Empowering practices for working with marginalized youth

ANITA NOWACK

Natasha Blanchet-Cohen and Jorge Salazar

Abstract: Based on a participant observation of a community development initiative, this article discusses the importance of acknowledging marginalization amongst youth, and the need for revisiting the nature of practitioner support. Fur key practices for achieving partnership between marginalized youth and practitioners are presented: (a) investing in relationships, (b) building on strengths, (c) finding common spaces, and (d) mutual accountability. These practices, along with defining properties, offer insight and direction to move away from the dominant hierarchy in which adults are providers and youth are receivers, and provide fertile ground for systemic changes which acknowledge inequities so youth and practitioners can collaborate in creating more inclusive communities.

Young people are major stakeholders in society. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) ratified by Canada in 1989 states that every child has "the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child." Although increased attention is being given to youth voice, putting into practice the Convention has posed specific challenges. For example, what is the meaning of "due weight"? And, how can the views of all children be given consideration when children come from a range of backgrounds and abilities, with widely varying interests? Many youth's voices are absent from community-building processes, deepening the gaps of miscommunication

and contributing to community exclusion (Khanlou, 2008).

This article focuses on the role of practitioners, and how, in adopting empowering practices, they can support youth from diverse backgrounds to contribute to their own well-being as well as that of their communities. Based on a participant observation of YouthScape, an initiative aimed at building stronger communities through youth engagement, four practices for meaningful partnership have been identified: (a) investing in relationships, (b) building on strengths, (c) finding common spaces, and (d) mutual accountability. While these practices are not prescribed rules of engagement or pre-defined criteria, they, along with their properties, offer insight and direction to support the engagement of marginalized young people.

Before describing each practice, we discuss the reasons for focusing on marginalized youth-practitioner partnerships, and the methodology for this case study.

Why marginalized youth-practitioner partnerships?

Though there is increased evidence that youth engagement is beneficial for individuals, programming and services, and more generally, for civil society and democracy, there is a lack of information about how engagement may be put into practice (Perkins, Borden, Keith, Hoppe-Rooney, & Villaruel, 2003). Twenty years after the ratification of the CRC and with

increasing attention being paid to the concept of child participation, this issue is of great relevance and interest (Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010). This paper focuses on the importance of youth-practitioner partnerships, and the need to articulate the nature of those partnerships, particularly in the context of working with marginalized youth.

The emphasis on partnerships comes from recognition that in each stage of a program cycle – design, implementation and evaluation – youth and practitioners have roles to play (Camino, 2000; Checkoway & Gutierrez, 2006). However, the notion of partnership between youth and practitioners departs from most conventional youth intervention programs, where the adult is a provider and holder of knowledge, and the youth is a recipient with problems and needs (Cook, Blanchet-Cohen & Hart, 2004; Cook, 2008). Programs and services have generally been designed for youth as opposed to with youth, in part because of a historical priority of child protection rights over participation rights (Blanchet-Cohen, 2009). The shift to the notion of partnerships is significant, and as argued by Zeldin, Petrokubi and MacNeil (2008), calls for innovation. New practices and processes need to be established, including a renewal of the notion of support, so that it includes opportunities for growth and learning by both youth and adults (Clark and Percy-Smith,

2006; Zeldin, Larons, Camino & O'Connor, 2005).

This paper focuses in particular on partnerships between practitioners and marginalized youth. Whereas the generic category "adult" is generally used in the literature, we prefer the term practitioner to refer to adults who work with youth-serving organizations, and interact with youth in their daily practice.

Marginalized youth are often overlooked in the youth engagement literature. It is for this reason, and to reflect the reality that some young people have more barriers to overcome than others, that we have chosen to focus on this sub-group. Political philosopher Iris Marion Young (1990) says marginalization is a growing problem in the developed nations. "Marginalization is perhaps the most dangerous form of oppression. A whole category of people is expelled from useful participation in social life" (p. 53). However, the what, who, why and implications of marginalization for youth in Canada need to be examined and "unpacked". Research with youth show that experiences of poverty, racism, homelessness, unemployment, under-education, addiction, abuse, country of origin, gender preference and so on generally determine marginalization but not necessarily, nor exclusively (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003). Indeed, marginalization is a multi-dimensional

concept, whose cause cannot be limited to the absence of economic resources (Jenson, 2000).

This paper posits that while revisiting the nature of support is important for all youth, it is particularly necessary for marginalized youth. As recognized by Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Brockern (1990), engaging with youth who have suffered from inequality, who challenge convention, or who may be preoccupied with belonging and making ends meet, calls for alternative approaches. "High functioning" youth, or those who come from privileged backgrounds, may require opportunities and spaces to become involved but the likelihood of them fitting into existing structures and responding to standard outreach methods is high. Finding how practitioners can facilitate participation that is empowering is also critical because, as discussed in the literature on resiliency, participation contributes to children's belonging and sense of competence (Werner & Smith, 1982).

