

Qualitative Coding Matrix on Youth Adult Partnerships Narrative

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Introduction

This paper addresses the importance of youth partnering with adults who are responsible for the delivery of developmentally and contextually appropriate services and programs that affect the well-being of youth in their own communities (Advocates for Youth, 2008). The reason this is important is to inform service delivery from youth perspectives in order to effectively address issues facing youth and to respectfully include youth in solving community problems. The paper includes a qualitative analysis of a narrative interview of a youth cohort on the impacts they perceive by having participated in a youth/adult partnership. The narrative is categorized into themes and codes have been assigned under each theme. Memoes are attached as a detailed description of each code is provided to summarize the components of an effective youth adult partnership.

Youth Engagement

The Center of Excellence for Youth Engagement (CEYE) defines youth engagement as “Youth engagement is the meaningful and sustained involvement of a young person in an activity focusing outside the self. Full engagement consists of a cognitive component, an affective component, and a behavioral component - Head, Heart, Feet” (web page, 2012). CEYE is a Canadian national network made up of “the expertise of youth, youth service providers, academic researchers and policy makers to identify, build and implement models of effective practice for meaningfully engaging youth and to document the results” (web page, 2012).

Conducting youth conferences are one strategy to include youth in decision-making processes on community issues. Youth benefit from their increased social capital and knowledge by their intentional inclusion to conferences on a variety of topics (health, political, and social issues). Societies and organizations also benefit from the creativity, energy, and perspectives of the youth (Pancer, Rose-Krasnor & Loiselle, 2003).

Youth Adult Partnerships

“A youth-adult partnership is one in which adults work in full partnership with young people on issues facing youth and/or on programs and policies affecting youth” (Norman, 2004, pg. 10) Adults in positions of social power who include youth in decision making regarding programs and systems that affect youth are quantifiably acknowledging in measurable outcomes that youth are to be respected and valued. The underlying conviction is that youth have the right to influence those structures that directly impact their lives. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CFC, 1989), of which Canada is a signatory, is a legally binding document that recognizes respect for the views of the child (those under 18 years of age) as one of its four core principles.

Organizational Readiness

In order for youth to have meaningful and authentic engagement in social processes, they must be involved at the higher levels of decision making that impact youth and other members of society. In addition to benefits to youth, Norman (2001) describes youth as having incredible energy, passion, and commitment; something which organizations and governments are always searching

Qualitative Coding Matrix on Youth Adult Partnerships Narrative

for ways to create. “Some experts refer to the knowledge-based, flexible organization as a collaborative community, grounded in a shared ethic of interdependent contributions. This makes trust in working relationships critical for the level of collaboration that successful businesses require” (Lowe, 2010, pg. 32). Lowe (2010) goes on to say that those who are engaged through safe and authentic opportunities to learn, collaborate and contribute are more resilient while demonstrating an increased ability to anticipate and adapt to change.

Correlations to Feminist Theory

Feminist theory discusses the personal as political and is based on the premise individual challenges are rooted in a political or social context. Feminism is aimed at advancing individual development through social transformation. Redefining social structures (ie. government/organizations/businesses) must occur in order to include the influence and value of members who are currently unrepresented in those structures in any meaningful and relevant process (Corey, 2009). Deleterious behaviors (by marginalized, oppressed, or stereotyped groups,) are perceived to be a communication regarding an unjust system (society). Zeldin (2004) states that public policy in the United States of America reflects public opinion that the adolescent life stage is a time of turmoil and stress and requires control and protection provided by society. Many people, societies, and organizations still hold negative stereotypes and assumptions about youth’s capabilities and contributions to society (Norman, 2004).

Analyzing Qualitative Data in the Youth Adult Partnership Narrative

Qualitative Coding Matrix on Youth Adult Partnerships Narrative

The categories and codes were chosen through an interpretative exercise in understanding the topics, settings, and concepts being discussed by the youth as they frame them. The codes were assigned by themes I intuitively assigned as I read the narrative and through life and work experiences I have had in the form of working with organizations associated with or serving youth, conversations with youth themselves, and engaging them personally as a youth mentor. Coding was a very lengthy, tedious process as outlined by Taylor & Boden (1998). Analyzing the data was a continually evolving process as new ideas, initiatives, events, and conversations influenced my analytical process regarding the study of youth engagement. Having been personally involved in actual youth engagement initiatives has prepared me to begin making linkages to external systems and cultures that impact effective youth engagement process such as youth adult partnerships. The following coding matrix highlights my definition of significant factors which contribute and develop effective youth adult partnerships.

