

**Global Scribes Literature Review:
Incorporating Positive Youth Development into A Youth-Led Program**

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Abstract

As policy makers and practitioners innovate to solve the world's current and most pressing issues, adolescents are often overlooked as impacted by today's problems and thus, disregarded as a potential resource for solving such problems. For example, 73% of youth have reported that they feel the effects of climate change, 23% of migrants in developing regions are under the age of 20, and 14 million youth, in 2011, were displaced by conflict or disasters (United Nations Environment Programme, 2008; United Nations Development Programme, 2015; Subgroup on Youth Participation in Peacebuilding, 2014). Additionally, the current ratio of young workers per older person is expected to fall from 7 to 4.9 globally by 2030, putting more responsibilities on young people's shoulders in the near future (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2015).

While adolescents make up 25% of the total working age population, opportunities to access their potential and be able to contribute to society are often lacking (ILO FAO, 2013). In 2013, the number of adolescents out of school grew to 124 million. In 2015, the youth unemployment rate was 13.1%, three times higher than the adult unemployment rate. It was also reported that 2 out of 3 countries do not consult young people when preparing national development plans (UNESCO, 2015; ILO, 2015; The Global Youth Call "prioritizing Youth in the Post-2015 Development Agenda). In addition to youth needing opportunities to participate in local and national issues, they also need guidance in walking through the common challenges of adolescence, such as: engagement in risky behavior, mental health concerns, and coping with social dynamics.

There is a strong need for the youth of today - the leaders of tomorrow - to grow up in an environment that addresses their developmental needs and prepares them to take on positions of power. Fortunately, researchers and practitioners are moving towards youth-led (YLP) or positive youth development (PYD) programs that treat youth as assets while providing them

with the tools and skills necessary for young people thrive in society. These programs that develop positive characteristics, competencies, and skills have also demonstrated a reduction in negative and risky behaviors in adulthood (Catalano, Hawkins, Berglund, Pollard, & Arthur, 2002; Scales, Roehlkepartain, & Fraher, 2012; Talbert, 2017). Global Scribes: Youth Uniting Nations, also known as Global Scribes (GS), is a youth-led organization that incorporates positive youth development within its design, providing global youth a unique platform to connect, create and collaborate across borders. As a “For Youth, By Youth” community GS strives to empower youth to become the leaders of tomorrow through social technology, providing them the opportunity to augment their formal education by acquiring 21st century skills.

Global Scribes

Global Scribes is an online platform where youth from diverse locations, cultures and ideologies, can connect and share their passions and creativity in a safe, accessible, and enabling environment. The Global Scribes program involves a four-step process to enter the platform that includes (1) creative writing about the monthly spark word, (2) producing a selfie video, (3) participating in the global video calls, and (4) actively participating in their own youth-led teams. The Global Scribes Teams cover 17 different fields of interest (as indicated by Figure 1) with projects ranging from developing an app, to launching campaigns, and much more. Overall, youth come together in this platform to “Create. Connect. Collaborate.” from all across the world but still from the comfort of their own computers. Global Scribes’ focus of “By Youth, For Youth,” means that the day-to-day operations are run by the youth (Scribers).

GS TEAMS



Figure 1: Global Scribes Teams

The goal is for youth to leave Global Scribes with the confidence that they can engage in a global society and act on their passions with relevant project skills, leadership skills, and cross-cultural understanding to do so. Currently, Scribes are working on publishing a book with their personal stories & artwork, developing a culture quiz app, running a radio station, creating GS promo videos, launching a Stop Litter campaign, collaborating on a song across multiple continents, and much more.

“As a team we’re learning from our early experiences and quickly refining in every aspect of our effort, striving to make this project the very best it can be.”

- Nick Saunders, Global Scribes (Wales)

“From Global Scribes I have learned the true value of communication and learning from others and the extreme significance of unity.”

- Sarra Allayan, Global Scribes (Jordan)

All youth are welcome, and encouraged, to join, the initial meeting is strictly for cyber-security and child-protection measures. Youth, ages 8-25 can participate in Global Scribes through their school, an implementing organization, a connecting scribe, or by finding Global Scribes on their own. Joining the online platform is a matter taken very seriously with the Global Scribes team and security is of utmost importance. Membership can only be granted after a video-conference has taken place with one of the Regional Ambassadors of Global Scribes and the potential scribe. Once they have met with one of the Ambassadors, new Scribes have access to the other Scribes through engaging with their chats, teams, and video calls.

Established rules within the platform prohibit topics that are potentially inflammatory and/or offensive, such as religion, politics, and inappropriate language. Scribes are encouraged to help monitor and deter and/or report any rule-breaking. In addition to self-reporting, all Regional Ambassadors are included in every team chat and video call to address any issues and monitor the conversations. If a scribe has broken Global Scribes' established rules the individual will be addressed by the Regional Ambassador to determine what actions will be taken as a consequence of the misconduct.

These measures in place, from the joining process to explicit rules on dialogue and engagement, allow for a safe, enabling environment for youth to flourish by expressing themselves and fostering global communication. Currently, GS is in Phase 1 of Growth Markers as there are approximately 2,000 scribes registered online (Global Scribes, 2018a). Out of those, around 250 are active participants (Global Scribes, 2018a).

Global Scribes as a Youth-Led Program

What does it mean to be a Youth-Led Program?

There exists a plethora of organizations dedicated to assisting youth in growing into capable adults. However, programs that empower young people to create change both within

their own life and in their community are more difficult to find. Youth-led programs (YLP) are designed to create change within the lives of youth and empower youth to address pressing issues within their community (Talbert, 2017). YLP develop young people's knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be catalysts of change within their community (Talbert, 2017).

