, youth groups, and street-involved youth; training for outreach workers and youth service providers.
- **Materials Development Committee** – creates youth-oriented brochures, makes T-shirts, stickers, posters and rave cards.
- **Theatre Project** – an innovative and interactive way of getting peers to think and talk about HIV/AIDS and youth.
- **Positive-Youth Outreach Program (POP) and Project ‘Safe’** – “allows HIV positive youth to identify their own support and advocacy needs and to develop a self-perpetuated support model”.

15. Street-Involved Youth

In Montreal, a grass-roots non-governmental organization, Dans La Rue (DLR – www.sunnymead.org/dlr), has become a place where street youth are empowered to unite as a community, engage in civic life and organize for change (Karabanow 1999). Dans La Rue was initiated by a Catholic priest (“Pops”) in 1988, and the seed for the present organization was a travelling van that offered food, clothing, information about how to access resources in the city, and “a non-judgmental listening post”. From its conception, Pops solicited the input of the youths themselves as to how Dans La Rue could best serve their needs. This participatory approach, which included the hiring of a former street-involved youth, informed Pops about how to most appropriately develop the initiative.

One of DLR’s missions is to build community by becoming part of street youth culture and capitalizing on its positive aspects, such as group solidarity. The agency expanded in 1993 when a subsidy from the municipal government enabled the building of a shelter, *The Bunker*. Street youth determined the site for The Bunker, and DLR adopted their recommendation to
allow pets on the premises. The shelter is staffed by ex-street youth, social workers and psychologists in a non-hierarchical working environment. The Bunker "adopts a humanistic approach that focuses upon understanding the youths' 'world-view' and invoking an active partnership in trying to resolve the underlying conflict(s)" (ibid. 322). For example, if a youth wishes to find a job, a worker will partner with the young person in a job search.

Street youths are actively involved in defining the organization's structure and philosophy. Collective intervention activities are ongoing at the shelter. Many group sessions developed and run by street youths address issues such as job searching, drug use, sexual relationships and abuse. Recently, DLR received a Federal Government Youth Grant to implement a recycling project; its goal is for street youth to be trained and employed by the project and later become trainers and employers of new workers as the project expands. Another project initiated by The Bunker and a large group of street youths was a demonstration against the increasing police brutality cases reported by the homeless in Montreal. Through Dans La Rue's participatory approach to a social problem, street youth are able to assume ownership for the interventions and transcend their at-risk circumstances:

DLR succeeded as a 'haven for street youths' primarily because it saw the creation of a community as vital within both its locality development and social action orientations. Community building was an end in itself (locality development) and a means to fight against structural issues such as welfare cuts, unemployment and housing shortages (social action) (ibid. 324).

16. Substance Use and Abuse

Allied Youth (www.gov.nf.ca/health/ay) is a non-profit international organization for young people in grades seven to twelve. AY was originally formed in 1931 in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania as part of the prohibitionist movement. It spread to other US states and later to Newfoundland and Labrador in 1963. Supported by the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial government, there are now 800 members in this region. The modern-day goal of AY is to give young people an opportunity to have fun while developing self-awareness, interpersonal and leadership skills, and community involvement. These are developmental in nature and are prevention approaches against the misuse of drugs and alcohol. Some of the issues that AY concerns itself with are career planning, technology, global education and the celebration of youth achievements. These issues are addressed through sports and social activities, leadership camps, workshops and community projects.

DanceSafe (www.dscanada.dancesafe.org) is a program aimed at aged 15-25 year old recreational drug users. The organization was founded in Oakland in 1998 as an ecstasy harm
reduction program, and it has now spread to many parts of the U.S. and Canada. Its mission is to promote health and safety in the youth rave and nightclub community. DanceSafe staff set up outreach booths at raves and nightclubs where youth can get non-judgmental information about using drugs safely. They also give out free condoms and, when allowed, will screen pills for adulterants (chemicals sold as ecstasy, which can be dangerous). Youth then have access to safe and transparent information about the substances that they may or may not choose to take. DanceSafe also holds two- to three-day workshops, which involve comprehensive pharmacology lectures along with interactive popular education.

17. Violence

Leave Out Violence (L.O.V.E. — www.reseau-medias.ca/eng/med/home/advoc/love) was founded in 1993 by a woman whose husband was killed by a 14-year old mugger. Her vision “is to give youth in despair the skills and the will to choose non-violent, productive lifestyles.” L.O.V.E. now is active in Toronto, Montreal, Halifax and Vancouver. Social and youth service groups, law enforcement programs, schools and community centres refer youth between 13 and 18 who are victims, perpetrators or witnesses of violence to L.O.V.E. They gain skills in literacy, critical thinking, group dynamics and public speaking, technology, and community building.

The young participants are then given opportunities to take action on the issue of violence. They act as photographers and reporters, analyzing and documenting the causes, impacts and prevention of violence. L.O.V.E. participants outreach and educate with their experiences, through travelling exhibits of their photojournalism work. They travel to school classrooms, conferences, businesses, government, media, community centres and other public forums to raise awareness and generate discussion about violence.

L.O.V.E. produces a youth-created violence prevention newspaper, “One LOVE”, which reaches over 120,000 people twice each year. The organization has also published a book, L.O.V.E. Works (Proulx and Zosky 1999), a violence prevention tool used in schools.

18. Youth in Care

The National Youth in Care Network (www.youthincare.ca) is a non-profit organization founded in 1986 by a group of youth. These young people believed that a child welfare system failing to recognize and consult with those whom it aims to serve will inevitably suffer from ineffective attitudes and policies. It is run by and for young people aged 14-24 who are or have been in the care of Canadian child welfare authorities. The members collaborate with local child and youth-serving agencies to work at bringing a youth perspective to discussions on effective
strategies to support young people's needs. Youth in or from care, beyond providing valuable insights about the child welfare system, can offer an experiential perspective on many youth health issues: the sex trade and adolescent prostitution, emotional/sexual/physical abuse, substance abuse, and learning and behavioural difficulties.

The Youth in Care Network provides information and other resources to local youth in care support groups. It assists the youths to attend national conferences wherever possible and involves local groups in national projects. It also produces a national newsletter, the *Networker*, which acts as “a medium for youth contact, information exchange, communication and participation”.

19. Youth with Chronic Illness/Disability

The Youth Health Program at Children’s and Women’s Health Centre of BC (www.members.home.net/rapgroup) has developed a comprehensive Youth Involvement strategy for the Centre. The Youth Advisory Council (YAC) and the RAP group are the major initiatives to come out of the strategy. The YAC has a number of functions and projects, including:

- Defining “Youth Friendly” – developing the criteria for creating youth friendly environments, which can be used as a resource in the hospital community
- Skills Workshops – leadership, communication and advocacy training
- TAG (The Adolescent Gazette) – a by and for youth newsletter, a medium for youth voices to be heard
- Youth involvement on hospital committee

The RAP group is now part of a larger program of Adolescent Peer Support. The RAP was formed when nurses at the Centre’s Adolescent Care Unit identified a need to promote peer support among teens with chronic health conditions. The RAP aims to provide a forum for youth to interact with peers and health care professionals and to become informed about their conditions and treatments. Youth advocacy support is central to this strategy; the *Goals Project* works on having youth inpatients consciously ask themselves: “How can I get the most out of my stay here? What exactly do I want to achieve? What are my goals?” The Project empowers youth to express their own needs and participate in their own health care, rather than being passive recipients of care. Another important function of advocacy support is to educate adult professionals in the hospital environment about the importance of youth-friendly approaches to health care and youth involvement in decision-making.

20. Summary

From planning educational conferences and workshops, to providing opportunities for youth to attain leadership and employment skills training; from making urban environments more
livable to raising awareness of human rights issues at the international level; and from building social housing to modeling environmentally sound practices, the preceding list testifies to the range of approaches that members of youth organizations take in their work. These themes represent a broad and comprehensive strategy within the youth movement to address human and ecological health, provide meaningful learning environments for young people and foster healthy community development. And, this list is certainly not exhaustive. Taken as a collective whole, we see that this work encompasses individual, population and societal health issues. Working in such a way, youth aim to strengthen the capacity of their communities to engage thoughtfully and concertedly to create a healthier world.
CHAPTER V: FINDINGS - ENABLING YOUTH ACTIVISM

If we want to be understood when we speak practically, we must follow (or put into use, or work through) the enabling rules that structure our ordinary language... The rules here are not restrictions; they enable us to act together.
~ John Forester, Planning in the Face of Power

The purpose of this chapter is to share the ideas, views and stories as expressed by the young people and adults I interviewed and to answer the second research question:

As youth and their adult allies organize together in the community, what are some of the key enablers that, when in place, facilitate the inclusive and effective involvement of young people in the process?

The body of the chapter includes a discussion and an analysis of direct quotations from the interviews and focus groups. A number of common themes emerged from this data, and I have ordered the quotations accordingly. These themes fall under the broad umbrella of enablers. Enablers are the approaches and strategies that facilitate the equitable and inclusive participation of young people in community development. They also allow young people to work productively in an organizational capacity towards their shared goals. The responses given in this chapter indicate that enablers can be expressed at a number of different levels:

- Within the dynamics of members of a youth organization (youth-youth and/or adult-adult);
- Between youth organizations;
- Within the relationships of youth and their organizations to decision-makers and other power-holders in the community; and,
- In the general public perception and ideology.

It is important to note the interesting dynamic between responses that are positive, indicating that the experiences of the respondents have been favorable in a particular area, and those that point to obstacles or barriers in the process of youth organizing. Logically, many of the enablers originate in responses to the question: “What are some of the key elements of your initiative or organization that work well?” I have also, however, deduced specific enablers from responses in which the subjects were essentially saying: “This is not working for me. If things were different, I could be doing more effective work in the organization/community.” These kinds of enablers often emerged from the last two interview questions: (1) “What are the key aspects of your work that are problematic and that can be barriers to the achievement of the
organization's goals?” and (2) “Describe your ideal vision of how the organization would function if all of the barriers were constructively addressed”.

Figure 1 is a summary of the enablers to be outlined in this chapter, a synthesis of themes derived from interviews and focus groups. It can be considered a “conceptual framework” for an enabling approach to youth participation. Following a discussion of the political context within which youth participation occurs in Vancouver, Richmond and Burnaby, this chapter elaborates in detail on each of the themes illustrated in the figure.
FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR ENABLING YOUTH ACTIVISM

Youth Voice & Action Affecting Meaningful Community Development

- Experience in Planning & Organizing
- Accessible Forums for Dialogue
- Willingness To Confront Controversial Issues
- Common Languages
- Skills-Oriented Learning
- Accountability
- Consensus
- Financial Support $$$
- Adult Allies
- Sincere Inclusion
- Value for The Process
- Considering Appropriate Representation
- Political Acceptance
- Safe Space
- Shared Responsibility
- YOUTH OWNERSHIP
- Public Education
1. The Political Context

As a background to the responses that I received from the people I interviewed, it is important to briefly provide the municipal policy contexts (in Vancouver, Richmond and Burnaby) within which many of them are working. In March 1995, Vancouver City Council passed the Civic Youth Strategy (CYS), a policy document stating the City's commitment to the youth of Vancouver and the strategies that would be undertaken to ensure their consultation and involvement. In principle, the City committed to including youth as partners "in the development, assessment and delivery of civic services which have direct impact on youth" and "in broad spectrum community consultations and initiatives". (CYS 1995, 4). The core objectives and guiding principles of the Strategy are listed in the following table:

**TABLE 5: VANCOUVER CIVIC YOUTH STRATEGY OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Objectives</th>
<th>Guiding Principles</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ensure that youth have &quot;a place&quot; in the city.</td>
<td>• Strong youth involvement at the local level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ensure a strong youth voice in decision-making.</td>
<td>• Partnership in planning and implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Promote youth as a resource to the City.</td>
<td>• Assistance and support rather than control and Management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strengthen the support base for youth in the city.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Vancouver Civic Youth Strategy 1995, pp. 5

A tripartite coalition was established to work on implementing the CYS.

**FIGURE 2: CIVIC YOUTH STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION**

Vancouver Youth Voices is an umbrella group for a number of community-based youth organizations and receives funding support from the City. The Child and Youth Advocate position is no longer funded. Instead, a new position was created (September 2000) within the Social Planning Department. The person hired into this position is now formally responsible for
focusing on youth issues and for supporting the Civic Youth Strategy Core Committee. The CYS Core Committee acts as an advocacy and advisory group to the Vancouver City Council. It is comprised of a number of youth members and representatives from various municipal departments: Vancouver School Board, Public Libraries, Parks and Recreation, Police and Fire.

The policy framework in Richmond is similar to Vancouver. The City of Richmond endorsed a *City Strategy for Youth Services* (June 1995) shortly after the Vancouver passed the CYS. Richmond has a Youth Advisory Council, and a number of planners in the Social Planning Department are responsible for liaising with this group and carrying out extensive consultations with Richmond youth on planning decisions and community development issues.