Code	Definition	Example from Data
Relationship		
Accessibility	Mentors create a relationship where youth intuitively know they can contact them at any time and discuss anything.	<i>HANNA: Like, you, um, yourself and Cane, are both active mentors I believe and I think that all of us feel we can call on either one of you at any time of the day or night. And so there's really that familiar relationship between all of us</i>
Genuine	Everyone feels safe to be who they are with each other and the group.	<i>MADISON: having the ability to have a good working relationship that has less of a stuck up/professional, more the ability to laugh and have fun, not having to worry about language or what topics</i>
Appreciative inquiry	An asset-based approach to asking questions that accentuates the positive (ie, what's working?) with the premise that every individual has something positive to offer the group / situation.	<i>JOHN: Thank you so much Madison. This is great information guys. I sense that there are a number of things that are really positive that are happening, but you can always build sort of a stronger approach to a YAP. So how can we build an even stronger YAP within this initiative? So think about some of the needs we may have or just some of things that we could improve upon.</i>
Dynamic	Constantly evolving, the realization that nothing is static	<i>HANNA: ...we are really strong. So, I think its continual</i>

Qualitative Coding Matrix on Youth Adult Partnerships Narrative

	but all parts are moving included relationship dynamics.	<i>maintenance because every relationship takes maintenance. It's a matter of just doing what we're doing and nourishing those relationships</i>
Sharing World Views	By virtue of the high value placed on the relationship between youth and adult, they allow each into the other's world – advocating for one another.	<i>HANNA: it's really important to mention that there's a level of advocacy, where it's not just adult to youth, it's the youth to youth, youth to adult, adult to adult</i>
Generosity	Generosity is sharing resources attached to inherent privileges/ways of thinking associated with adult and youth positions in society. Even as the group solidifies, always welcoming to new people who will feed the aspect of continual growth.	<i>HANNA: important to keep the group open... looking past that boundary, so that it encourages people that are young youth, to more mature and elders. So when you do age out it's not like you're kicked out of the group. Whether or not you're on a Youth Agreement, AYA, in care, five, thirty-five, fifteen, we should still keep that open, cause the more support the better.</i>
HONORING		
Responsive	Responsivity allows a relationship to evolve, build and flourish. By meeting each participant's needs, the whole becomes stronger and more resilient. Youth feel respected, honored & valued.	<i>HANNA: ... this group is cohesive and strong. There's always room for improvement...it's a matter of maintaining our relations and continuing to empower each other and be resources for each other.</i>
Continual growth	Improvement is constant and expected. Continual growth is present when new opportunities are created to challenge youth's skill levels and past ineffective ways of doing things.	<i>SHAWNA: like, for instance, Hanna was talking about my lease. Before this project, I might not necessarily have spoken about a problem with something, but now I educate myself before I go into it.</i>
Respect for diversity	Some members are quiet and provide calm, others are ideas people, others are implementation people – each contributes to the whole and respected for the role they play.	<i>HANNA: Look at the mentorship between Deborah and Madison. I mean, she [Madison] has her ear like on the ground and her hands in community which is really cool.</i>
Reciprocity	There is an investment of time and energy by everyone involved. Adults give of their time, utilizing their positions of power/affluence to provide opportunities to acknowledge the gifts youth have or have yet to develop and with the right opportunities, those skills and abilities begin to take shape.	<i>MADISON: it's been absolutely amazing, and opened every door I could imagine. I'm doing stuff I would never would have ever imagined that I would be doing all of this and with the symposium and with everything else that I'm doing and, it's, I, I still can't even fully believe it that it's gotten to this point.</i>
Freedom of choice	Youth can choose their level of engagement. Nothing is forced and is therefore safe because engagement is voluntary.	<i>JOHN: what do you think are important themes then, to make a YAP work? MADISON: "for the youth to have the ability to choose what level they are engaged in. Just because the adults want to engage them doesn't mean the youth want to be engaged to that</i>