Self-defined youth-led organizations use a wide range of models and methods to accomplish organizational mission and goals (Youth Speak Out Coalition & Zimmerman, 2007). At the core of YLP, youth are engaged in collective activities and experiences intended to help spark youth's interest and enhance their ability to address local issues (Talbert, 2017). According to the Youth Speak Out Coalition and Zimmerman (2007), youth-led models must also contain four key strategies:

- Youth-led models must fit the cultural context
- Youth-led models promote community and intergenerational healing
- Youths' agency is supported by adults
- Youth-led models transform culture

Research related to Youth-Led Programs

In a study that compared youth-led programs to adult-led programs Larson, Walker, and Pearce (2005) reported that in youth-led programs, adults provide behind-the-scenes support, thus giving youth the opportunity to think independently and work together to implement their ideas (Larson et al., 2005). With this level of self-determination, youth reported several benefits, including developing self-confidence, interpersonal skills, increased sense of responsibility, and ownership of the projects and high investment in project success. Youth also revealed that they expanded their leadership skills in addition to increasing communication and teamwork skills (Larson et al., 2005). As a result of their experience with youth-led programs, many youth reported a greater commitment to school and college (Larson et al., 2005)

Larson et al., (2005) reported similar developments from the adult-led programs (a school theatre production and career training where adults created student-centered experiences). Youth reported that their greatest concern of the adult-led programs was the threat of adults' control undermining the youth's ownership (Larson et al., 2005).

The self-determination afforded by youth-led programs is also reported in other studies. In a qualitative study of three out-of-school (OST) art hubs, findings indicated that the programs were more successful engaging youth when using primarily self-directed and youth-led approaches to learning and program delivery when compared to adult-led hubs (Hauseman, 2016). Though engagement was high in all three art hubs, it was highest (94.44%) at the hub that was the least structured and most youth-led (Hauseman, 2016). This study suggests that a youth-led program provides a high incentive for young people to participate. The motivation to participate in a movement that adults do not fully control attracts youth in a way that adult-led programs do not.

Kids as Self Advocates (KASA) uses the internet as the main platform for the organization (Youth Speak Out Coalition & Zimmerman, 2007). Created by and for youth with disabilities, KASA strives to educate society about issues concerning youth with disabilities and special health care needs while also breaking the isolation young people with disabilities face (Youth Speak Out Coalition & Zimmerman, 2007). As a virtual community, KASA reports that youth develop a sense of pride, experience a safe place to connect, and supports young people in becoming organizers in their own community (Youth Speak Out Coalition & Zimmerman, 2007). KASA uses technology as a tool to build social networks and movements. KASA also strives to transform culture by connecting members to decrease social isolation, develop communication and leadership skills, and provide a safe learning environment that encourages participants to create change within the organization and their own communities (Youth Speak Out Coalition & Zimmerman, 2007).

A significant component of a YLP is the development of social capital. Social capital has several definitions, however, each agree that the idea of social capital as social relationships can entail the transfer of resources and provide positive benefits (Jarrett et al., 2005). Three characteristics of YLP suggest they are well-suited to facilitating youth's development of social capital (Jarrett et al., 2005). First, youth programs intentionally construct social structures that bring youth and non-familial adults together. Second, the interactions between youth and non-familial adults are frequent and supportive in nature. (Jarrett et al., 2005). Third, many organized programs are concerned with enhancing youth development through intergenerational relationships (Jarrett et al., 2005). To understand the processes behind developing social capital in youth programs, a qualitative research study of three programs was conducted (Jarrett et al., 2005). The three programs studied included a local chapter of the National FFA Organization, Art-First, and Youth Action (Jarrett et al., 2005).

Overall, two thematic areas were found from the interviews: that there are three stages in the formation of relationships with community adults and they illuminated how these relationships provided youth with social capital in the forms of different resources and benefits (Jarrett et al., 2005). The three stages in the development of relationships with community adults start with youth-adult disconnect, move forward to interacting with adults, and end with connecting with adults (Jarrett et al., 2005). The interviews also showed that the adults the youth interacted with as a part of the three programs provided the youth with information, assistance, exposure to adult worlds, encouragement, and support (Jarrett et al., 2005). Another unique finding of this study was how each of the three programs adapted to their particular community context (Jarrett et al., 2005). Youth-led programs are also used in educational programs or schools to help students. A recent study compared YLPs and traditional board-mandated usual practice (UP) programs that were designed to reduce bullying, sexual harassment, and dating aggression (Connolly, Josephson, Schnoll, Simpkins-Strong,

Pepler, MacPhersn, Weiser, Moran, & Jiang, 2015). Four Canadian middle schools were randomly assigned to a YLP or UP, assessing a total of 509 students in grades seven and eight (Connolly et al., 2015). The students' knowledge, attitudes, victimization, and emotional school adjustment (anxiety and school interconnectedness) were assessed in the fall (pretest) and spring (posttest) semesters (Connolly et al., 2015).

Overall, results favored the YLP over the UP. Knowledge about bullying, sexual harassment, and victimization significantly increased through the school year by YLP and UP (Connolly et al., 2015, p. 419). However, there was a greater gain in dating aggression knowledge for the YLP group than the UP group (Connolly et al., 2015, p. 419). Significant attitudinal changes were found for both groups but there was no significant changes in attitudes toward sexual harassment for either group (Connolly et al., 2015). The largest significant difference was found in emotional and school adjustment. For anxiety, YLP demonstrated a significant reduction from fall to spring whereas the UP group did not show any decline (Connolly et al., 2015, p. 421). Furthermore, students in the YLP group maintained a high level of school connectedness through both semesters (Connolly et al., 2015, p. 421). In contrast, students involved in the UP groups showed a significant decline in school connectedness (Connolly et al., 2015, p. 421).