The City of Burnaby bases its framework on two policy documents, the Burnaby *Civic Youth Strategy* and the *Youth Services Model* of the Burnaby Parks and Recreation Department. The City of Burnaby does not have a single policy group that serves to represent urban youth issues like the CYS Core Committee in Vancouver or the Richmond Youth Advisory Council. Instead, Burnaby works with the *Youth Committees* of four Youth Centres located in different “quadrants” of the municipality: Creekside, Krib, South Central and Summit Youth Centres. Through this model, Burnaby aims to achieve neighbourhood and regional political representation of youth issues, concerns and interests.

2. **Enablers**

The following themes outline the **enablers** — as expressed by the people I interviewed — encompassing the nature of work that facilitates youth activism. The same themes subsequently enable the effective translation of youth activism into meaningful community development and social change. Citations from the literature, presented in text boxes, contextualize and substantiate particular themes. I also indicate at the end of each quotation whether its origin is a focus group, an interview with an adult or an interview with a youth.

2.1 **Skills-Oriented Learning**

> popular education and social learning (or learning by doing) ... teach analytical skills and link them with ‘the big picture’.

Leonie Sandercock (1998), *Towards Cosmopolis: Planning for Multicultural Cities*
In order to participate meaningfully in community life through action-oriented initiatives, young people need to learn a wide range of life and work skills. This kind of learning is not always the approach taken towards young people. One youth noted the lack of support in this area:

...I think there is a real movement happening right now where youth want to have genuine participation and genuine voice, but they’re also not being presented with opportunities to build the skills...[focus group]

One of the organizations in this study has instituted a co-mentorship model. This model aims at fostering a mutual learning relationship between youth and adult community members with specific skills that young people can acquire through this working relationship.

... we bring in people to mentor us on things that we’ll specifically need to know for the [art] site. But we also acknowledge the fact that, um, everyone involved with the project is brought in because they have certain basic skills and, um, they in turn mentor the mentors and each other as well. So it's a continuing learning process through the whole thing with everybody being able to draw from each other's base of expertise ...[New speaker] It's not an age thing ... in my mind [what] works is the co-mentorship model, which is that it's not the level of experience or the age that matters but the sharing and what people can learn from each other. [focus group]

Many of the adult allies who work with youth understand the value of a skills-oriented learning approach:

... we're always trying to provide opportunities and training so that the youth in our programs can gain work experience and guidance skills, and be involved on youth councils and boards. We partner a lot with schools and their student councils. So, a lot of youth are building relationships with other youth service agencies. [adult interview]

Many adult supporters also recognize the challenge that mentorship presents, since learning skills takes time. Young people may have to wait to work independently on a project until they have the “skill set” they need to direct initiatives on their own.

And, there’s always a struggle with being keen and having skills, so trying to keep [youth] interested long enough, having them meaningfully involved while they learn the skills, until they get to the point that they can do what they want to do... wanting to encourage the skill set and find ways to do it, but that’s a long learning process and for some people who don’t have a high level of self-awareness it’s going to be an even longer process. [adult interview]

### 2.2 Youth Ownership

> the methodology proposed requires that the investigators and the people (who would normally be considered objects of that investigation) should act as co-investigators. The more active an attitude men and women take in regard to the exploration of their thematics, the more they deepen their critical awareness of reality and, in spelling out those thematics, take possession of that reality.

~ Paulo Freire (1970), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*
Adult allies acknowledge that making an organizational environment transparent and accessible fosters youth ownership of the organizing process:

On a day-to-day basis, it's an issue of trying to make the office open and accessible, so that people feel like they're welcome to come in and do some work. We want [youth] to know that they can take something on, rather than telling me what they want and me going out and doing it, because then there's no ownership. So that means making sure they have access to the office and the resources. [adult interview]

One young person I spoke with belonged to an advisory committee that had identified where youth ownership was lacking. A space used frequently by youth at the hospital had not been designed by young people and did not reflect their interests:

... [The youth told us they] want to paint the walls. [They want the hospital administration to] give youth more flexibility and freedom with decorating the Acute Care Unit and making it more youth friendly. [youth interview]

Many of the youth I interviewed belong to youth driven organizations, which uphold youth ownership as a priority concern:

There isn't, there isn't any aspect of [our organization] where there isn't any youth involvement, from grant writing to the administration to accounting to the art to office duties... There's youth involvement in every single step of what [our organization] is, which is why I think it has been as effective as it is. [focus group]

We can all talk about where we want to see the project go together as we create and define where or what our next step is, what workshops we get involved with, what youth groups we get involved with and, that way, we get all the different perspectives. [focus group]

Once you realize that, wow, you know, like I shape my own tasks. Like I, I create the things that I want to work on, I can do it from a passion or [an] interest in it, and you get so much more out of it and it's really empowering to know that. And it's like, that's why it's such a great team to be working on. [focus group]

2.3 Shared Responsibility

A common participation strategy that many youth organizations use in their initiatives is called co-facilitation. This can be either a peer-based team effort, or a combined youth-adult partnership. These organizations are cognizant of the need for young people to work in a team environment. Co-facilitation and other forms of joint leadership avoid placing work responsibilities on the shoulders of individuals. They facilitate youth ownership, and they encourage creative and cooperative problem solving.
When meetings first began, it was observed that the adults were speaking and the youth were silent, hence they established a co-chair format, so that the meetings are always facilitated by a youth and an adult. [adult interview]

...each project should have a head coordinator and then another coordinator...we recently did a project where one person was coordinating it, and that project felt far away...that person wasn’t getting, um, the kind of support that we found easily came from being in partnership or in a team of three or four on something. So it’s sort of one of our guidelines to always have two people...it’s really valuable to sit down with someone else and say “okay, what should we do?”...It’s like work if you’re doing it on your own. Whereas if you’re doing it with someone else there’s a higher learning curve, and there’s more like creative energy and it’s just more fun and challenging. [focus group]

Equity is an important characteristic of shared work responsibilities. The youth divide tasks in a way that ensures the working environment continues to be engaging for each participant:

And we’ve sort of split things down the middle between [the two of us] in terms of glamour work and grunt work. Um, we both sort of share, we share the duties... [focus group]

2.4 Safe Space

Creating a safe space where young people are accepted, where they feel a sense of belonging and where their unique gifts and contributions are recognized is a primary concern for most youth organizations:

[We always consider] “how do you create a safe space so youths aren’t marginalized or youths will feel welcome or that, um, there isn’t any harm?”...because it may be really personal stuff that we go over from time to time. [focus group]

An important component of most conferences, meetings or other gatherings led by youth is what is called check-in, debrief, or round. This is a circle activity where the participants introduce themselves, say why they’re participating, and how they are feeling in general. This an opportunity to create an inclusive space and learn about the people in the group. It is also relaxing and often fun, since frequently the round will incorporate information like “what’s your favorite fruit”, or “what time of day do you like the most and why?”. These circle discussions can also be a way of closing working sessions.

We all do a check-in, which is kind of a personal time where we just say what we thought of the meeting, how we’re feeling, anything we want, really. Sometimes we choose an arbitrary topic or just reflect...it really brings closure and brings it back into perspective and not so business like, which is nice. [focus group]
when we were doing facilitation of workshops and we do it in pairs, like a really important part of the process is the debriefing, check-ins before and after, because it's really hard to do it by ourselves, and the idea is to have a person there to talk about that. [focus group]

One of the focus group participants spoke to the challenge of trying to create safe space by redressing power structures:

And I think what we try to do, although we don't always do successfully is make it safe for people to call everybody on their shit, like it's not always done, do you know what I mean? Like it's sometimes hard to make it safe and okay for everybody to be like "I don't appreciate this", but at least that [structure is] there. [focus group]

The following response from a focus group participant demonstrates that her experience with safe space — feeling “comfortable and free” in her organization — is directly linked with her sense of productivity and participation:

...I've worked in lots and lots of other different youth organizations and stuff, and this space in this organization was the first one that I felt like everything that we did was productive...how comfortable and free I felt in the office... [focus group]

2.5 Adult Allies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>There is no freedom without authority, but there is also no authority without freedom. Freedom and authority cannot be isolated, but must be considered in relationship to each other.</th>
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<td>~ Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed</td>
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Expanding the visibility and power of young people as agents of change does not occur without adults who support and advocate for youth engagement. Throughout my study, I found that adult allies of youth play a variety of roles in this respect. For example, they offer a link to decision makers with whom youth generally don’t have contact:

...[The community developers are] our real aid, not only in being amazing facilitators for us...They're our link to the greater scheme of things. It's really an amazing thing. Otherwise, I think the lines of communication would be broken...it brings the Board from this giant, giant sort of, um, bureaucratic mass into a real community working where there's a lot of open lines of communication. [focus group]

Adult allies can provide specific organizational skills that young people might be newly learning, and youth also benefit from the contacts that these adults may have in the community:

...[One of our adult supporters] is a wealth of knowledge in terms of fundraising and legal and contractual issues and accounting issues. And she's setting up, set up our accounting system, she does our books and ...we use her knowledge an immense amount...[New speaker] I'd say the biggest thing that the board members do for fundraising is help us network and act as bridges. [focus group]

Adult allies, as much as young people, are considering issues of safe space:

...[Youth are] in it for a lot of different reasons. They might be in it to meet people, to plug into the community. A lot of them are just looking for a safe space to be. One of the big things
about process is creating a safe space. So, I think adult mentors have to bring to bear all their skills, knowledge, power etc. to create safe spaces. That's a lot about what as an organization we strive towards, to create the safe space for youth TO CREATE and go farther than they ever have before. [adult interview]

It's important to create an atmosphere where kids are listened to, they are safe and they aren't judged. [adult interview]

I found that planners and community developers working with youth are highly committed and inspired by the work that they do:

You know, we're talking about young people who are learning, and trying different things out themselves... And I've sat in council and I've had tears in my eyes as I've watched our young people make these presentations, and you know, young people that we've known since they were fourteen, fifteen or sixteen who are now twenty and we've watched them move along. It's very, it's really heartwarming to know that, um, it works! You just have to stay at it. [adult interview]

2.6 Financial Support

| Participating costs money (transportation, meeting places, time off from jobs), but youth typically do not have many resources. | ~ Canadian Mental Health Association (1993), Getting Together: Towards a Partnership with Youth |

Funding is an issue for everyone. It is a bigger issue for non-profit organizations, and an even bigger one for youth organizations. The funding challenges faced by the social service sector are compounded by the pervasive stereotypes surrounding youth, as well as by the fact that many youth organizations are trying to push the envelope and challenge the status quo.

Um, it's actually quite a challenge for us to get money because of... two things, but I think one's more important. One we're youth, right, we're a youth organization... but most importantly it's what we do. 'Cause at the core what we do challenges the fundamental tenets of our economic system. [focus group]

When funding is available to support youth activities, young people generally face severe restrictions on how they are permitted to spend those dollars:

... we'll get a grant that says, you know, "you've got this huge bundle of money but you only use it for THIS"... we get a lot of money for the actual construction of [art] sites and a lot of money for renting the office, like keeping up certain parts of the office and stuff like that... And then, ah, it was harder to get money for the actual involvement of youth... [focus group]

Adults with a genuine desire to involve young people in their organizations often do not have enough financial support to do so:

[Funding is] a major issue... I don't believe that just going out to youth and trying to build relationships with them and getting them to understand that you are an ally to them is necessarily effective. I really think that you have to show your commitment to youth, and one of the big ways to do that is to employ youth. Unfortunately, we just don't have the resources
to do it, and it's hard because we believe in it... we kind of have this double standard where we say it's very important to have youth involved at every step of the process, but then we don’t have the resources to pay them. [adult interview]

Power in terms of young people and in terms of the relationship between adults and agencies has to begin by a commitment of dollars to young people... I mean, the best scenario in terms of young people involved in a process is to hire them into the process, so that there's an equal power balance. And I would prefer to have more young people hired than just one. Preferably one, but more if necessary. [adult interview]

The youth public art organization I interviewed indicated that funding issues can often threaten the practice of collective decision making:

Like, “oh we just didn't get a grant and now we’re not going to be able to pay everybody”, but not everybody can help write the next grant because everybody's so busy, and we don’t have enough time to mentor everybody on grant writing at this time because we’re in crisis mode. [focus group]

In short, to be truly effective and sustainable, the valuable work of youth organizations in communities needs to be supported financially:

... we need to really be putting resources into this kind of work and no one is doing this. [focus group]

2.7 *Sincere Inclusion*

**Tokenism n. esp. Politics: the principle or practice of granting minimum concessions, esp. to minority or under-represented groups, as a token gesture to appease public pressure, comply with legal requirements, etc. (1998 Canadian Oxford Dictionary definition)**

Youth can be very susceptible to tokenistic inclusion by adult groups that have not sensitively considered how young people become meaningfully involved in a process. Tokenism is recognized as a potentially damaging experience for marginalized individuals. One common case of youth tokenism occurs at adult-led conferences *about* youth, where one young person is asked to represent the views of *all* youth.