Qualitative Coding Matrix on Youth Adult Partnerships Narrative

		<i>level.</i>
Belonging	By working on projects together, a sense of belonging is cultivated. There is a purpose for everyone to achieve common goals.	<i>HANNA: And we all have come to have an open relationship where we know everybody's strengths and their experience so that we're able to cultivate a stronger group.</i>
Recognition & acknowledgement	Celebrating achievements tells the youth they are valued. Acknowledgement demonstrates the importance of everyone working collaboratively. Purpose of the group is also reinforced during these activities.	<i>SHAWNA: we've always had help from you guys whenever we've needed it which has made it a lot easier to go to things. Even simple things like having us get a wage when we do something rather than just like getting a gift card was a big difference.</i>
LEARNING		
Reciprocity	Creating an environment for youth to develop accountability and responsibility behind a goal that they value. The adults create an environment to learn from youth.	<i>MADISON: I think that it really looks like youth that are accountable and responsible and are really actively engaged and adults that are creating the space for that.</i>
Contextual	Describes the sharing of knowledge and support to youth when requested through life situations	<i>HANNA: if I have any questions about anything, I know I can contact anyone part of the group: adult or youth. And that's really important and I think everybody feels the same with me. And that it's actually used.</i>
Mastery	Youth sees personal gains in skill level and new ways of approaching challenging situations	<i>SHAWNA: I'm more of a patient person now after this whole project. I know how better to say them in ways that maybe people can understand more and relate to more, comes across better in general.</i>
Scaffolding	Adults prepare youth for experiences	<i>MADISON: ... the adults have really given us the ability through experiences while teaching and mentorship and supporting to be able to go out and do other things... even if it's nothing they're necessarily tied to ... you and Cane are still supporting me to do that whenever I have questions like, how does this work, you're still there if I need you.</i>
Sharing Life Experiences	Bilateral Learning	<i>HANNA: You mentor us and learn from us and often times our responses, like you'll get the 'a-ha', 'oh!', going on where you're also learning just the same.</i>
Changing Organizational Culture	Protected space is a result of forging/ maintaining new ways of creating and demonstrating collaborative practice to create organizational change. This is the work the adults to advocate for youth to others in power who do not yet have the same visioning or knowledge of how to create processes for shared leadership. It is the	<i>JOHN: What's so important in human development is that you have empowering relationships. Secondly, what's really important is that you feel safe not only emotionally but physically safe in any environment or setting. What's important is that you feel like you're learning, you're, you're taking on new things that expand uh, your knowledge, etc. And the other is that you feel like you</i>

Qualitative Coding Matrix on Youth Adult Partnerships Narrative

	organization that must learn and sustain youth engagement at all organization levels.	<i>have voice. That, that you're engaged.</i>
MENTORING		
Action Oriented	Mentoring is about making the learning experience personalized, unique in order to make sense of it and connect it to personal resources and requirements	<i>HANNA: Shawna had a question about a lease and she was able to call me and ask, and then I wasn't entirely sure so I asked Cane. We know who might have an idea - we use that relationship and keep it active.</i>
Inter-dependent	Once youth are mentored, supported, and respected, they reach out to each other to model what they have learned.	<i>MADISON: Like, Hanna is a little bit older, Shawna and I are the same age, Shane's in that, you know. We all help each other where need be right? Like, I have no problem driving people and driving them to this and that and what-not. And then again the adults help by supporting that with a little bit of gas reimbursement.</i>
Feedback Loop	Co-evaluating each other's effect on the group process for evaluation and learning.	<i>HANNA: I think there's celebration for different strengths and experiences. JOHN: Look how much you are mentoring Madison. SHAWNA: You don't act like organizational people...like something is stuck up there.</i>
Investment of Time & Energy	Adults make a conscious choice to invest in initial teaching moments from a comprehension of the value their investment will create for their organization and the youth.	<i>MADISON: Adults can create that space and be that support and willing to take the time to sit down. And even though it might take them five minutes to do something and fifteen if they do it with a youth, be willing to take it, that fifteen minutes to teach the youth to do it, because next time the youth can do it with a lot less help.</i>
Strategic	This is about timing of presenting relevant information to youth, teaching strategic thinking rather than just providing a script or a solution.	<i>MADISON: at least have Cane behind me go, you know, when I've talked to him, kind of going, 'kay, these are the things you need to look for and being able to do that on my own but still feel like I have the support of group.</i>
KNOWLEDGE		
Dynamic	When a youth becomes enlightened to underlying issues and background knowledge, they learn to think critically/strategically. Adults can also learn how this might transform their own organizations.	<i>SHAWNA: I know, even like small things, like if I was ever going to do a group, I think I would know the ingredients that you would need to get people to come and now when adults ask why they can't get youth to come, I can pretty much point out five things you didn't do right off the bat.</i>
Contextual	Labeling becomes useful when it is needed to understand the dynamics of an adult/youth relationship.	<i>HANNA: The thing is its tough because it has to explain the dynamic of the group because you do need to be able to identify that there is a youth side and adult side.</i>