Although not specifically created for the educational system, GS is established in a number of schools around the world. Used in the classroom setting, GS provides students with the opportunity to connect with other youth on a global scale as part of the class curriculum. Another aspect of GS partnering schools is a 'GS Club' made up of students. Each school has a GS Club Leader, who oversees and supports the GS Club within their school (Global Scribes, 2018a, p. 11). These club leaders are responsible for organizing club meetings, recruiting new members, encourages participation in the club and within GS, while also facilitating meetings

(Global Scribes, 2018a, p. 11). Future research of GS could measure how GS Clubs have impacted student Scribes school connectedness, attitudes, knowledge, and anxiety.

Global Scribes as a Youth-Led Program

The literature reviewed above demonstrates what it means to be a youth-led program. Youth-led programs teach young people the skills needed to become socially active (and possible activists) within their own community. GS is an international, youth-led organization that uses internet technology to incorporate the four key strategies of youth-led programs (fit the cultural context; promotes community and intergenerational healing; transforms culture; and youths' agency is supported by adults.) Because GS is a global organization, Scribes are exposed to cultures other than their own. This provides Scribes the opportunity to increase cultural competence and to connect with youth from all around the world. Connecting with youth from a variety of geographic locations aids in demonstrating the differences in their lives, but also the similarities between them (i.e. experience with school, similar interests, use of technology). By connecting youth, Scribes can become aware of and respond to issues that are common all around the world.

As an entirely online program, GS faces distinct challenges compared to nuts and bolts programs. Because Scribes do not physically meet face-to-face, it may be difficult for individuals outside of GS to see the benefits of creating a youth-led virtual world. According to Larson et al., (2005) the principal concern of the youth-led approach is when conditions develop such that youth lose control of a project, causing it to break down or go "off-track" of its original direction. To counteract this concern, GS includes young adults Scribes (ages twenty-one to twenty-five) to share their experience and maturity not only assisting groups to complete projects, but also to provide a supportive adult presence within the GS community. This encourages youth to develop leadership skills and learn how to work collaboratively to complete projects of their choosing. Because Scribes have control over the team they join and their level

of involvement, it is suggested that many are determined to see their team project through to the end.

As a YLP, GS creates a “place of possibility” for Scribes to learn and develop. Global Scribes is unique among other organizations because of its purposeful design giving Scribes almost complete autonomy over daily activities and team projects. Similar to the KASA program, GS uses technology as a tool to build social networks and transforms culture by connecting members to decrease social isolation, develop communication and leadership skills, and providing a safe learning environment. GS supports youth by encouraging participants to create change within the program and their own communities.

In addition, Global Scribes promotes the development of social capital within the Scribes community. Youth and non-familial adults are frequently brought together through core calls, spark words, and the mentoring program. The three stages of relationships with community are also clear in GS. When Scribes first join GS, they may not have a positive relationship with an adult (youth-adult disconnect). Once Scribes become involved with teams, core calls, and the mentoring program, they are interacting with adults on different levels. Once relationships are established through repeated participation, younger Scribes then connect with other adult Scribes. Although completely online, GS utilizes the internet as a tool to connect youth at a global level. Through the internet, teams have completed projects that encourage them to become involved in their own communities. By becoming involved in their own communities, Scribes build social capital in their local community.

Global Scribes and Positive Youth Development

What is Positive Youth Development (PYD)?

Historically, youth development programs in the United States were intervention programs responding to existing crises, such as substance abuse disorders, conduct disorders, teen

pregnancy and academic failures. As these crises continued to persist, practitioners transitioned to the development of preventing problem behaviors. Research revealed that programs which addressed the negative *and* positive characteristics of youth, were actually more effective in preventing youth from engaging in risky behavior. The positive youth development philosophy grew out of this recognition, and posits that successful interventions provide youth positive alternative routes to risky behaviors as well as encourage youth to engage in and take leadership in their own development and eventually their community's development (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2002).

PYD program models aim to build the competencies, skills, and abilities of youth needed for them to grow and flourish throughout life (Hinson, Kapungu, Jessee, Skinner, Bardini, & Evans-Whipp, 2016). The model encourages building mutually beneficial relationships between youth and other parts of their life (i.e. family, friends, school, workplace, community, society, etc.) to provide opportunities for them to enhance their knowledge, interests, skills, and abilities (Hinson et al., 2016). Examples of identified components are emotional competence, interpersonal communication skills, self-determination, and opportunities for prosocial involvement. GS is a YLP that utilizes positive youth development (PYD) to inform organizational perspective, practice, and future development. As a Youth-led Program (YLP) that integrates PYD into its design, it is important to compare GS to other programs that also use a PYD approach.

Research related to PYD

A recent ethnographic study of an elementary after-school basketball program examined its atmosphere through the view of its students (Ward & Parker, 2013, p. 534). The program model was designed to ensure that individuals' needs for relatedness, autonomy, and competence must be met for successful growth (Ward & Parker, 2013, p. 534). The authors

defined atmosphere as the climate created by the interaction that occurs between the participants, staff, and the environment (Ward & Parker, 2013, p. 536).

The after-school program met two days per week for two and a half hours per day for the duration of the school year (Ward & Parker, 2013, p. 537). The program was designed to function as a club where youth could meet, play basketball, and learn (Ward and Parker, 2013, p. 537). Against the background of basketball, the program provided students with opportunities to increase autonomy, competence, relatedness with non-familial adults, and to practice conflict-resolution skills (Ward & Parker, 2013, p. 538). The program offered daily choices for students for basketball content, activities and participation in the leadership teams (Ward & Parker, 2013, p. 538). The regular schedule for the program included free play at the beginning of the program, then moving forward to an awareness talk, group practice or play, and ended with reflection time (Ward & Parker, 2013, p. 538). Although adults outlined what went on during practices, students also contributed and would take turns leading different parts of practice (Ward & Parker, 2013, p. 538). Upon analyzing the program design, findings revealed that the PYD model empowered youth through giving them autonomy in what they want to practice and improved both their communication and leadership skills.