Um, but a situation like that is also so dangerous for youths who come and just share their experiences. Like they don’t, um, they're totally being the objects of the story line, you know, the subjects of the conference. And they’re not, they’re not asked to critique the broader context around them or speak to why they did have these experiences in the first place. So it’s like the youth share their stories and then all the experts speak to their experience which is really, um, not safe or not a very safe environment for anybody to be in, I don’t think. I mean that doesn’t just apply to youths, but it happens a lot with youths because for some reason people think youths are often not really thinking in a critical way. [focus group]

[Sarcastically reflecting on a past experience:] “We have a youth from the United Youth Movement [coming to talk at the conference], and UYM doesn’t really mean anything anymore, but we’re just going to say it, and we don’t really pay her anything, but that’s okay cause she talks a lot, and she’s poor .... Aw.” [youth interview]
Many young people have experienced a feeling of frustration when the work that they are engaged in is not genuinely recognized.

The perception issues I think sometimes is this, is “gee it's great what those young people are doing.” [New speaker] “Wow, good God, thanks but, I'm so glad they're there.” [First speaker] “Thankfully.. So anyways - back to work.” And I know that's not true for all people but I do feel that way sometimes. And I feel that way based on the support that we get financially. [focus group]

2.8 Common Languages

When planners speak the language of a particular group, they do so not just to be clear, but to shape a course of action. They act as they speak. Because we learn language and the world together, we cannot have much of a world together if we do not listen. Only through our shared work, language, and interaction do we have a meaningful world of which we are intelligible, moral members.

~ John Forester (1989), Planning in the Face of Power

A participatory process that involves young people can unintentionally alienate them if care is not taken in choosing a language appropriate to their development and experiences. Although the issue of language came up many times in this study, I selected the following quotation to represent some of the concerns that frequently arise:

Especially when you're having young people involved in processes, they sit around the table and say “I don't know what the hell you're talking about. Like, can you just tell me in plain English what you're saying? You guys use all these words and we don't understand what you're saying. Can you just cut to the chase and let us know what's going on?” So, part of it is about ensuring that if you're involving young people in a process that it comes from their language perspective, not from an adult language perspective. Language is very important in how things are constructed, and when [youth] get involved in a process, they need to be able to understand what's being said, what's being put forward. The challenge is that adults forget about that. Adults come into the room, sit down at the table and work with some young person. They may be academically trained, and I was too, academically trained. And young people are going to swear. That's the reality. “You're full of shit!” Adults need to understand that they have to come to working with young people from a language perspective in which they have to think about things. And they also have to listen to young people. How are they speaking, what are they saying? Can I speak at this level? Do I have to tone down my language? Do I have to remember that there are acronyms in what I'm saying and I have to be cognizant of that? “You guys are talking in a foreign language”. [adult interview]

2.9 Accessible Forums for Dialogue

Radical practice unfolds in experimental settings which, in turn, are created in the course of the practice itself. Settings for a living experiment, they are invariably scaled to a human nexus; they are spaces for human encounter.

~ John Friedmann, The Good Society

Some of the issues addressed earlier, including safe space and common languages, affect the accessibility of forums for youth participation. In order for youth to feel truly comfortable
participating in a process, adults need to learn to let go of pre-established notions about how forums for dialogue should be designed.

...there are so many barriers to [youth] being full participants. A lot of them are more timid than the adult community. A lot of them are just not comfortable in the adult setting...[adult interview]

Youth want structure, but they're running away from the traditional ones, so it's always the question of "what is this structure going to look like?" [adult interview]

There's a lot of power imbalances in terms of young people involved in an adult process. And that's the first problem - that they're adult processes, they're not young people's processes... Adults want to have "This is point A", and they want it on paper, "point B, C, D". These are the timelines we're going at, this is how we're doing it". Now, young people may not be on the same timeline that you are or I am...You need to begin to engage young people early on, and have them work with you to construct something that they will be comfortable with and you will be comfortable with. [adult interview]

2.10 Political Acceptance

<table>
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<th>Any local authority committed to realizing children's rights will have to acknowledge that such a commitment cannot be expressed through the adoption of goals that only superficially enhance the lives of children.</th>
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<td>~ Sheridan Bartlett, Roger Hart et al (1999), Cities for Children</td>
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A common factor in the often-uninviting design of adult forums is politics. Bureaucracies do not tend to be very accessible to young people, much less youth-friendly. Youth participation in public life requires legitimization at the political level in order to be wide reaching.

I was quite shocked and amused during an interview with a youth activist. This young person had been a member of the Civic Youth Strategy Core Committee for a number of years. He recounted an experience in which a letter sent to the committee members from the Mayor's office (the CYS being a mandated advisory body to the Vancouver City Council) addressed the committee as the “Pacific Youth Strategy”?!! [?] Both the youth and adults I interviewed had experienced setbacks due to bureaucratic red tape.

...the biggest, biggest hassle with the public artist's work is bureaucracy...the City wants a say in every single thing you do and it drives me nuts because you have to go and present at any stage...and at any part the City can shut you down. And that's terrifying. [focus group]

One of the other challenges has been the time lag. I think it's particularly frustrating for youth, although I can tell you it's frustrating for me too, working within a bureaucracy and seeing change happen. A lot of times it just doesn't work fast enough for people and the momentum gets lost. [adult interview]

I use the word bureaucratic paper pushing...stuff filtering down from the Board that we have to spend minutes on and give focus to and then, and then end up giving lack of focus to our project outside in the community, which is unfortunate but the case...it tends to consume
what your real focus should be on, which is outreaching, getting in the community, but, um, it also needs to be done so I don't know. We need to maintain a balance. [focus group]

In my experience, fear is a great impediment to the political acceptance of participatory youth work. The status quo is highly resistant to granting youth the power and the freedom to work in communities with their own agendas.

Um, it was one of the most excruciating processes I've ever been part of in my life. And we're glad and we're gonna spend that money but we're, I don't think we'll do it again. [Chuckle] No thank you, keep it when you say you want to get [youth] to be active citizens, I can see all of them get a little bit nervous...[the grant application process] was just like hoops, through hoops, through hoops... there were all the bureaucrats in the middle who are always gonna be in the government and would rather not get things that they think are, you know, whatever, "controversial", not funded. And so they just stalled for time so that they, you know, would try to look for things to poke holes in. [focus group]

People don't think youth can do it. One hundred percent. They don't think youth can do it and they don't want to give them a chance because they'll be too radical or they'll cause problems. [adult interview]

Politics will always be a part of working in the public realm. Rather than feeling hopeless in the face of the bureaucratic barriers, a young woman I interviewed enjoyed the challenge of working within "the system". She saw it as an opportunity to learn and to work for change:

I still believe that it's worth working through those slow gears because at least you're getting somewhere. There is potential for change. [focus group]

2.11 Willingness to Confront Controversial Issues and Take Risks

We... must never provide the people with programs which have little or nothing to do with their own perceptions, doubts, hopes, and fears...

~ Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Supporting youth to become more involved and engaged in community life requires, for many, a leap of faith. Two major hindrances to meaningful youth involvement are negative stereotypes and the belief that youth either do not know enough or are not responsible enough. This required leap of faith involves working with youth on issues that are real to them. This may seem obvious, but many people still have not figured it out. In an interview, a young woman revealed that she found it "weird that there's a policeman at the meeting trying to tell you about the cool basketball program they're starting up for youth" rather than addressing what she asserted were "racist, brutalized efforts in the Downtown Eastside". The values of youth culture need to be legitimized, although these values will not frequently match the dominant values of the broader adult society.

You get funded to do certain kinds of work and you don't get funded for others. There's things that young people do, like play music, put on shows, do art, speeches, write newsletters, and do zines, graffiti, like all of these things are so youth culture... those are youth community.
The youth are at raves, that's what they're doing. They’re not up until 11:00 going to meetings...or answering questions [for public sector programs]... That's what they've made us do to get money. None of that other stuff will ever get funding. That's what sucks ass. [youth interview]

Many youth organizations face intolerance because they are advocating for minority group issues around race, sex, income and others.

We have a difficult time with the limits of people's acceptance, so people will say that they want queer youth to be safe in their communities and their schools, but they don't want to go any farther than that. But, where we would go is to say “well, they also need to be validated, if they have questions they need to be able to go somewhere where they can get accurate, non-judgmental information”. Queer youth need to be validated and told “that's normal”, “that's healthy”, all the rest of it. That's a step that people don't want to go to, so that keeps us out of some places and that keeps us from reaching some young people. [adult interview]

One of my interviews highlighted politicians' general unwillingness to take risks when dealing with controversial issues:

One of the reasons that [a public employee focused on youth issues] got booted out was that she was too autonomous. She was advancing a cause that the city council didn't want to see. The bureaucrats and city manager didn't want those issues on the table... So they got rid of [that person] to defang what was going on. What did the youth community do? They petitioned, they protested, but they weren't listened to. Why? Because they're not an electorate. They don't vote. [adult interview]

2.12 Valuing the Process (as much as or more than the Product)

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<th>Relationship building is an endurance event.</th>
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<td>~ Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern, <em>Reclaiming Youth at Risk</em> (1990)</td>
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I have often heard both youth and adults say that “it's all about process”. Our society is very product oriented. Critical learning and skill development, which youth undergo as they participate in organizations and community projects, take place over a long term time period.

Adult stakeholders often are product-oriented, whereas with youth it's process. They develop leadership skills, things they can take back into their lives...We need to challenge youth service providers to think about how they gage success. We need a shift in thinking away from the numbers game, such as dollars and number of participants in attendance. [adult interview]

To be truly committed to a youth driven, youth empowerment model, you have to be able to sit back as adults and let [youth] take the front seat of the bus and let them drive it. Sometimes, its easier and faster for us to just do it ourselves and get it done, but I think we've all been committed to seeing the process through. And it takes a lot of time, it really does, a lot of time to support, a lot of time to see it through, to be there through the ups and downs and the left-turns and U-turns. And, that's a challenge, I think. It's part of the beauty of it, but it's also a challenge for everybody involved. [adult interview]

The youth organizations I have profiled are generally aware of the level of support young people need when learning new skills, and they work at making the experience as rewarding as possible until the youth are ready to take the lead on any initiative:
...we really tried to encourage people as they come on to just come out [and facilitate], it’s gonna be fun and, ah, we really wait until someone, a new team member is ready to facilitate our workshops ... Everyone has their difference in their comfort level with it, so we offer all the trainings and we let them decide when they want to try to do their workshop and, um, and make sure that we sit down and do debriefing after and make sure we do, you know, proper preparation as best we can, that sort of stuff. [focus group]

One focus group participant articulated the explicit objective of her organization to provide a learning environment for youth, an approach that validates young people’s “in process” development and facilitates long term capacity building within the organization:

When we hire people we’re specifically looking for people who have some skills, um, but not every skill or who have some experience but not all of the experience...and if someone applies with all of it, it’s just not the right place for them, because we’re not looking for someone who can, um, who can like run [our organization]. We’re looking for someone who can participate in the process and we’re looking to give people opportunities. [focus group]

2.13 Considering Appropriate Representation

Clearly, then, the concept of difference needs to be ‘handled with care’. difference must be incorporated into the quest for social justice in the multiracial, multiethnic city.

~ Leonie Sandercock (1998), Towards Cosmopolis: Planning for Multicultural Cities

For anyone working in fields that consider democratic participation and/or public involvement in decision making and community development, representation is an issue. Any inclusive planning process needs to be respectful and considerate of the stakeholder group or population that will ultimately be affected by that process. Generally, the size of these populations makes it impossible to include every person’s voice in the process. The key is to identify representatives who can speak knowledgeably and reliably to the needs and interests of the group. A population for which meaningful representation is a highly complex issue is younger youth and children:

How can [the committee] meaningfully reach young kids? At this point, the youth are speaking for the children by recalling the kinds of issues they would have liked to address, had they been able to, at an early age. [adult interview]

An ongoing challenge for youth organizations is finding ways to engage with youth who may not have interest in participating in a formal way. Youth activists that work or volunteer in youth organizations tend to be natural leaders. They may not be able to meaningfully represent the needs and concerns of many of their peers.

The youth who are out there representing their community - this may be a bias on my part - they’re professional advocates, they’re one type of youth. Youth that are really out there. Not afraid to stand up and say something, not afraid to get themselves in some hot water, they are very very outspoken. To me they’re a category of youth, and they’re very important. But to me we’re missing more representation of youth, we’re missing youth that perhaps are interested in getting involved but don’t know anything about it. [adult interview]
The ability to ensure a high level of representation in an organization is directly influenced by available time and resources — both human and financial.

For me, the biggest, biggest issue is getting the resources to truly have representation at the table. [adult interview]

2.14 Consensus and Accountability

Can we do justice to all values, images, and identities and still negotiate consensus?