Qualitative Coding Matrix on Youth Adult Partnerships Narrative

Reciprocal	This is the networking of knowledge. The knowledge is transferred in a ripple effect.	<i>MADISON: It's given me the ability to help and support them in a lot of different ways because I have the resources behind me ...to go out into community and help and support youth better and engage them</i>
Intentional	Flexibility, Understanding, Compromise, Transparency describe the goals of communication while they also describe characteristics of relationship	<i>JOHN: Yeah, well, you know it's important to have an identifier for context, like you saying, but also that we not stigmatize or label.</i>
Authentic	Honoring others value, not only capitalizing on their strengths, but responding to their needs (decisions on providing rides, food, and convenient meeting location)	<i>HANNA: You know, we started meeting in a location that is more central for all of us. Works better for one team member who's still in school. It's important that we have that accommodation for each other.</i>
Collaborative	Everyone is equally important. Members are assertive and realize that all viewpoints can be learned from, recognized and implemented for the best solution [Video Blog, Resolving Conflict Effectively].	<i>SHAWNA: Looking back on it, I'm really surprised that I've never felt like our opinions say weren't really agreed with by the bigger group that you guys backed us up. We were always encouraged to say our opinion rather than not.</i>

Table 1 Youth Adult Partnership Matrix (Taylor & Gibbs, 2010)**Concept Map and Fishbone Diagram of the Youth Adult Partnership Narrative**

The Concept Map was constructed to represent the fluidity of influencing factors to each other as they relate to youth adult partnerships. Each theme is perceived as equally important; however, more attention to one may be necessary in different stages of partnership development in order to produce genuine care and respect for all involved as individuals. Although youth adult partnerships are a means to an end, they are also a platform for transformative thinking in the way adults as power holders in society can practice wisdom as well as respect to capture the value, passion, skills and knowledge held by youth who hold less power. The value of this map is that there is no hierarchy of concepts or values and therefore each component must be given equal value and consideration. Because youth adult partnerships are a composition of unique individuals attached to unique experiences,

Qualitative Coding Matrix on Youth Adult Partnerships Narrative

history, and knowledge, all effective partnerships will not be generated from a specific composition or formula of concepts. It is imperative to remain teachable and sensitive, as in any relationship, to the process of forming effective youth adult partnerships by virtue of their unique quality.

The fishbone map portrays the elements required to create and sustain the goal of effective youth adult partnerships specific to the group being interviewed. This allows for the discussion of contributing factors that lead to an end and are goal focused. Youth adult partnerships, in turn, are a building block to achieving meaningful youth engagement (Norman, 2004). This may assist in preparing organizations and decision-makers in recognizing how youth become engaged within social and political structures and how their current members or employees who are in subordinate positions can become involved and engaged in the structure or organization in a meaningful way.