Four themes were found in comments about the after-school program study (Ward & Parker, 2013, p. 540). The study found that the relationship between adults and youth became essential to the creation and maintenance of the atmosphere in the program (Ward & Parker, 2013, p. 540). The next second theme of 'Getting more skills' involved the students learning about and improving their basketball skills (Ward & Parker, 2013, p. 541). Youth participating in the after-school program indicated that learning in-game team skills, tactics and strategies were very important to them, and was evident in the choices of things to practice (Ward and Parker, 2013, p. 541). In addition, a sub-theme included 'Learning respect and stuff' (Ward & Parker, 2013, p. 541). For participants in the after-school program, this sub-theme involved learning

other non-basketball related skills, such as conflict resolution, teamwork, fitness concepts, and other life skills (Ward & Parker, 2013, p. 541). The other life skills that were learned involved getting along with each other, having a good attitude, and being respectful to staff and other students (Ward & Parker, 2013, p. 541). The fourth theme 'Here I had control' was related to youth having control in terms of creating the norms that governed the club while also having flexible rules and a light structure (Ward & Parker, 2013, p. 543).

It is also important to understand the implications of social media on PYD. Research suggests that social media functions as a communication tool, which allows for easy, creative, and affordable avenues for information dissemination and public participation (Lee and Horsley, 2017, p. 128). A recent study of 4-H Clubs, a youth organization in the United States, investigated the role of social media communications in relation to PYD (Lee and Horsley, 2017). During this two-part study, three coding variables - organizational disclosure, information dissemination, and involvement - were applied to investigate the 4-H Club's Facebook activity (Lee and Horsley, 2017). Results demonstrated that among available social media platforms, Facebook remained the primary communication medium for 4-H with the largest number of fans (Lee and Horsley, 2017). The most emphasized and direct posts involved connection, competence, and contribution (Lee and Horsley, 2017). Other traits such as confidence, compassion, character, and conviviality were indirectly emphasized through stories of other youth members (Lee and Horsley, 2017).

The second part of this research study involved in-depth interviews of the 4-H alumni (Lee and Horsley, 2017). Findings of the second part suggest that the 4-H Facebook page fosters PYD in diverse ways and also serves as a platform where alumni, supporters, and the organization all interact with one another (Lee and Horsley, 2017, p. 133). Using Facebook also allowed members to pursue more learning experiences and get involved to address community issues (Lee and Horsley, 2017).

Several research studies indicate that motivation is a key ingredient of change. Youth possess a built-in motivational system that has enormous potential to help them engage in PYD (Larson, 2006). Under the right conditions, people become intrinsically motivated, and engaged, by challenging tasks (Larson, 2006, p. 679). For PYD to occur, there must be a combination of intrinsic motivation and support both for its activation and remaining activated as youth experience obstacles (Larson, 2006). Mentors, parents, and other adults have an important role to play in this area (Larson, 2006).

To activate intrinsic motivation for youth, youth need to experience a sense of ownership and to gradually develop greater ability to regulate this agency (Larson, 2006). In addition, this agency needs to be directed in ways that are uniform with the development of the youth's well-being and constructive participation within society (Larson, 2006). The mentorship relationship provides the opportunity for adults to balance the two-part role of creating structure and allowing youth ownership. What makes the mentorship relationship special is the key characteristic of mutual trust (Larson, 2006). Once the mentor-mentee relationship is established, the adult has the enhanced freedom to balance the roles of supporting youths' intrinsic motivation and providing input that helps direct it toward growth (Larson, 2006). It is clear that mentors have a unique position to help mentees yet respect their autonomy.

In a meta analysis of seventy-three independent evaluations of mentoring programs, overall findings supported the effectiveness of mentoring for improving outcomes across the behavioral, social, emotional, and academic domains of young people's development (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Naida, & Valentine, 2011). The benefits of mentoring were apparent from childhood to adolescence and was not limited to one stage of development (DuBois et al., 2011). Furthermore, peer-to-peer mentoring programs showed comparable levels of effectiveness to adult-mentee programs (DuBois et al., 2011).

Global Scribes as a PYD Program

As a YLP that integrates PYD into its design, it is important to compare GS to other programs that also use a PYD approach. The literature above provides a view of best practices of PYD. The projected design of GS fulfills many PYD components. Similar to the after-school program described by Ward and Parker (2013) GS promotes a positive atmosphere for its participants. It also promotes relatedness, autonomy, and competence through the program design. Through teamwork, scribes use their skills to complete various projects that are unique to each team (competence). Furthermore, the results from the after-school program study and GS are comparable.

In terms of fostering communication, GS improves scribes proficiency in English throughout the program. The monthly spark word allows scribes to describe what the word means to them in English, where other scribes can read and respond to it. The GS website, a responsibility of the scribes, is also in English. Increasing Scribes' proficiency in English will help them communicate at an international level in the future. Moreover, GS provides scribes with several choices to learn skills: the monthly spark word, Core Calls, and participating in the team(s) of their choosing. These teams are unique to the Scribes interest and so appeals to their desire to learn various skills. These skills are consistent with ones that Scribes learn.

GS promotes increases communication skills and cultural humility. Even though GS does not meet in a physical space, they are able to provide youth with the necessary tools to help themselves and others in the future. As an international organization, scribes are exposed to different cultures. The atmosphere of GS integrates cultural humility into the program. Cultural humility is a process of openness, self-awareness, being egoless, and incorporating self-reflection and critique after interacting with diverse individuals (Foronda, Reinholdt, & Ousman, 2016, p. 213). The results of cultural humility include mutual empowerment, respect, partnerships, and lifelong learning (Foronda, Reinholdt, & Ousman, 2016, p. 213). GS promotes

cultural humility through selfie videos about “The Life I Lead”. These videos allow Scribes to share their lives with everyone, therefore spreading an atmosphere of learning throughout GS.