Consensus-based decision making is recognized as a characteristic of an inclusive planning practice, yet it becomes a very challenging task with the increase of personal and group interests contributing to a decision making process. One of the organizations interviewed for this study seems to have a healthy arrangement of horizontal leadership, and consensus facilitates the inclusion of each youth member in the decisions that affect the organization:

In that sense we are all involved in other projects sort of like it’s our own and there isn’t like the boss and there isn’t like, you know, like different levels of it, we’re all on the same plane, we’re just all working in maybe different areas and, all the decisions are made that way and through consensus [we] define them with each other. [focus group]

The larger an organization is, the more challenging and complex it becomes to maintain an inclusive decision making process. The previous focus group quotation came from a youth who is one of only four youth staff members. In an organization with many more members, inclusive decision making is a complex and time-consuming task. Members of the public art group had varying perspectives on the effectiveness of their organization’s decision making process:

...it’s kind of hard when you’re trying to do things as a collective and have input from everyone on every decision. It takes a bit longer, but it rewards us...

...we can’t get everybody sitting at the table at the same time.

I have to say that this is the first organization that I’ve worked in that has tried to even form that whole foundation on collectivity, and they’ve actually done a really good job and worked really hard in doing it.

And that’s really hard for me to, to explain because I don’t totally really understand it. I know that the collective wants input from everyone and that it’s really hard to have input from everyone and do it efficiently and then make a decision on top of that... in a team level it’s easy because the team is small, but [with] the whole collective I don’t know if that’s possible too, because the team has like their own things to do, their own dynamic and their own tasks...and deadlines, and you can’t be all things... So I guess like the ideal of having everybody sharing their opportunities in the collective and then decision making is really nice but it’s not possible.
One of the adults I interviewed discounted the idea of consensus all together. He did believe, however, that healthy decision making is possible when power in an organization is transparent and accountable.

“There’s no power here, everyone’s equal, except the finance person over there, and that person over there.” That happens all the time, get rid of all the titles and no one has power. That’s bullshit. There are people who have invested power. The trick is to have transparent power where there’s cheques and balances. And then from there, if one person is really good at something and really wants to put a lot of time into it, then that person should probably have more power. That doesn’t mean you can’t question them. That doesn’t mean you don’t question their very existence...

For youth involvement to have beneficial impacts at all levels of society, politicians and other decision makers mandating such policies as “youth voice in decision making” and “youth as a resource” must establish mechanisms through which they remain accountable to the youth population. Forums that involve youth in a bureaucratic system can be particularly lacking in accountability structures.

I think sometimes the youth committee members feel they don’t have the connection to council they had hoped to have. They haven’t had the direct connection to departments that they might have liked to have had too. [adult interview]

...we are misguided as to what our own goals and mandate should be...We submitted our work two years ago and we get a response like, you know, lukewarm responses throughout and we don’t see much happening. We put in so much effort and, you know, we are an advisory committee. We don’t have much power... I think there should be time limits set by the Board, they [should] have to get back to us by a certain date with a good answer. We give them things and they just sleep. [focus group]

2.15 Experience in Planning and Organizing

Adults have been around longer than youth. They bring to the table the wisdom of their years and their knowledge of how decision making systems and organizations work. Youth, on the other hand, bring to the table a freshness to the issues which may be just what is needed to find more effective solutions to problems.

—Canadian Mental Health Association, Getting Together: Towards a Partnership With Youth

Creating and sustaining a viable organization requires both skills and experience. Planning in an organization involves project management, specific procedures and other methods of working that many youth members may be putting a hand to for the first time.

[A challenge is] just not having those structures that more established organizations have...we have to create all the structures ourselves. [focus group]

A key component of an organization is your organizational memory, your contacts, all these kinds of things that define the organization as an entity... The thing that makes youth organizations very dynamic is that they don’t ‘play’ in the roles, they’re all willing to take risks, huge risks at times, and because of that they can become hugely successful. But the problem is
that they don't have some of those core kinds of things that make you tick, which could be your policies, your accounting, your generalized management skills and all those kinds of things aren't always there... Plus, you need formal education to do certain things. You need managerial skills. Especially if your organization gets beyond a certain size, then you will need someone with those skills. You can't just DO accounting... [adult interview]

In one focus group discussion, a youth indicated that not having had the time or experience to coordinate formal “systems” for his organization was both a challenge and an opportunity. It meant that there was a great deal of flexibility in how young participants could work within the organization:

Um, so in terms of people being involved it's really, this is good and bad, it's really up to their own impetus. It's bad in that we don't have the systems yet... The good thing is that there's as much work for someone to do as they want.

2.16 Public Education

It took a decade of work to move the idea that young people don't grow up in programs, they grow up in communities. Perhaps we can increase the learning curve for the next challenge -- participation shouldn't occur just in programs, it should occur in communities.


Public education in the area of youth engagement needs to occur at two levels. Young people themselves have the right to the kind of education that allows them to become critical thinkers and active citizens.

The biggest problem working with youth in the Downtown South was that there was a very limited and privileged access to information and education. Youth [often form] politics at a very superficial level, without knowledge of the underlying reasons behind why you make a certain lifestyle choice... I just wish there was more of an education process for people to really think more about [systemic issues/causes] instead of basic needs stuff. If we're just fulfilling basic needs, we're not going to get anywhere... a little thing here, a little thing here, instead of, like, the huge chunk and making sure it's clear that we know what that chunk is and we know it'll fix the problem... [youth interview]

Finally, there needs to be more education of the public about the stereotypes that impact on youth. A counteracting of those stereotypes then can occur through efforts to educate the public about the skills and talents of our young people. Youth are not often acknowledged for the resources that they are in their communities. Consequently, communities tend to miss out on a tremendous opportunity to learn and grow through their young people.

The other thing around funding is that I would like to see us educate our population better about the strengths of youth. We can't do any of that, and yet there's a real adultism out there where we include youth but we do it because we've been told it's an important thing to do... It's education, it's making people understand somehow that when I was eighteen I definitely knew what I wanted for an eighteen-year-old, and I was idealistic enough to have a really good vision of the future. And I knew that at sixteen, and I knew a lot of that at fourteen, and I wasn't a bad kid. There are all sorts of stereotypes associated with youth. I think there needs to be a lot of education around youth as full human beings, not
underdeveloped. As full participants in democracy. On top of that as NOT the stereotypes. I think it would be helpful for people to be aware that youth don't account for the majority of violent crimes, that youth aren't mischievous. We have to kind of go past that... I think it would be one of the most important steps to having youth included is to educate society at large about the importance of their voice. [adult interview]

3 Integrating Enablers

The sixteen enablers presented above are the major themes that emerged from a detailed analysis of the interview and focus group data. They include experiences where some of these factors may have been present in an organization, facilitating the collective action of the young people involved. They also include experiences where one or more of the enablers were not available to the youth, this circumstance clearly frustrated the process of youth engagement.

A sustained effort to incorporate and maintain as many of these enablers as possible into any partnership between youth and adults will undoubtedly support the increased participation of youth in development projects around issues of importance to them. It will be up to the participants of any given initiative to discover the most appropriate and effective integration of these enablers. Certainly, the composition of a group, the characteristics of a project or an organization, the skills and capacities of the members, and the external factors affecting the group are unique in each case. Enabling the participation of the young people in each case will need an equally unique approach. Regardless of the approach, enabling youth participation is in a community's best interest. The implications are health promoting — for the young people and the entire community. Chapter Six will demonstrate that a component of healthy community life is strong social capital, the strengthening of which is facilitated by meaningful youth participation.
CHAPTER VI: FINDINGS

YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS CRAFTING SOCIAL CAPITAL

Youth organizations practicing small group democracy increase the capacity of local communities
to set their own future pathways for growth and development.
~ Richard Lakes, Youth Development and Critical Education:
The Promise of Democratic Action

After over a year of research into the area of youth activism for community change, I have
come to the conclusion that social capital theory is an ideal analytical framework for describing some
of the new and innovative forms of organizing that youth and their adult allies are developing. In
Chapter Five, I presented a thematic analysis of the enablers that need to be adopted in order to
facilitate meaningful youth participation. While Chapter Five is useful as a checklist of valuable
approaches, it does not contribute directly to the theory and practice of community development
planning. Chapter Six goes beyond a prescriptive list by placing the findings in the larger context
of planning, interpreting them within a social capital model and integrating them in planning
theory. This chapter provides many examples of how social capital is being crafted, enhanced and
consolidated through young people’s efforts. The findings describe an emerging civic culture that
enables youth participation. Many of the enablers characterized in Chapter Five are the
foundation for particular organizational techniques that, when applied thoughtfully and
strategically, contribute to the health of the entire community.

1. Youth and Social Capital in the Literature

Throughout the course of a comprehensive literature search on social capital theory, I
found only one article that documents the contribution of youth to enhancing social capital. In
“Social capital and community development” (2000), Autar S. Dhesi describes the case of Decian
Kahna, a town in northwest India, and the impact that organized youth have had on its
development in recent years. Decian suffered an erosion of its social capital base with the arrival
of the British until well after independence in 1947. Traditional village leadership and values had
come into conflict with newly structured formal institutions, which hindered development in the
area and caused the out-migration of “enterprising persons”. Proposed advances in Decian socio-
economic infrastructure were thwarted by conflicts between "formal and informal community institutions, [and] the elected village council could not initiate developmental activities in spite of the availability of financial support" (209). The formal leadership functioned through a structure that failed to incorporate traditional cultural values. As a result, "the traditional community leaders were so adverse to the elected leaders that there was a complete impasse" (ibid.).

In 1957, a Block Development Advisory Committee was formed to assess the conflicts and make recommendations as to a course of action. In consultation with the development administration, and with their financial support, the committee decided to reach out to the youth and organize a youth club. It was hoped that this effort would facilitate village-wide acceptance of changes in existing social structures and formal institutions. The youths themselves organized the club, and it was found that they were also able to strategically reinforce and mobilize values of generosity and cooperation existent in the culture.

As well as providing the club with recreational facilities, the authorities organized village leaders' training camps for them, so that the young people could be "deployed as catalysts for development". After participating in these camps, the trained youth coordinated small group consultation discussions with community members. Dhesi portrays the young people as profiting from existing tensions in the community and redirecting them to a new consciousness about the importance of carrying out developmental activities:

A new layer of social linkages among the youths in contrast to the traditional structure started emerging. The highly motivated young members of the village community assumed the role of agents of change...The existence of norms in the collective consciousness of the community was an important form of social capital that youths could call upon to mobilize the community's cooperation...By bringing about some consensus on social purpose and clearly defined objectives of collective action, youth succeeded in coordinating the expectations of traditional and formal leaderships... Thus, the youth contributed to strengthening the formal leadership by securing active official support for its activities on the one hand and by modifying the informal social capital to meld with the formal institutional social capital (210).

The net results of these community capacity-building strategies included diversification of the economy, increased socio-economic infrastructure and improved literacy rates. Dhesi concludes that

...the existence of a critical mass of highly interested and resourceful individuals is a necessary condition for collective action. Usually, the younger members of a community are likely to be relatively more receptive to new ideas and can be effective agents of social change and development (211).

Youth in this community were able to mediate — and effectively pacify — what was a previously an antagonistic and a polarized community environment and, subsequently, facilitate cooperative efforts that guided development. What does this kind of process mean for what youth organizing strategies can offer to the burgeoning body of work on social capital and its forms? Why are
writers who attest to the intrinsic value of social capital to any collective action not documenting experiences of youth activism and its impacts? The following sections will substantiate the validity of these questions.

2. Re-Conceptualizing Theory

In order for the reader to have a clear understanding of how I have designed the analytical framework for my investigation, I return to two applications of social capital that were presented in Chapter Three. These are Uphoff's (1999) and Rydin & Pennington's (2000) analyses, referred to on pp. 34 and 35. Although I find Uphoff's and Rydin and Pennington's analyses extremely useful, I have concluded that they can be presented in a way that more appropriately illustrates the dynamics and relationships of these theories' categories and measures. Separately, they do not invoke an awareness of social capital that does justice to the process of youth organizing as I have observed it. After collecting the data for this thesis, I revisited Uphoff's and Rydin and Pennington's papers and, from them, created a model that both incorporates and expands on the first two. Synthesizing the analyses into one model reveals a more comprehensive inquiry into the phenomenon of social capital. The two models complement one another in that Rydin and Pennington elaborate in more practical terms the social and organizational arrangements that shape structural social capital, as Uphoff characterizes it.

Figure Three illustrates this new and integrated model of social capital, based on my results. Uphoff's categories are presented as a series of concentric circles in order to represent the dynamic relationships between each of the categories he outlines. Rydin and Pennington's measures are embedded within the model, since they denote the more micro-scale patterns of social capital that emerge through institutional design and redesign. Beginning on page 82, the remainder of this chapter is devoted to elaborating on the individual characteristics of the model, with the findings as examples. Many of my results confirm the theories of social capital on which the model is based. In addition, they expand on the theories by making particular aspects more explicit.
FIGURE 3: DIMENSIONS AND DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

COGNITIVE

Social Organization

STRUCTURAL

Civic Culture

Values

Norms

Roles

Rules

Networks

Horizontal Linkages

Interpersonal Relationships

Precedents

Procedures

Roles

Inclusion

Solidarity

Trust

Respect

Equity

Generosity

Expectations leading to cooperative behaviour

producing mutual benefits

Organizational Matters

Institutional Design and Redesign

Norms and Routine Practice of Interaction

To complement Uphoff's cognitive social capital characteristics with others I have observed through the process of my own research, I have added four elements to the "Dynamic Factors" category: inclusion, respect, and equity. Although networks are already present in the "Sources and Manifestations" circle, I have also inserted them into the "Dynamic Factors" circle. Networks are a source and a manifestation of structural social capital, yet they also function dynamically in tandem with the vertical linkages and horizontal linkages of social organization. The substantive characteristics that are my own additions to this model are underscored in the figure so that the reader can distinguish them.