Qualitative Coding Matrix on Youth Adult Partnerships Narrative

Youth Adult Partnership Narrative Concept Map

-Youth have the freedom to choose their own level of engagement
-Meeting places are central >everyone is important.
-Resources are provided to group as needed or to assist with working together such as gas money & food, payment for work trips & research time completed by youth
-Adults and youth both perceive that they need each other to meet one another's needs equally; one is not better or superior to the other

Relationship

-Mentors create a relationship where youth can call at any time
-Everyone is able to be who they are in communication style, humour, temperament...
-Members are responsive & vocal when distance is perceived in a member
-Transparency, flexibility, understanding, compromise
-Sharing resources attached to inherent privileges/ways of thinking associated with adult and youth positions in society. Even as the group solidifies, always welcoming new people who will feed the aspect of continual growth.
-Youth/Adult helps the other navigate in the other's world/culture/age group

Honouring

-The group is responsive to each other's needs
-Everyone knows improvement is constant
-Each member is supported by each willing to take the time to sit down to talk
-Some members are quiet and provide calm, others are ideas people, others are implementation people – all are valued by being utilized
-Genuine care and respect contribute to individual development and organizational success
-providing organizational space that is physically respectful and psychologically safe for engagement to occur

-Bilateral learning (from each other and from a body of people to the larger organization while the organization learns how to authentically practice youth engagement)
-Has a practical application to solving individual, organization, or community problems
-Intentional opportunities are created to develop individual knowledge and skills to provide resources to those that require it
-Youth/Adults develop skills in collaboration processes, critical thinking, process analysis, intentionality, through scaffolded experience – new for the organization as well
-Adult and youth guide each other in languaging, relevant topics, and presence in the other's world
-Protected space is a result of forging/ maintaining new ways of creating collaborative practice to foster organizational change to sustain the gains made through Youth-Adult partnerships.

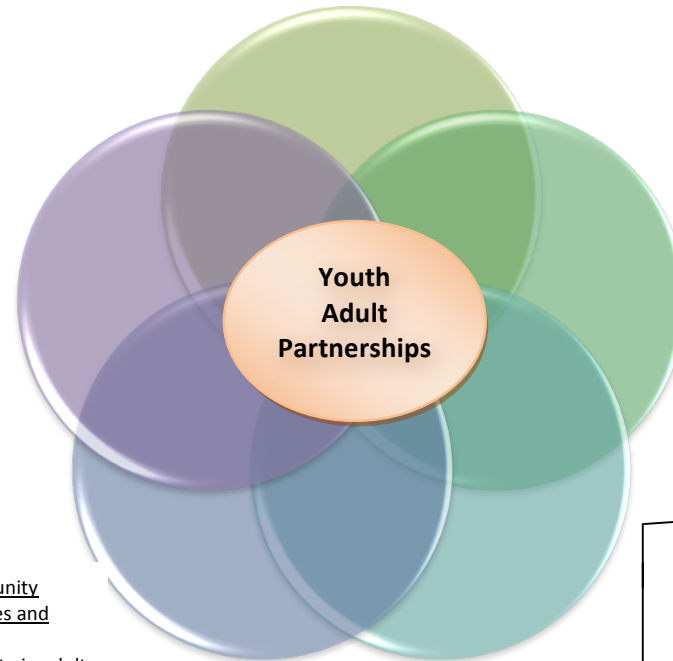
Learning

Knowledge

-Youth build adult's knowledge base by informing them on community issues and impacts/effects of government or organizational policies and culture
-Context is provided to prepare youth to learn how to communicate in adult forums to build skill and capacity for future workers/leaders
-Information on content and process is provided by youth and adults: each has a piece of the puzzle – collaboration of knowledge/information
-Intentionality is woven into presenting to society that youth have valid views, perspectives, and have the capability to contribute
-Communication is candid and intended to build group cohesion
-Centered on learning and building each other up rather than focused on promoting any one member over the other

Mentoring

-Learning is in the doing (projects planning and completion as a team)
-Collaboration on work
-Constant change in group dynamics: the student becomes the mentor; the mentor becomes the student
-Making youth aware of hidden challenges in addressing new groups of people, encouraging critical thinking by the youth
-Skills are dually built to address shortages or gaps in the other's world and culture
-Co-evaluating each other's progress to inform learning and evaluation
-Challenges are addressed and overcome by all (if one needs a ride to a meeting, one of the group provides it.



Fishbone Diagram of the Youth Adult Partnership Narrative