Overall, GS demonstrates an atmosphere that accentuates positive youth development. As an online community, Scribes use the internet to communicate with one another. If parents are involved (for younger Scribes), they may want to know about GS and be kept updated with events and what is “going-on” within the community. Using social media platforms, such as Facebook, is an easy and cost effective way to keep parents, teachers, schools, partners, and Scribes up to date with the latest information. Currently, GS does have an active Facebook page. Recent posts have included information about events, campaigns, and membership. While all of these posts demonstrate PYD in terms of communication, it is the Facebook posts about diversity, empowerment, Scriber achievements, and daily life that show how GS contributes to PYD.

As a support mechanism for GS, a proposed mentoring program will make psychosocial support available within a peer-to-peer environment (Global Scribes, 2018a, p. 10). Older Scribes (twenty-two years or older) will be available for younger Scribes (twenty-one years and younger) through Scribes World (Global Scribes, 2018a). Currently, older Scribes provide an informal, peer-to-peer support system (Level 1) for Scribes who may be going through obstacles in their life (i.e. changing schools, transitioning to different grade levels and the University, or into a first job position) (Global Scribes, 2018a).

Projected Level II will enable peer-mentors to share knowledge about the Scriber’s World community by giving advice, ideas, care, support, best practices, and how to improve current practices (Global Scribes, 2018a). Finally, Level III involves learning with experts; guest speakers are going to be presenting mentorship workshops for mentors (Global Scribes, 2018a). Topics of these workshops can include how to responsibly guide youth, normal life

transition versus a critical situation, and understanding when it is time to refer Scribes to the appropriate child welfare services (Global Scribes, 2018a).

The effort that GS is putting into creating a great peer-to-peer mentoring program meets the criteria of supporting youths' agency while also directing it towards growth. Although GS is a program for youth, there are also adults that are involved as Scribes who interact with participants who are younger than they are. Schools that are involved with GS have teachers who are there for their students (who are scribes) if they need assistance.

Outcome Measures for Youth Programs

Evaluating GS as a Youth-Led Program

Improving one does not change the other. However, research shows the opposite is true: youth and community development are inextricably linked to one another (London, Zimmerman, & Erbstein, 2003, p. 33). Youth-led Research, Evaluation, and Planning (Youth REP) is an approach that was developed by Youth In Focus (London, Zimmerman, & Erbstein, 2003, p. 33) The Youth REP approach promotes PYD and youth empowerment while also generating powerful learning opportunities for program, organizational, and community improvement (London, Zimmerman, & Erbstein, 2003, p. 34). This approach engages youth in the documentation, research, and action processes along with the process of knowledge production that shapes these fields (London, Zimmerman, & Erbstein, 2003, p. 36). The youth-led evaluation process requires the involvement of multiple parties, draws on their perspectives and knowledge, creates opportunities for partnerships, and provides various development benefits (London, Zimmerman, & Erbstein, 2003, p. 36).

More specific to Youth REP is Participatory Action Research (PAR), which supports the idea that the most reliable representation of reality is when the distance between the subject and object is either removed or minimized (London, Zimmerman, & Erbstein, 2003, p. 37). PAR

also emphasizes the empowerment and self-determination of clients (London, Zimmerman, & Erbstein, 2003, p. 37). The youth-led evaluation method empowers young people by providing them with the tools to develop and validate knowledge, while also giving them the ability to create policies or programs that fit their needs (London, Zimmerman, & Erbstein, 2003, p. 39). A flexible aspect of youth-led evaluation is that it can be used as a sole method or as a powerful complement to an adult-led evaluation (London, Zimmerman, & Erbstein, 2003, p. 39).

Utilizing the Youth REP approach to evaluating GS would allow the youth to evaluate their own progress in building this organization. Youth would be able to assess which policies and activities are going well and others that need improvement. After researching, adjustments to the organization that improves the quality of overall programming and quality of projects for each team may be implemented. Thus, Scribers would teach themselves the skills needed to evaluate organizations. The Youth REP approach would benefit the Scribers conducting the evaluation, GS as an organization, and the communities their projects impact.

Evaluating GS as PYD

Components of positive youth development include competencies, skills, characteristics, and environmental factors. Multiple frameworks to measure PYD are available for use in the United States, yet an internationally accepted and validated framework that spans age, gender, culture, socioeconomic status, and environmental contexts is still under development (Hinson, Kapungu, Jessee, Skinner, Bardini, & Evans-Whipp, 2016).

However, the United States Agency of International Development (USAID) created the “Positive Youth Development Measurement Toolkit” for its workers to use in its international youth development projects (Hinson et al., 2016). The framework combines theoretical and empirical work done in positive youth development and consists of four domains, Assets, Agency, Contribution, and Enabling Environment, with multiple components under each domain as shown in Figure 2.

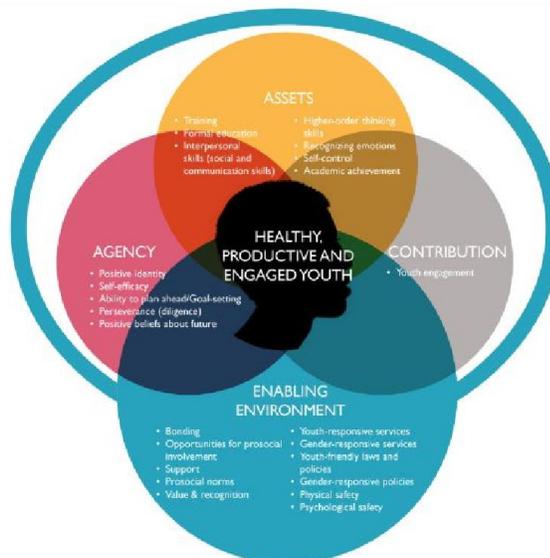


Figure 2. PYD Measurement Framework. Adapted from “Positive Youth Development Measurement Toolkit: A Practical Guide for Implementers of Youth Programs,” by Hinson, et. al. 2016, p. 22. Copyright by Global Innovation Exchange.