Figure Four illustrates graphically Rydin and Pennington's measures of social capital through institutional design and redesign. This model serves as a framework to characterize some of the organizational matters and norms and routine practice of interaction that I have observed during my inquiry into the dynamics of the organized youth community.
FIGURE 4: MEASURES OF (STRUCTURAL) SOCIAL CAPITAL

The assignment of rights and duties to actors

The nature of arenas for interaction

The rules of interaction

The role of actors within interactions

The sharing of information and resources

The presentation and self-presentation of actors and the interaction process

The handling of conflicts and values

The language of interaction

The building of agreement, compromises and trade-offs

SOURCE: Rydin and Pennington (2000)
To Rydin and Pennington's eight measures, I have added a ninth: the sharing of information and resources. The inclusion of this category complements other bodies of work in the literature on social capital theory. An analysis of social capital in the context of youth organizing would not be complete without highlighting the strategies of information sharing — developed through dynamic networks and partnerships — that build capacity in the youth community. In the course of my research, I observed information sharing to be a function of both 'organizational matters' as well as 'norms and routine practice of interaction', hence I have portrayed it as such in the figure. In the practical analysis, this measure also serves to concretize the dynamic factors of Uphoff's structural forms of social capital: vertical linkages, horizontal linkages and networks. I explain this in detail beginning on page 90.

3. The Theory in Practice

Figure Five expands on Figure Four with practical examples of the ways in which the young activists, adult allies and youth organizations that comprise my research provide insight to social capital theory. These examples are listed in text boxes under each of the theory's measures. The examples are a synthesis of findings that were presented in Chapter Four and Five with other findings from the interview/focus group responses and my own experiences/observations. Taken as a whole, these findings consider the range of ways in which young people are mobilized and how their mobilization contributes to social capital, community health and change. Based on my findings, the remainder of this chapter focuses on expanding, describing and clarifying the specific elements of Figures Three, Four and Five.
Assignment of Rights and Duties to Actors

Right for support, Responsibility and ethics, Commitment to the process, Co-mentorship

(Need to fill in more information)

Nature of Arenas

Safe space
Fun
Critical education
Youth Voice
Inclusive

Role of Actors

Co-facilitators
Mentors
Participants
Supporters

Rules of Interaction

Safety/respect guidelines
"Law of two feet"

Organizational Matters

Institutional Design and Redesign

Building of Agreement/Compromises/Trade-offs

Norms and Routine Practice of Interaction

Sharing of Information & Resources

Partnerships across sectors
Youth-friendly educational workshops, events and manuals
Train the trainers for capacity building and dissemination, Media

(Self-)Presentation of Actors

Music, art, humour (youth culture)
Honesty, openness in interactions
Enthusiasm, Acceptance of diversity in styles, interests, backgrounds, skills

Handling of Conflicts/Values

Choice
Team approaches
Conflict resolution policies

Language of Interaction

Transparency, Accessibility
No technocratic jargon
Play, Symbolism, Spirit

Building of Agreement/Compromises/Trade-offs

Consensus-based decision making
Balancing of trade-offs of 'in-house' work and community outreach, New measures of success, Persistence
3.1 Assignment of Rights and Duties to Actors

Right for Support, Responsibility and ethics, Commitment to the process, Co-Mentorship

Support and commitment are explicitly mandated in many youth organizations. Young people are mentored in learning skills until they have the confidence and the experience to take leadership roles independently:

Because of the nature of the topic, there's always a staff person who goes out with the youth. We have had incidences where we get threatened at schools, the worst case was that once we had to cancel a Speak ahead of time because someone had been making threats that they were going to beat up the gay people that came into the schools. So, it does get kind of, there is that difficulty, and um, we have a staff person there just to support them. Often the adult will be sitting at the back of the room and the two youth facilitate... it really helps to have staff support there. Sometimes the youth don't feel like they're getting treated with respect... And so if the young people don't feel comfortable then there's a staff person to step in. They're there to make sure it doesn't get out of control. So that's the relationship there. [adult interview]

And so if you want to be able to do workshops you have to take that training, come and observe a couple of workshops, and then we usually do workshops in pairs so if you come and observe there'll be three people. Then, um, after observing a couple you can move into helping do a portion of that workshop so maybe three of you doing a workshop and then you can go on to doing a full workshop. [focus group]

One of the aspects of working in an organizational capacity with young people is reaching a common understanding around issues of ethics and responsibility:

...we had some positions open to train young people for a year, and we had too many problems with the mixture of young people working with young people, especially if they were friends...It's the responsibility to what you're doing in the community... there was conflict around trying to ensure that they had enough room for them to do what they needed to do and living their own lives. [adult interview]

Having experienced some of the ethical conflicts that can arise, many youth organizations develop particular strategies through which young people can model ethical practice:

And the reason to have [a] disconnected volunteer base is to have someone who is sort of seen as outside of the social network or the "gossip" network, that you can go to if you need to speak to somebody and you know that it's going to be confidential. Someone who's maintaining safety and ground rules, that sort of stuff. Generally, that's policed by the youth group themselves, but there's always volunteers around as well who are outside of that social network. [adult interview]

In one of my focus groups, I learned that the assignment of rights and duties to actors can be highly explicit as young people define clear and comprehensive relationships between members of their organizations:
And then the core members of [our organization] have been members that have been involved in the beginning or for at least a year, um, and who have some understanding of how the organization runs and our mandate and what we're going after. They have just shown to themselves and to the rest of us that they're really committed to helping the organization grow...on like large directional issues or involvement issues, ah, for [our organization] that's made with, um, the help of the members and if need be the Board. Um, the Board of Directors is, ah, an inter-generational Board and it's made up of five people over 25 and five people under 25...how that's structured is every year half the board is to be elected, two or three of them will be youth, two or three will be adults and then we'll switch over the next year again. So the Board has a two year term. And the vision of the Board was that they'd be doing the things that we were talking about, fundraising and that sort of stuff, and that they're more on the ground...[focus group]

3.2 The Nature of Arenas for Interaction

| Fun, Safe space, Youth Voice, Inclusive, Critical education |

Most youth organizations aim to create an environment where fun and learning are integrally linked. Games, song and dance, and role play create fun and inclusive arenas for interaction.

Particular features of many youth organizations embody the clear intent to create safe space within which young people can participate:

We have something we call “the welcoming committee”, for anyone who can't come to Drop-In or isn't comfortable with it. Last Friday, we had 60 kids here, so it can be pretty intimidating for a young person to walk into that. So, we'll send a welcoming committee to meet with a youth at a neutral space. [adult interview]

Participation in youth activities encourages young people and adults in the community to develop critical thinking skills around issues of equity and inclusion:

And then we also work with the broader community to challenge homophobia in a broader sense, so we do for example PrideSpeak, which is going to schools and community centres. It's peer education, so young people from our centre go and speak to kids in schools about their personal experiences, naming homophobia, transphobia and sexism. So, talking about how to challenge that. Then we also do systemic advocacy, so if there's a homophobia problem in eight different schools, what do we have to ask the school system to do to address the problem? So we try and do both levels. [adult interview]

The following is another example illustrating how young people mobilize to create arenas that facilitate critical awareness and education:

Youth managed to get mobile registration [for the civic election] at Dusk to Dawn, and at Gathering Place. Training was offered at the Aboriginal [Friendship] Centre for youth to train in how to register. Vancouver Youth Voices with the CYS Core Committee put out a kind of score card to look at things like: what kinds of judgements do you need to make? What kinds of questions do you need to be asking people at All Candidates Meetings about youth issues? They also hosted with Youth Driven and the Environmental Youth Alliance an All Candidates Meeting, which was the most successful one of the entire election in terms of turnout and preparation of questions in advance. Youth organizations faxed in their questions, things that they wanted to make sure hit the floor. [adult interview]
3.3 The Rules of Interaction

Safety/respect guidelines, the “Law of Two Feet”

I have concluded that the term “rules” in this case could be more appropriately worded as “agreements”. A number of times over the course of my research, I have observed a youth community technique for designing agreements of interaction in a participatory way. At the beginning of a meeting or gathering, a weekend forum or conference, for example, the facilitators will ask for input from the group of youth in order to create “safety guidelines” or “respect guidelines”. These are agreements that govern the pragmatics of the dialogue for the course of the event. Every participant has the opportunity to contribute to writing this ‘decree’, or series of ground rules. The suggestions are all recorded on flipchart paper and posted in a prominent place. They can be reviewed, added to and adapted as the event unfolds.

An example of a set of safety/respect guidelines might look like the following:

Respect Guidelines
- No acronyms
- No interrupting
- Active listening
- Speak up! Make noise! (but only if someone else isn’t talking)
- Be yourself
- Right to pass
- If somebody says something that upsets you, tell that person in a compassionate way
- No racist or sexist jokes

“The Law of Two Feet” is another example of ‘rules of interaction’ in the youth community. This law was explained to participants at the March 2000 Youth Community Consultation by an Aboriginal young person. He described this law as a First Nations tradition that ensures each member of a group contributes the best of his or her wisdom and ability to the collective effort. During the break-out working sessions at the Consultation, different groups were focused on different needs of the youth community: funding, networking, outreach etc. At any time during the session, if individual participants felt they were not contributing their ideas in a particular theme area to the extent that they could be in another, they were ‘required’ to stand up, use their two feet.
and move to a different group. The Law of Two Feet means that no one has to get ‘stuck’ doing one thing. Youth are free to move, interact in unique ways with different people and develop their areas of interest and knowledge. This Consultation activity was highly productive. In fact, the ideas that were generated subsequently resulted in the writing of a successful funding proposal for a central HUB where Lower Mainland youth organizations can network and build their capacity as a collective youth movement.

3.4 The Role of Actors Within Interactions

As was revealed in Chapter Four, participation, facilitation and mentorship are processes within which youth and adults assume specific roles as they work in partnership for healthy community development and social change. The following are examples of young people’s beliefs about the approaches that adults need to take when they assume roles in this movement:

Adults supporters are really important to have, and it’s also important that their roles are clearly defined. [youth interview]

...whoever it is that’s in the supporting positions are there to support and provide whatever resources that, that the youth aren’t able to get themselves. They’re not there to direct people, they want to guide people, give support. [focus group]

When adult allies commit to roles that adopt this kind of approach, young people can be more effective in their roles as participants and facilitators.

3.5 The Presentation & Self-Presentation of Actors and the Interaction Process

More and more, I come to admire the honesty of young people and their desire to learn from the diverse experiences of their peers. I remember feeling so inspired after thirty young activists converged on Evans Lake, British Columbia, for the March 2000 Youth Community Consultation. When we gathered in a large circle to conclude the weekend retreat with a check-in round, one of the young women expressed to the group that whenever she attends such an event she always tries to forget everything she learned in the past. In that way, she explained, she stays...
completely open to learning new things from the young people she meets and interacts with at the gathering.

The following quotes describe some of the impressions that adult allies hold of the young people with whom they interact and organize:

...by and large that mentality doesn’t exist with [youth], of being disenfranchised. What exists that's good is a passion for fighting for change. That's really unique and comes from the youth themselves. I see a potential to do something positive [in my work] because there appears to be more capacity. You can’t fall into a deficit-based way of looking at things.

...the young people at the symposium were just incredible. And they were willing to stand up. They were willing to stand up in the middle of the group and say, “Well this is how I feel about this situation”, which was unique, because I think in a lot of ways when youth are mixed with a professional community and don’t have a lot of background, they sit silent. But here they didn’t.

Youth love to process...These young people oftentimes, not all the times but often, have tons of energy to throw at you. They want to put their whole selves into it.

In my experience, youth organizations working in issues of social/environmental justice and community health accept the diversity and uniqueness of members that comprise their organizations:

Something that, um, [our organization] tries really hard to do is also to acknowledge that not everybody’s coming from the same place. Even though we have to work collectively, we’re not all equal. I know that [our organization] really values trying to work on an equally level plane but it’s really hard, like not everybody’s coming from the same place, so we do acknowledge that and, ah, somehow it works! [Chuckle] Don’t really know how yet, but it works.

Honesty, enthusiasm and humor are naturally expressed in how actors present themselves as they create trust and reciprocity in their organizations:

I had no problem with Dan today — because he mopped and vacuumed! [Laughter]

One final characteristic that should be highlighted is the comfort young people often feel experimenting with different forms of self-presentation while interacting with their peers. Taylor (2000) has identified this characteristic as being an important contributor to social capital development:

Hall (1995) has argued that civil society is characterised by the presence of different, varied identities, plus (and crucially so) the capacity to move between such identities (1027).