USAID explains that “this framework illustrates that to achieve the vision of healthy, productive and engaged youth, PYD programs, practices and policies must work with you to improve [these domains]” (Hinson, et al, 2016, p. 22) which can be defined further as follows:

1. **Assets:** Youth have the necessary resources, skills and competencies to achieve desired outcomes.
2. **Agency:** Youth perceive and have the ability to employ their assets and aspirations to make or influence their own decisions about their lives and set their own goals, as well as to act upon those decisions in order to achieve desired outcomes.
3. **Contribution:** Youth are engaged as a source of change for their own and for their communities’ positive development.
4. **Enabling environment:** Youth are surrounded by an environment that develops and supports their assets, agency, access to services, and opportunities, and strengthens their ability to avoid risks and to stay safe, secure, and be protected and live without fear of violence or retribution.

Global Scribes proposes to use this framework as an effectiveness accountability measure. The following section reviews the body of literature regarding the PYD components of self-efficacy, beliefs in the future, prosocial involvement, and youth engagement.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, under the domain of agency, is defined by USAID as the “beliefs in one’s ability to do many different things” (Hinson, et. al, 2016, p. 69). Tu and Zhang (2014) studied how self-efficacy is an important indicator in mediating the relationship of loneliness to stress, depression, and perceived life satisfaction in youth. At a prestigious business school in China, 444 students, with 38.4% being males and the average age being 19.02 with a standard deviation of 1.26, were surveyed for these items (Tu & Zhang, 2014). Results indicated that self-efficacy was negatively associated with loneliness ($\beta = -0.349$, $p < 0.001$), stress ($\beta = -0.160$, $p < 0.001$), and depression ($\beta = -0.195$, $p < 0.01$) and positively associated with life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.642$, $p < 0.001$) (Tu & Zhang, 2014). More significantly, with self-efficacy as a mediator, the effects of loneliness on stress and depression were reduced ($\beta = 0.242$, $p < 0.001$ and $\beta = 0.765$, $p < 0.001$) and the effects of loneliness on life satisfaction became insignificant ($\beta = 0.018$, ns) (Tu & Zhang, 2014). This data illustrates that self-efficacy partially mediated the relationship between loneliness and stress and depression and fully mediated the relationship between loneliness and life satisfaction.

Interactive activities have consistently reported to elevate levels of self-efficacy in youth, as shown by Deane, Harre, Moore, & Courtney (2016) while studying Project K. Project K was an after-school program that provided opportunities for adventure activities, community involvement, and mentorship (Deane et al., 2016). The 600 Project K participants from 50 Project K programs were ages 13-15, 46% female, and from a diverse range of socioeconomic status backgrounds (Deane et al., 2016). The participants, along with a control group of 577

students, were surveyed at baseline, during the program and one year after the program for improved self-efficacy (Deane et al., 2016). The surveys consisted of a self-reflection questionnaire addressing academic and social self-efficacy (Deane et al., 2016). In order to triangulate the self-reported social self-efficacy ratings, parents of all students (control and Project K) were asked to complete a social competence survey based on their own observations of their child's attitudes (Deane et al., 2016).

Results of the survey indicated that while both the Project K and the control participants' answers were virtually the same at baseline, by one year following the program's completion Project K participants had significantly higher academic self-efficacy (beta = 0.44, $p < 0.001$) and social self-efficacy (beta = 0.36, $p < 0.001$) than the control participants (Deane et al., 2016). Parents of Project K participants also reported higher interpersonal skills for their children compared to parents of the control participants (beta = 0.24, $p < 0.001$) (Deane et al., 2016). Deane et al. (2016) goes on to argue that self-efficacy is crucial to their willingness to take on greater challenges in the future and attack new setbacks.

Belief in the Future

Belief in the Future, under the domain of Agency, is defined by USAID as "having hope and optimism about one's future potential, goals, options, choices, or plans" (Hinson, et. al, 2016, p. 70). Murry, Berkel, Simons, Simons, & Gibbons (2014) examined if beliefs in the future, along with other positive youth development indicators, affected the likelihood that rural African American males ($n=378$) would engage in risky HIV-related behavior in later adolescence. The males were studied over a 12-year period starting from the 5th grade and were surveyed about received parenting styles, peer affiliations, internal beliefs, and characteristics.

Murry et al. (2014) identified a chain of indicators, showing what factors lead to avoidance of risky HIV-related behavior. Future orientation (equivalent to beliefs in the future or the recognition of the importance of future goals such as education) played an important role

(Murray et al., 2014). Youth who internalized future orientation also tested positively for self-regulation (beta =0.17, $p<0.1$) in early childhood adolescence (Murray et al., 2014). These led to more affiliations with prosocial peers in late adolescence (beta = 0.23, $p\leq 0.001$) which further lead to the adoption of risk avoidance behaviors (beta = 0.55, $p<0.001$) (Murray et al., 2014). Future orientation was a catalyst for a chain of events that lead the avoidance of risky HIV-related behavior (Murray et al., 2014).

Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement

Opportunities for pro-social involvement, under the domain of enabling environment, are opportunities that promote positive interaction and participation (Hinson, et. al, 2016). Johns, Grossman, and McDonald (2014) examined an Australian sports-based mentoring program, More Than a Game, for its impact on developing pro-social behavior and social inclusion in youth. The program consisted of young men, ages 15-25, from a diverse set of cultural backgrounds (Lebanese Muslim, Jewish, etc.) (Johns et al., 2014). The program facilitated multiple football-related activities and clinics for the youth in Melbourne, Australia and at the culmination of these activities, the group played in a Unity Cup (championship-style game) (Johns et al., 2014).

A mixed-method, post-evaluation approach to measuring the impacts included collecting qualitative and quantitative information from the three target groups: program participants (n=21), facilitators (n=8), and participants of the Unity Cup (n=10) (Johns et al., 2014). The study analyzed the participants' personal development and experiences in the program; in particular, the impact that their participation in a team-based sport (prosocial involvement) had on their attitudes towards cross-cultural belonging and social inclusion (Johns et al., 2014). The data collected indicates that of the 21 participants surveyed, all participants indicated over 40% improvement on positive attitudes towards other cultural groups (Johns et al., 2014). These changes in attitudes were indicated by participants as being a result of having a safe

environment (a neutral playing field) where there was interaction with other cultural groups (Johns et al., 2014). Communication, cooperation, and mutual trust were not only necessary to reach the common goal but were encouraged by the facilitators (Johns et al., 2014). This environment allowed perceived cultural differences to be set aside and real human relationships to be forged.

In addition, some stakeholders in *More than a Game* pointed out that one of the byproducts of being on a team was the effects it had on countering feelings of isolation and strengthening a sense of social inclusion and society bonding through the promotion that every team member is valuable and has a purpose (Johns et al., 2014). Through the qualitative feedback, it was found that these young people saw an increase in levels of interpersonal confidence when it came to meeting new people and building new relationships. (Johns et al., 2014) This exposure to these relationships led to increased resilience and ability to cope with adverse circumstances (Johns et al., 2014).

Youth Engagement

USAID explains meaningful youth engagement as a “mutually-respectful partnership between youth and adults whereby power is shared, respective contributions are valued, and young people’s ideas, perspectives, skills and strengths are integrated into the design and delivery of the programs... [it] seeks to change the power structures that prevent young people from being considered experts in regard to their own needs and priorities, while also building their leadership capacities” (Hinson, et. al, p. 71).

Sieving, Bernat, Resnick, Oliphant, Pettingell, Plowman, and Skay (2012) examined how positive youth development and youth engagement methods could reduce the likelihood that adolescent girls would engage in sexual risky behaviors. Girls from ages 13-17, who were targeted due to high risk for pregnancy, were recruited from primary care and reproductive clinics to participate in a positive youth development program called PrimeTime (Sieving et al.,

2012). The program provided monthly visits with case managers for 18 months, peer educator training (training sessions and then an incentive to contact peers for a 15-minute conversation), and service learning classes (weekly meetings and a service project)(Sieving et al., 2012). For data collection, the girls were categorized into four groups according to level of participation in the intervention: 0 = no exposure (or the control group at n=57), 1 = minimal exposure, 2 = case management only, and 3 = case management + peer leadership (for intervention overall n=71) (Sieving et al., 2012). The girls completed self-report surveys at baseline, 12 and 18 months following enrollment that evaluated their contraceptive use consistency and type, number of sex partners, age difference with sex partners, desire to use birth control with partner, beliefs supporting birth control use, communication about sexual risk with partner, and condom use self-efficacy (Sieving et al., 2012).

At 18 months, intervention participants reported significantly more consistent condom use ($F(1, 85) = 3.81, p=0.05$) and beliefs in supporting birth control ($F(1,91)=6.63, p=0.01$) than control participants (Sieving et al., 2012). More significantly, for some measures the effectiveness of the program correlated with the level of program exposure the girls received showing that the peer leadership portion was a significant part of the program (Sieving et al., 2012). As program exposure increased, dose-responses analysis indicated that participants reported more condom and dual method use (Sieving et al., 2012). For a more in-depth look, the service learning portion of the program consisted of 16 courses in teaching the girls group decision making, problem solving skills, emotional self-regulation, supportive peer relationships, and playful peer involvement which they put into practice in one of two service projects: coaching elementary students in a school performance or producing a video on actions that convey respect.

The four PYD components selected to evaluate the effectiveness of Global Scribes, self-efficacy, beliefs in the future, prosocial involvement, and youth engagement, not only address

the USAID positive youth development domains (Hinson, et. al, 2016), but have been evaluated individually with empirical research for their importance in positive youth development. Therefore, Global Scribes will use these PYD components as key performance indicators (KPIs) in evaluating program effectiveness.

Global Scribes makes strides in providing activities that catalyze self-efficacy in Scribes. They provide interactive teams with opportunities for leadership roles, access to needed resources, and mentorship where the youth can discover their own abilities to develop projects. Global Scribes strives for Scribes to leave with a sense of the resources, skills, and community necessary to complete future pursuits and are prepared to overcome any future setbacks or challenges. Thus, Global Scribes proposes to measure self-efficacy among Scribes.

Through the exchange of ideas in the Global Scribes platform, Scribes are exposed to the many possibilities and avenues to pursue their passions and engage in the global community. Scribes are also connected to other youth who may share similar interests, leaving them feeling supported and equipped to move into the future ahead of them. Global Scribes goal is that the community will decrease Scribes doubts about moving and increase their desire to prepare for the future. Therefore, Global Scribes proposes measuring Scribes' positive beliefs about their own future.