This empathic ability of many young activists and their supporters – the ability to “move between identities” – accounts for their openness and honesty, acceptance of diversity in countless forms, and practice of shared playfulness and humour.
3.6 The Handling of Conflicts and Values

One of the most important characteristics of youth-friendly activities is that they account for the diversity of interests that will undoubtedly be represented when a group of young people work collaboratively together. In order to maximize what these diverse interests can contribute to the work of community transformation and change, it is essential to create forums where young people have choice in how they work and express themselves. Providing young people with the freedom to make choices honours their personal values — and thereby reduces conflicts — in the process of collaboration. The following two responses exemplify this approach, from creating an alternative session at a joint youth-adult provincial symposium (non-profit sector initiative) to recognizing the unique needs that youth might have at the neighbourhood level (local government initiative):

Representatives were asked to bring something from their communities that symbolizes their vision for the future. It was actually the youth who did most of it. Sometimes, the youths would say "I'm just not interested in this session". They didn't feel a connection to the discussion, so they would be able to go and work on the DreamBoard. It turned out to be a wonderful opportunity. [A young person] would engage youth in conversation about what they were doing. The youth then got to present the board, why they put the things on it etc. It was a really great example of how capable and how much they have to say about what that means to them. The discussions were extensive. They discussed everything from hearing youth voice, to suicide in their communities, to things that weren't working right that they'd really like to change, to things that were working right that they really valued in their community. So it was a really good evening for the entire group. [adult interview]

We have a pretty comprehensive model in place. It's very neighbourhood based, so we don't cookie cut. What works in Kerrisdale doesn't necessarily work in Renfrew. So, there's consultation done with the community youth and community parents and community schools and other service providers, neighbours, staff groups, and through that consultation process we come up with our framework or blueprint. We've been able to come up with a model that works for that particular neighbourhood. [adult interview]

One of the focus group discussions revealed the organization's explicit focus on diversity and conflict resolution policies, implemented through a team approach to problem-solving:

The first time I came here was December of last year to do a diversity training for [the organization] and, ah, and then they decided that they needed to have that discussion more so, um, with the whole discussion around diversity came, um, needing to understand where conflicts were arising from and why those conflicts were happening. So, my background has gone through mediation training and conflict resolution, so I just kind of fell into it. It wasn't part of the job description for sure. I just sort of did it. It was kind of a weird thing. But, um, I don't know how, I don't know how else to describe it. [Conflicts] just come up and we just deal with it and I think we deal with it...together to solve, resolve the solution or resolve the problem, I think. It's not really one person doing it themselves. [focus group]
In his interview, an adult ally highlighted the resourcefulness and experience of young activists in the handling of conflicts and values:

One of the great skills youth have that adults have sort of skipped over is facilitation and negotiation. If you were to do an inventory of how many youth in youth organizations have training in that, I bet it would be a lot higher than the general population. Just because that seems to be something that’s taught. It’s life skills. Most of the adults over the age of 25 or thirty didn’t have that kind of life skills training.

3.7 The Language of Interaction

Transparency, Accessibility, No technocratic jargon, Play, Symbolism, Spirit

As elaborated in Chapter Four, the language of the interaction determines the extent to which young people can feel included and engaged in a working environment. In an interview, an adult supporter asserted that ensuring information is accessible to the young people “is an ongoing public message to my organization”. Of course, there are many “languages” involved in human interaction. Youth culture encompasses a diversity of languages, including play and youth spirit.

Play and recreation is so important, playing a role in health, social justice, environment, and economic development. [adult interview]

An important aspect of the languages of play and spirit is symbolism. I recently wrote an e-mail to one of the youth participants in regards to a tiny pumpkin that became a symbol of friendly competition between cabins at the March 2000 Youth Community Consultation retreat. I was unable to remember the ‘rules’ of the game that centred on this pumpkin, and following is the response of the participant from whom I asked for help in recounting the story:

i barely remember the pumpkin fiiasco... it was something to bring the cabins together i think. each cabin was to "protect" the pumpkin, use their creativity to keep it SOMEWHERE VISIBLE but still inaccessible to "invading" cabin neighbours. remember, the pumpkin could not be hidden (had to be in view) and also, people had to ask permission to enter other cabins.

ended up being rather complicated intricate plots to steal the pumpkin, find out who had it, like a game of CLUE — "it was you! in cabin #6 - with the pumpkin!" then, in retaliation for someone stealing my teddy bear, someone stole caroline's alien thingy ("little green alien"). then, because they put it in their back pocket and sat on it, the alien's head snapped off. which led to the decapitation of the alien...

Social capital for community transformation expands when, together, youth and adults can speak a common language that is transparent, accessible and fun:

We did it as a game, but it was really very serious. We didn’t want anyone using acronyms or any jargon, and we didn’t want people to talk about things without an explanation of the history. [The participants in the symposium] used noisemakers. We gave them out and we also encouraged people to bring their own. People made a lot of noise and it was really effective...At the end of the symposium, we got tremendous feedback about how people got connected with each other, how they could see the importance of working with their community youth...[adult interview]
As demonstrated in Chapter Five, youth organizations work to build agreement through consensus-based decision making models. Given the challenges that most of these organizations face in the funding and support they receive, as well as their limited but growing experience with organizational leadership, there are compromises and trade-offs to be made in their decision making strategies and community work. Many of the youth and adults I spoke with articulated the need for priority-setting. A difficulty that many youth groups have is establishing a healthy balance between (1) how much time and energy they dedicate to developing the internal structures of their organizations and (2) how much they give to their outreach activities and community work.

Maybe there could be new regulation policies on how, what the workload is, just in terms of ratio to outside versus inside work... And that's the same as in any kind of work, trying to maintain a healthy balance, really. [focus group]

I got into this work not thinking I would spend almost eighty percent of my time fundraising. And it's not what I want to do. I want to be out there and learning and facilitating and organizing... [focus group]

So this means more grant writing and so that means we take more time, we have to kind of prioritize and say okay, instead of, ah, getting involved in this many projects... we're gonna take the extra time and it's freed up to write grants that self sustain ourselves, or otherwise... the funds stop. [focus group]

It's just that kind of creative bam bam bam, click click click, which eventually just wears people out and they eventually crash. So there's always that balance, and that's what we've found with [the] Youth Driven [coalition] is that most organizations have found a way to strike that balance. They involve board members, they have an older person involved, and a lot of it comes down to a vision- or a mission- encompassed statement of equity that, you know, adults don't get the full reign of this thing, that we have to listen to young people, young people have power. That becomes a big issue, giving youth the power... There's also a lot to be said for adults having the philosophy of openness. [adult interview]

A young activist I spoke to in a focus group session pointed out that a key trade-off to developing the contacts and working relationships she highly values is the negotiation of political 'protocol':

Like you can't, you know, there's just so much protocol and running around that you have to do but in some ways it's really, you know, beneficial in terms of establishing those relationships, and in other ways it's just so frustrating because if you're involved with one union well, other unions don't like that... you know, it's a lot of, a lot of wishy washy stuff that goes on... so it's a bit of a dance that you have to do. [focus group]
Adults working in partnership with young people understand that, in order for youth to feel empowered in the planning process, adults may have to compromise their traditional conceptions of what measures ‘success’:

Now, in the long run the week-long series of events was under attended. But I think the important thing about the whole thing was that the process was better. Young people did get involved, not just young people, but it was their piece of work, they were able to say, “THIS is what we would like to see this week...We want to do that action, and a week-long series of events will allow us to do that action”. Like I said, there were problems with attendance, but I think the important thing is that there was a process there.

[The Skate Fest] was basically a two-day event with all kinds of temporary features for jumping. The young people also organized some rock bands to help them create that atmosphere. We knew it was a success, because on Monday morning the mayor and everybody were getting all kinds of complaints about noise and kids.

Finally, the youth movement in this region of the world and many others, not unlike other movements that have demanded a more central place for disenfranchised groups in public life and decision making, has not evolved overnight. The building of agreement in relationships between different interest groups requires persistence. The following experience illustrates this process:

So, for example, youth wanted to see more choices of late night entertainment. That led to the development of a special permit process for all-night dance events, and that moved our city council from a position of “absolutely no way ever will we have these in the City of Vancouver” to finally moving toward a management of all-night dance parties...people said “it is really important that we have this in a safe place that is legalized”. Youth wanted to have it in a legalized setting, without concerns about fire and all of that...These are young entrepreneurs who want to do things by the book, young people want to have these dances, and we need to have more involvement. So, I think they really changed attitudes, but it took three years of different ways of running at this. And, I must say Civic Theatres was incredibly stoic and supportive when they could have really been on the hot seat. They...really believed that it was important there be a choice of entertainment and that these events be managed. And they stood by a lease agreement. There was a lot of pressure. The police were not very supportive of rave events, and it’s taken a lot of experiential things for them to feel comfortable with having a permitting process, and they still have a lot of anxieties. [adult interview]

The success of the Vancouver youth community in finally securing the legalization of rave events attests to young people’s dedication to hold decision makers accountable to policies like the Civic Youth Strategy. This is a powerful example of how partnerships and alliances with a variety of community groups can assist young people in advancing their demand for a stronger voice in municipal decision making and planning. These inter-sectoral partnerships are a form of sharing information and resources, the ninth and final measure of structural social capital to be elaborated on in this paper. An analysis of this measure in youth community organizing unveils links to the dynamic factors category of social organization, as I outline them in the analytical model on page 76: horizontal linkages, vertical linkages and networks. I discuss these factors in more detail below.
3.9 The Sharing of Information and Resources

Partnerships across sectors, Youth-friendly educational workshops, events and manuals, “Train the trainers” for capacity-building and dissemination, Media

In December 2000, I had the opportunity to participate in the Manual, Outreach & Dissemination Project (M.O.D.) of the Self-Help Resources Association of British Columbia (SHRA). The purpose of this project was to disseminate the organization’s new facilitation workshop manual through a “train the trainer” approach. The M.O.D. Project allowed youth and adult representatives of various organizations to learn the facilitation skills that SHRA staff would normally teach in their workshops. These representatives gained the knowledge and experience to go back to their organizations and teach these valuable skills, with the manual as a resource.

Capacity building strategies such as the M.O.D. Project build solidarity between youth organizations and other groups in the community as well as facilitate the growth of social capital in the youth movement. They establish horizontal linkages between youth and their organizations at the community-based level. They create vertical linkages between youth and larger umbrella decision making bodies, such as non-profit organizations, funding agencies and governments. In effect, they create networks that can continually expand as more individuals and groups work in solidarity on the issues that affect young people, supporting them in accruing greater power to affect change in society.

Another example of a network to share information and resources is the Youth Driven Youth Action coalition. Youth Driven was originally conceived when the Environmental Youth Alliance (EYA) hired two youth in 1998 to do a survey of twenty-five youth driven organizations. From the seventeen responses the survey received, it identified some major ‘capacity issues’ affecting youth-driven organizations, all of which have been discussed in this thesis:

- Funding
- Administration (Accounting, Management)
- Policy
- Decision making and accountability structures

Youth Driven, formed in 1999 under EYA, is now a coalition of youth-driven organizations. Its mandate is to provide its member organizations with information and resources that allow them to work more effectively as part of a larger youth community.

Youth Driven is a big facilitating body. “We have a community, let’s define what that community is. Hey, we have skills, so let’s train one another as well as go for other skills. THESE are our barriers and hey, let’s work together. It doesn’t matter if you’re working on gay and lesbian issues or environmental issues. We’re trying to make a community, how can we as a community that’s doing all this progressive stuff all come together and share resources..."
and be more than just the sum of its parts?" And that's why Youth Driven has been successful. There's been a lot of angst too, and I think that's growing pains... From our perspective it comes back to the process again. Youth Driven isn't the tool or the vehicle for people to go and affect massive political change, but we believe that there is a huge youth community out there doing that, and if we can enhance what they're doing by giving them the tools, the support and the profile, and do anything we can for them... Well, we know that youth can do it, we know youth can affect it, we know there's a certain philosophy, certain things that youth are missing, so create a program that facilitates youth getting that and you have a stronger youth community. [adult interview]

An illustrative case in which networks are working dynamically to provide youth access to information and resources, increase public education and enhance solidarity for social change is the *Globalise This!* project (see Chapter Four pp. 41-42). The spectrum of individuals and organizations contributing resources and support to this project represents a strong network that integrates both vertical and horizontal linkages. The project is funded by national agencies and coordinated by a large group of national, provincial and local organizations. *Globalise This!* attests to the social capital available in a movement that seeks to ensure young people have a comprehensive and knowledgeable foundation of models from which to learn about how globalization affects us. It also demonstrates how youth organizations increase their social capital by partnering with individuals and groups who have little access to resources. In the case of *Globalise This!* it is young women in small British Columbia communities who are the beneficiaries of this support network.

After experiencing the Vancouver-based weekend workshops, the young participants in this Project learned how to make good use of their “Activist Toolkit” as they went back to their communities to generate their own projects. The active dialogue and the network of people that sustains it continue. The *Globalise This!* e-mail listserve is a highly utilized method for sharing information, requesting support and mobilizing around educational and fundraising events. Appendix C provides some examples of *Globalise This!* cyber dialogues. They highlight the practical and useful function of the internet in facilitating the mobilization of networks for education and change.

4. Social Organization and Civic Culture – Interdependent Domains

In her paper “Communities in the Lead: Power, Organisational Capacity and Social Capital” (2000), Marilyn Taylor presents some of the common criticisms of social capital, including the fact that it can be used as a governance tool to increase the power of the dominant group and oppress others: “corruption scandals of governments across the globe also testify to the negative potential for networks” (1027). So what determines whether these networks are the manifestations of “bad” social capital or “good” social capital? The difference is in the civic culture of the
individuals and groups participating in the network. Civic culture is the domain of cognitive social capital, just as social organization is the domain of structural social capital. Yet, they are interdependent domains. The civic culture will both determine the form of social organization, and it will be affected by how social organization unfolds through institutional design and redesign.

As indicated in the Figure Three, the values, norms, attitudes and beliefs of the civic culture of most youth organizations are revealed in a number of important dynamic factors: inclusion, cooperation, respect, generosity, equity, trust, solidarity. This is not an exhaustive list, and it will continually evolve with the culture and as the social organization of this culture expands. The following responses from focus group discussions reveal how the dynamic factors of trust, respect and equity influence the organizing strategies that these groups are creating. In the first, the speaker understands that without trust, his organization's team-based structure would not function:

I know everybody on the other teams and I have faith in what they're doing and that they can do it... A lot of trust is involved. [focus group]

The second example illustrates how an organization's staff members, aware of their own time constraints, have given ownership for developing a volunteer program to two of their current volunteers. A high level of trust between members of the organization facilitates an institutional design that reflects the emerging civic culture:

The volunteer program that they're developing, that's really been theirs. That's been identified as a need for a long time and they've been working on it for awhile, and it's really been them. We had a couple of early meetings where we said, "okay, well yeah, we figure we need this, this, this and this". And somehow they took all these ideas away and started to put together this program, and every once in awhile they'd come back and we'd all sit down and look at it and go "that looks great, what about da da da da?" Or yeah, whatever, they'd take it away. So that's really been for me a prime example of how it could work...[focus group]

With this thesis, I do not wish to paint a utopian picture of the behaviours of all young people in every organizational capacity. Rather, my hope is that this work will provide some indicators of an emerging youth movement. Many of the individuals and groups comprising this movement have committed to experimenting with innovative approaches that enhance the civic culture and forms of social organization. These young people are participating in a process of trial and error in which learning takes place in practice, as the critical theorists know all too well. Yet, these trial and error processes are resulting in some very effective strategies for mobilizing solidarity and other values aimed at creating a healthier world. I have entitled this chapter “Youth Organizations Crafting Social Capital”, because I see crafting as the most appropriate term to epitomize the inherently creative and constructive nature of developing social capital through youth participation.
CHAPTER VII: 

IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING & CONCLUSIONS

Without constant vigilance, youth participation will be promoted as a community program rather than a community principle.

~ Karen Pittman, International Youth Foundation

In *Youth Development and Critical Education: The Promise of Democratic Action* (1996), Richard Lakes profiles a spectrum of community-based, state-wide and US national initiatives that engage youth as partners in community economics, health and wellness, neighbourhood improvement, street arts and others. Through the experience of writing his book, Lakes has realized that we cannot afford to disenfranchise youth from the process of community development planning:

We must start to encourage and facilitate partnerships of young people in sustainable, capacity-building approaches... We desperately need their youthful energy and tireless strength, their boundless assets and valuable skills, their special qualifications and talented gifts for the important work ahead (18-19).

Based on my thesis research, I conclude that we need to form collective agreements to facilitate what is no less than a societal paradigm shift of perspective on the rights of youth in public life. Their rights include equitable involvement in directing the creation and shaping of human settlements. With this direction from young people, we will undoubtedly experience an accelerated alignment of our development with the principles of social justice, ecological integrity and sustainable economics. This paper has provided evidence for a variety of practical strategies that young organizers can teach us as we collectively choose to ground ourselves in these principles. In order to synthesize the detailed analyses presented in the body chapters of the paper, below I revisit some of the major concepts and theories that the thesis has explored, suggest specific roles for the planner and state an overall finding in respect of the nature of work in society. I conclude with suggestions for further research.

### 1. On critical theory & social capital

The work that has been the focus of this thesis is essentially about youth and their supporters engaged in — to borrow a term from John Forester — critical planning practice. In Chapter
Ten of *Planning in the Face of Power*, Forester eloquently speaks to the unprecedented contribution that this kind of work provides to the field of planning:

This is the contribution of a critical planning theory: pragmatics with vision – to reveal true alternatives, to correct false expectations, to counter cynicism, to foster inquiry, to spread political responsibility, engagement, and action. Critical planning practice, technically skilled and politically sensitive, is simultaneously an organizing and a democratizing practice... In the face of power, justice and equality are hopes, solidarity is a source of strength, and, however daunting the odds, there is freedom in the struggle (162).

In their crafting of social capital, young activists and their adult allies incorporate many of the key principles of critical theory and progressive planning into practice. These principles, as articulated in the theories of Paulo Freire, John Friedmann, John Forester and others, include:

- Co-intentional education
- Dialogical theory
- Cooperation & collaboration
- Educational projects that facilitate the development of critical consciousness
- A focus on the *quality of human relationships*
- Acknowledging cultural differences — “cultural synthesis”
- Social organization based on respect, inclusion, equity, solidarity

In sum, the social capital emerging from the youth community represents the *operationalization of critical theory*. I would argue that what the new youth activist movement facilitates is our collective attention to communication systems. *Communication systems* in this context – distinct from the normal usage of the term in modern society – are not about machines. They are about systems of *human* communication, relationship building, and social organization, all aimed at creating a healthier world. In the introduction to this paper, I cited the work of Reuven Kahane (1997). Kahane asserts that “postmodern Western youth behaviour”, far from deviant or meaningless, represents an authentic *code of informality* by which youth culture organizes itself. From the thesis work presented here, we can conclude that youth are now applying this ‘code’ in an organizational context to create more democratic working and learning environments.

As expressed in the concluding section of the Chapter Six, contemporary youth activism embodies a unique *civic culture*, one based on values of *respect, equity, trust* and *solidarity*. These values guide new forms of community organizing that result in healthy social capital development. Social capital grounded in such values is a countervailing force to “bad” social capital, which is maintained in civic cultures based on greed, exclusion, intolerance or oppression. By thoughtfully structuring their methods of institutional design and redesign to encompass the values of the new civic culture, youth and their allies are formalizing critical theory and crafting good social capital.
2. On civil society & citizenship

As we have seen in this study, young people engaged in questions of social, environmental and economic justice embody a civil society group that increasingly demands meaningful attention and accountability from ‘the powers that be’. In becoming identified and honoured as a civil society group, young people require specific approaches from planners and other adult community leaders. In Chapter Three of Cities for Citizens (1998), John Friedmann addresses the emerging nature of the planning profession:

...the challenge for us as planners is to redefine ourselves and our profession in ways that will make our work congenial with ...the reemergence of civil society as a collective actor in the construction of our cities and regions... (20).

Further to this, Friedmann articulates his personal vision for the critical planner who facilitates this process:

I see urban planners being passionately engaged in a transformative politics for inclusion, opportunity for self-development and social justice. It is a politics driven by the energies of a civil society that is beginning to reassert itself in all of its diversity...Neither reformist nor revolutionary, it is a transformative politics for the long haul (34).

Friedmann’s elaboration of planning and civil society, twin forces in a “transformative politics for the long haul” is a natural expansion on the ideas he presented in The Good Society. In that text, critical theory and radical practice cannot be separated from the planner’s appreciation for the individual person’s identity and experiences:

If differences were more openly acknowledged, we could allow for, and even encourage, an increasingly strong expression by each party of her or his experience. This would lead to greater clarity for self, greater ability to fulfill one’s own needs, and more facility to respond to others. There would be a chance at individual and mutual satisfaction, growth, and even joy... (Friedmann 1979, 106).

Fundamentally, Friedmann pleads for a more thoughtful understanding of the meaning of citizenship. The concept of citizenship, rather than attempting to equalize people, must encompass difference. Civil society groups are immobilized without individuals who see their own diversity as an asset and feel they have rights as citizens, with unique strengths, skills and capacities to offer their communities. According to Wharf Higgins (1999), “genuinely universal citizenship is differential: it embraces the diverse perspectives that people derive from their distinct experience and position in society and views these as a strength” (301). Fostering a sense of citizenship needs to begin at an early age in order for young people to feel welcomed in public life and responsible to their communities. One of the thesis interviews revealed an adult supporter’s conviction on this issue:

We wanted people to understand that it's a progression, that youth don't just suddenly become active in their communities just as adults don't suddenly become active in their communities.
That it's a progression that starts at a very young age. It's about teaching citizenship. Like everything else a child is learning in life, it's important because it's the primary foundation of democracy – that people are active.

In “Children in Urban Regeneration: foundations for sustainable participation” (1997), Suzanne Speak articulates this need for “citizenship education” – a lifelong process:

...it [is] important to bring children into the participation process at an early age so as to develop in them the skills and confidence to engage fully as adults...Perhaps it is only through being encouraged to participate and speak out at this stage in their development that people will grow to have equal rights of expression later (37).

3. On health and resilience

The link between sense of citizenship and being a healthy person cannot be underestimated. Wharf Higgins (1999) contends that an empowered citizen is one who has an idea of her or his self worth, has a sense of control over personal health, and feels able to make a difference in the world. Beyond affecting the health of individuals, citizenship also impacts on group solidarity, hence on the power of civil society groups in the public sphere. Finally, citizenship fosters a mutually dependent relationship between belonging to and giving to a community. Healthy people are more likely to engage in community health initiatives. As we have seen in this study, personal health, population health and community health are dynamic and symbiotic domains of people living together – in communities and as part of a society.

My contention with this thesis is that social capital is integral to creating healthy and strong communities, and youth participation is a way to do that. In Chapter Four, I presented examples of the range of ways in which youth are currently participating in health initiatives, and I stated that the list represents an extraordinarily holistic approach to individual, population and community health. Youth participation in creating healthy communities represents a commitment to improving quality of life, for everyone. Youth activists acknowledge the environmental, social, economic and spiritual factors that contribute to human and ecological health and well being. In order to increase this critical awareness in the broader population, youth are educating for change and mobilizing their peers and elders alike to take thoughtful action on issues of importance. Young activists and their allies are emulating healthy models of social organization, so that people can address the larger health issues in a working environment that is supportive, builds capacity and is conducive to collective action.

A primary assumption of this thesis is that the kind of social capital I have described is “a good thing”. In other words, strong social capital is a characteristic of healthy community development. The literature has demonstrated that social capital fosters reciprocity, enhances information channels and the sharing of resources, builds trust between community members and
contributes to the formation of dense networks or associations with which people can work in solidarity on issues of importance to them. Effectively, social capital is a health-promoting characteristic of human interaction. With the evidence presented in this thesis, I argue that meaningful youth participation is a path to ensuring that communities have an investment in this characteristic. Youth participation strengthens social capital. Consequently, the process promotes the health of youth while contributing to healthy community development.

I would also argue that the forms of youth participation now unfolding represent the youth movement’s consolidating resilience to many of the societal forces discussed in the introduction to this thesis, especially the influence of corporate power. Youth are forming what Paulo Freire or John Friedmann would term a “politics of identity” to counteract the market appropriation of youth identities through a manipulated desire for material goods. The “radical practice of the Good Society” is now being taken up by youth and their allies through collective action and social capital, which provides them with a tool to resist the omnipresence of corporate media in our communities.

4. On the role of the planner

At various points in this thesis, a variety of roles for the planner have been suggested in a process of supporting young people’s participation. These include:

➤ providing a link between youth and decision-makers
➤ ensuring that young people are included in public consultation processes
➤ creating partnerships with youth that allow them to design and implement inclusive public spaces
➤ connecting young people with other community members who can provide mentorship for skill development
➤ supporting public education that reveals the strengths young people can offer to community development planning

In addition to these roles are four others that were identified by adult supporters that I interviewed.

1) “Have connections and rapport with City resources”

The planner will need to develop relationships with funders, equipment suppliers/operators and graphic artists, among others. Media contacts are also crucial. In order to increase the visibility of the important work that young people are involved in, the planner needs to establish good media relationships and “promote what you do in house”. One of the adults I interviewed explained that, in his experience, he found that “for those people, it’s usually a breath of fresh air to work with kids”.