Much like More than a Game, Global Scribes is a neutral communication field where youth from diverse cultural backgrounds can learn about one another and learn how to work with one another. Youth on Global Scribes (Scribes) are encouraged to be involved with teams, very much like a sports team. Though there is only virtual interaction with fellow teammates, the need for participation and collaboration with one another is very tangible. Teams challenge diverse youth to interact with one another and strengthen that sense of cohesiveness. They also encourage Scribes to voice their opinions and express themselves in front of others. It is a safe and less intimidating method for Scribes to bond and belong. By measuring the

percentage of participants involved in pro-social activities within the GS community will be used to assess development of pro-social involvement.

Just like PrimeTime, Global Scribes provides the platform for youth to collaborate on projects and is “for youth, by youth” meaning that youth are involved in running the teams and decision making in the organization. Through these projects and leadership roles, youth not only are participating in solving current issues, but are learning leadership skills that leave them empowered to act in their communities. To evaluate youth engagement, Global Scribes plans to measure the percentage of youth participating in leadership roles, participating on a project, or participating in advancing the organization.

Conclusion

There is a strong need for the youth of today to grow up in an environment that prepares them to be the leaders of tomorrow; and, this is being most successfully done through positive youth development. Global Scribes Youth Uniting Nations is a Youth-Led Program that incorporates positive youth development within its design. GS links youth across the world and provides them with the opportunity to collaborate on shared passions and build cross-cultural relationships. Through creative expression and newly found friendships, youth are developing into intelligent, skillful, and empowered adults. In order to test our hypothesis that Global Scribes is in fact a youth-led, PYD-utilizing program, YouthPower Learning’s PYD Framework (Hison, et. al, 2016) will be used as it is well-reputable and was created by compiling theoretical and empirical work on youth development projects.

Scribers are already developing new products for Global Scribes in hopes to advance its vision for a “for youth, by youth” global organization. Scribers and supporters are currently developing plans to ensure rigid cyber-security and child protection measures; not to mention to bring all current fragmented communication and project management tools onto one community

platform called Scribers World™. New features will include GS Buddies, GS Mentors and GS English Tutor mechanisms. Unique gamification, GS Honour Levels, achievements and reward/award attributes will encourage more involvement among Scribers. There will be personal archiving of Scribers' stories, artwork and team contributions and a Bulletin Board for community-wide announcements. Global Scribes also plans to put funding towards reaching youth who may have less access to internet through creating mobile internet lounges in areas with limited resources. Lastly, Global Scribes hopes to involve more donors in growing this platform.

Through including Scribers within the evaluation process they will be able to see what they would like to change (or kept the same) within GS. Using the Youth REP Approach, Scribers would teach themselves evaluative skills they could use in the future. The success of youth-led programs can also be evaluated through assessing the social capital of an organization and its members. Possible future research for Scribers to complete would be mapping out the social capital of GS as an organization, along with surveying Scribers and alumni to see if their social capital has grown since joining GS.

By evaluating the key performance indicators described above (self-efficacy, belief in the future, prosocial involvement, and youth engagement), the genuine impact of Global Scribes on Scribers' lives will be investigated. To measure self-efficacy, there will be an evaluation of noticeable increase in self-efficacy skills among Scribers. Belief in the future will be measured by examining a noticeable increase in Scribers' own beliefs about their future. Measuring of prosocial involvement will be done by determining the percentage of the Scribers invested in prosocial activities within the community. Lastly, youth engagement will be measured by determining the percent of youth participating in leadership roles, participating on a project, or participating in advancing the organization.

The creation of a virtual community brings unique challenges. Maintaining a virtual organization is expensive and requires significant funding (Youth Speak Out Coalition & Zimmerman, 2007). GS is currently expanding into Scribers World, a virtual community that will provide Scribers with more opportunities to connect with one another. ScribersWorld will provide stronger cyber-security and child protection measures (Global Scribes, 2018a). Scribers World will be integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into its design, allowing for GS to become a truly inclusive community for youth with disabilities (Global Scribes, 2018a). Most importantly, Scribers World will bring all current fragmented communication and project management tools onto one community platform that is entirely dedicated facilitating collaboration and relationship building among Scribers (Global Scribes, 2018a). In order to complete and maintain Scribers World, funding must be addressed through various donors, grants, fundraising or other financial avenues.

In addition to funding, outside obligations can also conflict with the needs of the organization (Youth Speak Out Coalition & Zimmerman, 2007). Outside obligations can include family and friends, relationships, and work (Youth Speak Out Coalition & Zimmerman, 2007). Although GS could not influence family or work obligations, there has been an effort to increase engagement with schools. As of now, GS is partnered with several schools in different cultures to include a GS Club as a part of their organization (Global Scribes, 2018a). Establishing GS Clubs in local schools allows for students to become involved with GS and spread the word about it as an organization. In relation to academics, GS can be used (as a GS Club or in the classroom) to assist students with improving their english and other skills needed to thrive. GS strives to reach as many youth as possible while also becoming a part of their everyday life.

As previously mentioned, GS strives to create a “safe space” online for Scribers to express their thoughts and ideas without fear of discrimination or prejudice. While online, Scribers are empowered to learn from and to communicate with one another. They are also

provided with the tools and skills needed to interact through the website (i.e. personal messaging, chats, forums, etc.). Through developing this model, GS has created a “place of possibility” (Goessling, 2017). In her article, Goessling (2017) defines “places of possibility” as literal and metaphorical spaces where people are afforded the tools and resources needed to imagine alternative realities, identities, and systems other than what currently exist, primarily through creative and activist practices. It could be argued that GS itself is a “place of possibility” due to its strictly virtual community.

The future of Global Scribes holds many opportunities for youth to create, connect, collaborate, and develop into well-rounded adults-the leaders of tomorrow. In order to establish Global Scribes as an evidence-based PYD program, funding to develop and implement the proposed measurement is requested. Once it is established that Scribes report positive development experiences, Global Scribes has more opportunity to scale to its’ impact goal of 5 million+ Scribes and further the impact in the lives of its participants.

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