2) Create opportunities for schools to become involved in community action
Schools have traditionally been a way of segregating children and youth from community life. A widespread movement to build an organic sharing of experiences between school classes and community members/groups will challenge this segregation. Community gardens, neighbourhood improvement programs and events at community centres are some examples of where this type of sharing might be encouraged. The following reveals the efforts of a social planner to give young people opportunities to learn about city governance:

For example, in the last few years we've been working with some of the high schools to create sort of a career prep program which would train young people to give us 120 hours and gain skills, for example in engineering, by-law enforcement…The By-law people were quite enthusiastic about how much they were learning from the young people, as much as vice versa… The trick is these things don't just happen. You have to keep reminding the adults that we're trying to create this opportunity for young people.

3) Situate short-term projects within long-term visioning

Young people do not always have the experience to frame their goals and actions within an overarching vision of what they hope to achieve. Planners and other adult supporters can help young people to find this balance by asking questions that facilitate critical thinking:

So the challenge is looking at the systemic issues which need to be changed. How do we [address] them? Where do we send them? How do we really truly advocate for them? How do we really hold anybody accountable? That's a big challenge. [adult interview]

[A challenge is] ensuring that people understand they're part of a team and part of an overall structure…So, you need to validate that work and somehow incorporate it into the whole …I think because there's less experience working in organizational structures. Youth might [not have] an understanding all the time about what the big picture is… you can't just take an idea and run with it over there… just that general big picture stuff. [adult interview]

The other aspect of encouraging long-term visioning is that young people receive a “reality check” in terms of the larger socio-political context within which they are working. In this role, the planner assists youth in “mak[ing] informed decisions with their own agendas”.

4) Learn to be a reflective practitioner

John Forester (1989, 1999), Leonie Sandercock (1998) and others have referred to the qualities of the reflective practitioner. This is a critical, progressive and communicative planner who makes a genuine effort to learn about herself or himself. Reflective practitioners understand and address their own power as a dynamic factor of professional relationships, both in organizations and as planners/facilitators/advocates in the community. One of the adults I interviewed recognizes the importance of personal reflection all too well:

Well, I think the biggest thing is your own self-knowledge about where your power lies, because it seems to be magnified between adults and youth. Especially as a white guy from a middle class background, if I didn't know what I say and how I act impacts other people, I can easily destroy processes really quickly, so that self-knowledge is a really important piece.
Finally, an elemental role for the critical and progressive planner is to engage in "the empirical, interpretive, and critical study of daily planning interactions" (Forester 1989, 160). In light of the analyses presented in Chapters Five and Six, engaging in this critical study assists the planner in understanding how relationships and planning interactions function (a) to enable/disable young people's participation, and (b) to facilitate (or not) the strengthening of social capital in the youth community. In "Building Social Capital: A Learning Agenda for the Twenty-first Century" (1997), Patricia Wilson supports Forester's position and posits a number of key approaches that planners will need to be voiced in: communicative action, participatory methods, organizational learning and group dynamics. According to Wilson, "the role of the professional as technical expert, master planner or manager will be embedded in the larger role as catalyst, facilitator, communicator, team-player" (745).

In sum, the planner has roles that bridge realms of (1) policy, (2) public education and (3) organizational practice. Karen Pittmann, Director of the International Youth Foundation, addresses concisely the four legs of a "stable platform" in this movement, the fourth of which is youth culture.

We will have to work carefully...to identify or create the public ideas that undergird a sustained effort to bring all young people into the civic, social, and economic arenas of their communities as lifelong learners, workers, and change agents. We must recognize that this public idea, like any stable platform, must have at least three legs: one leg in policy, one in public opinion and values, and a third in organizational practice. We could argue for the importance of a fourth leg in youth culture, for this idea must resonate with young people, tap into their resources, and unleash their potential (Pittman 2000, 8).

5. On work

As each focus group discussion conducted during this research study was winding down, the participants were asked: "Why are you doing this? What are you personally getting out of it?" Three of the responses seem to me to synthesize some of the essential undercurrents and ideologies that are driving the new youth movement today:

I feel that this work now is really crucial at a crucial time.

We make a difference every day.

We need a huge increase in the respect within the work that young people do. Because you know what?

If we all wait until we're as old as THEY are to get active, we're fucked.

Excuse me, little tape recorder - like it's so true.

And, ah, and I don't think people fully realize that.

For the young people who participated in this research, their activism is rewarding, and it is necessary. I conclude that what we are seeing in the new youth movement is a re-
conceptualization and a re-patterning of the space that work fills in our daily lives. In order to institutionalize work that is rewarding and necessary, it is crucial that we collectively focus our attention on some of the larger questions addressed in this thesis. We need to recognize the value of providing opportunities within which people can dedicate their energies to issues of importance to them. We need do everything we can to enable citizen participation. And, we need to encourage, invest in, sustain and cultivate social capital in communities.

The work that I have characterized in this paper is infused with passion and purpose. It symbolizes a resistance to the kind of workplace that now exists for most people, the direct result of neoliberal trade and a globalizing economy:

...it is a truism that work teaches young people responsibility. But sociologists who have examined the role of work among teenagers come up with a very different and unsettling picture. A job is no longer a rite of passage to adult responsibility, but a way of celebrating the materialism of the selfish society...today’s jobs offer little of educational value. Greenberger characterizes these as dead-end, unchallenging “McJobs”... Such experiences lay a foundation of attitudes of contempt for the value of work as enjoyable and satisfying (Brendtro et al 1990, 27).

In contrast to this disheartening circumstance, many youth activists and their allies are engaged in work that incorporates critical learning, respect for diversity, planning for healthy communities, and fun. When did fun stop becoming an integral aspect of work? Why were work and play determined to be mutually exclusive categories? In 1909, Jane Addams condemned the failure to “organize play” in our relentless pursuit to organize work, which according to her has been a “stupid experiment”. The organized youth community is striving to change this dichotomy. Youth activists are clearly aware of the value of play for creating safe space, stimulating valuable dialogue and fostering collaborative spirit.

In conclusion, the work profiled here is intrinsically creative. Work must always be creative if we are to feel a connection with, and a passion for, what we do in our lives. The creativity of these young people comes from working in solidarity towards innovative problem solving, while they struggle to redress relations of power and powerlessness in society. In The Reinvention of Work: A New Vision of Livelihood for Our Times (1994), Matthew Fox offers a lovely account of the work we must undertake in this critical epoch of our evolution:

When is work real? Work is real when it is necessary. Schumacher advises us that the work most needed today is work on the inner life of our species. Much of the necessary work today will be to clean up the mistakes and oversights of the industrial era. A good example of this is the environmental work that will be required if we are to return waters, soil, air, forest, food chains, and habitats to health again. But the industrial revolution polluted not only the soil but our souls as well. Our souls have shrunk through being told that our lives are lived inside a cosmic machine where wonder, awe, mysticism, joy, childlikeness, play, and art are not welcome...It is not money but need that creates work. Right work will in turn create more work, provided we have answered the questions of need correctly. What work is the universe
asking of us at this time? What work is the Earth asking of us at this time? What work are the other species asking of us at this time? What work are the youth asking of us? What work are the future generations asking of us? We don't need just any kind of work or any kind of job at this moment in history. What we need is the right work for the right times.

The fate of society and our Earth rests in the hands and hearts of youth. How will they structure their work as they face this responsibility?

One thing I'm really impressed with about the new generation of activism is the respect that people show for each other. We can learn a lot from that new culture. It's profoundly feminist, it's profoundly anti-racist and it's profoundly democratic.

~ Judy Rebick, author of Imagine Democracy, speaking at “Doing Democracy” [a conference at Langara College, Vancouver, November 2000]

6. On planning practice, theory and research

This thesis can give us some important insights into how we need to expand planning theory and practice. I have examined here the contribution that youth provide to social capital theory and to the practice of organizing for healthy community development. Further, I have offered some guidelines to planners so that they might enhance their capacity to enable this process. Where do we go from here?

Through the course of the thesis project, two important areas for further research arose in my mind. Both centre on the perspectives that non-youth hold about meaningful youth participation in community building. Firstly, what are the views of adult community members who interact with youth organizations engaged in community health initiatives? These adults could include teachers, community centre staff, senior citizens, business people, or countless others. Secondly, are the innovative organizing strategies of youth activist groups being adopted systematically by non-youth groups? How? What are the feelings and opinions of these groups about the impact of the strategies on their working environments? Have the strategies increased their effectiveness in achieving organizational goals? Research in these areas will further substantiate and validate the work of youth and their allies. As a consequence, new and healthier structures for working together will be increasingly implemented in policy and in formal planning practice.

I am the spirit of Youth! With me, all things are possible!
~ Jane Addams, 1909

*** I gratefully acknowledge the British Columbia Health Research Foundation for supporting this important work with a Studentship Grant (2000-2001).
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: STRATEGIES FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION

SHORT-TERM – Groups that are short-term and task-specific counter the problems of continuity and high turnover rates.

PARTNERSHIPS – Avoiding isolation of youth by developing partnerships between youth and adults is key for effective participation.

PEER SUPPORT – Training is particularly successful when it is youth themselves who are trained to train and support other youth.

SKILLS-BUILDING – Constant building of skills as young people mature helps to maintain momentum despite the high turnover rates.

MENTOR TRAINING – Since this process requires a change of style for adults, adults and older youth need training and support in order to be sensitive enablers of youth participation.

INFRASTRUCTURE – Participation process of youth should start at the grass roots level and build from there in order to develop structures at the top.

DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS – Participation must not be suddenly imposed in adolescence, but rather built up in a developmental process, starting with younger children.

CLARITY, HONESTY – The parameters and boundaries of youth's participation and influence over the process must be clear from the beginning in order to avoid unrealistic expectations and disappointments.

APPENDIX B: ELEMENTS OF RADICAL PRACTICE

APPENDIX C: GLOBALIZE THIS! CYBER DIALOGUES

...I actually don't have that much more to say except to tell you the cool thing ESCAPE (Esquimalt Students Care About Peace) did for Buy Nothing Day. We originally wanted to drape the vending machines because they're the most obvious example of corporate domination at hand, but no one had a sheet they were willing to let us use, so we just put "Out of Order due to Buy Nothing Day" signs on them. This only fooled some people, and people bought drinks anyway, but we also did a kind of theatrical presentation that day at lunchtime. We performed a ceremony to honour the God of Consumerism to an audience of about 40 people. We made a God out of an old television and made it a shrine out of ads and tinsel. We gave offerings of fake money and publicly thanked it for the gifts it gives us, like free trade zones, materialism, compulsive buying, free trade and all the environmental and human destruction that comes with it. We also made up a prayer basically outlining the problems of consumerism and materialism and distributed about 120 copies to students around the school. A lot of people rejected it as soon as they heard the word "prayer", but I told them that they were already converted so they might as well learn about the religion they're a part of and made them take one.

...hey all! I wrote an e-mail letter to Bill Clinton about Leonard Peltier (that Billie sent us info about). I'm sure he's not going to change his mind 'cause I'll ol' me sent him a letter, but if tons of people express their outrage, it CAN affect how he acts on January 20th. I've included the letter below, as well as Clinton's e-mail address, if you can copy and paste it, and send it, too, that would be fab.

Hey you guys, it's Jen. I am starting a zine, and the following is my little sales pitch...I would really appreciate you guys pitching in short or long essays or writings about social issues, cause while I have a surplus of writers for friends, none of them are really as involved as you guys, so I would REALLY appreciate. Please don't think you aren't bright enough or something stupid cause you guys are the coolest (yes, I use the word cool, no harassment thank you very much) people I know, and you are filled with brilliant ideas and I want to put them in my zine!!! Okay, you all be good and hopefully talk to you soon. Oh, and if you want to submit artwork or poems or short stories, that would also equally kick ass. Mec!

How are you all - this is Lisa. I'm well. We're collecting donations at present to help the families affected by the earthquake in El Salvador which is loads of work. The women's organization we work with there had many people lose their homes and they are working to provide food relief and housing in affected communities. Anybody interested in circulating information on this campaign, let me know.

Hey kids, it's time to pull out your polyester leisure suits and promatistic dresses...Come dance away the FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas) at the People's Prom!

Valentine's Day Feb 14th, 8pm @ The Anza Club (3 West 8th Ave)
$5 with prom gear $7 without (Prizes for best outfits)
Lots of great entertainment including...
Kissing booth (involving your favorite CEO's and heads of state)...
Drag divas Cake and punch (what would a prom be without) Photo portrait booth Dance contest Limbo mania

So come out and meet your valentine sweetie at the People's Prom, guaranteed to be the best prom you've ever had.

****FTAA = Free Trade Area of the Americas = a proposed new trade deal that will include all countries of north, south and central America excluding Cuba. For more info on the FTAA check out www.tradwatch.org for a quick synopsis.****

Hey everyone! ...I went into one of our local coffee shops called Hava Java and asked them if they sold fair trade coffee. The girl was super rude to me and told me that fair trade coffee is all a load of bullshit! I was astonished and had really no reply. But I would really like to know why she thought that! Any takers? Well, if you could back to me on this one, I would really like to keep harassing her as she was soooooooo rude!!! Thank-you, Sal