The case of YouthScape

Grounding the article is YouthScape, an initiative in five communities across Canada, aimed at building the resiliency of communities by including young people, particularly disengaged and vulnerable youth, in planning and implementing community development initiatives. Com-

mon across the sites was a youth-led granting program, as well as multisectoral Steering Committees bringing together agencies that impact young people's lives (i.e. schools, municipalities, businesses, youth centres). While each city had its own trajectory and focus, the question of how to engage marginalized youth emerged as a dominant theme, whether be it in the Steering Committees or in the granting program. Those implementing YouthScape often remarked that it would be *"a lot quicker and easier"* if the involvement of marginalized youth was not a requirement.

To document the case study, we used a variation of participant observation (Monette, Sullivan & DeJong, 2008). Conversations and dialogues that took place over a two-year period were studied, though they had not been initiated for the sake of research per se. Given prior agreement that the research would assist in compiling a body of knowledge on good practices and models, the study followed ethical guidelines. The data were collected from the project coordinators, developmental evaluators, partner agencies and youth over a two-year period with the consent forms including a clause that collection of information for the purpose of research was ongoing. Field notes were taken during learning calls, in community gatherings and during site visits where focus groups and key informant interviews also took place to document progress and learning. Quotations have been

left anonymous to protect the identity of individuals and their communities.

As authors, we came with different perspectives, one as an applied researcher who is Caucasian, and the other as a young advocate immigrant from Colombia. Through lengthy conversations, disturbing realities, such as systemic barriers and the inequality of power relations surfaced, including inequities between ourselves. Our discussions were at times intense, mirroring the tensions in the communities, and further informing our understanding of the meaning of support.

Acknowledging marginalization

In YouthScape, experiences of "marginality" were uncovered as youth shared stories about dysfunctional families, racism, drug addiction, teenage pregnancy, inadequacy of housing, foster care life, and difficulties in adapting to city-life when coming from isolated reserves or war-torn countries. *"As I got to know them, I found out that these young people have many issues that mean their lives have been challenging"* (personal communication, coordinator, March 2008). Time and again, we were reminded that marginalization was not necessarily written onto a person's face, nor would a young person voluntarily appropriate that label to describe themselves.

It also became clear that while certain factors were associated with marginality, young people's experiences of margin-

Through lengthy conversations, disturbing realities, such as systemic barriers and the inequality of power relations surfaced, including inequities between ourselves.

ality varied (Montgomery, Burr & Woodhead, 2003). Though many sources of marginality are involuntarily inherited, such as racism, poverty, body shape, mental health, and address, one may also choose marginality. As reflected a developmental evaluator on an electronic bulletin board for YouthScape:

You can't change the race to which you were born; there's no choice there. You start at birth being seen as 'less than' and that's what marginalization really means. A few choose that state; how and why they do is [also] important. (personal communication, February 2008).

There were also degrees of marginality; young people moved in and out of the "'margins", depending on personal situations and changing support systems. Marginality was and is not static.

A key finding from Youth-Scape has been the value of acknowledging the inequalities and systemic power differences, and recognizing the multiple routes of marginality. Ignoring these is neither helpful nor productive. In doing so, however, we also realized the importance of involving communities and young people themselves in critically discussing the label of marginalization. Otherwise, labels reinforced feelings of exclusion, a reality recognized by others using the designation "at risk" (Levin, 2004). Some partners in YouthScape refused to use the term in promotional materials: *"Let's avoid using labels*

as this tends to further exclude people." Certain young people expressed similar concerns, asserting, *"We don't like the word. It does not mean anything; everyone is going through something."*

In response, youth used the "wiki" idea, which allows people to share their perspectives freely. This opened up discussion among youth and adults, serving to reflect and appropriate the term. The aim was not necessarily to reach consensus, but to acknowledge the different lived experiences. In this way, young people who were members of excluded or under-served groups were acknowledged, and the spirit of inclusion was honoured.

From the challenges encountered in YouthScape, we identified some key practices, along with properties, as critical to reaching out to marginalized young people, and engaging them in community processes.

Practices to support marginalized young people

The question of defining practitioner support stood out in YouthScape early on, as queries ranged from reaching out and finding appropriate methods of interaction, to deeper issues around how to sustain involvement. At times, these stifled the initiative as a whole. At the centre, it was about redefining the relationship between youth and adults working with youth. As evocatively stated by a coordinator: *"Our society does not work in [separate] youth and adult worlds. We need to engage both*

simultaneously. [Otherwise] it is like driving a car without a wheel" (personal communication, March 2008). It was also about adopting new skills for supporting meaningful engagement, which a Steering Committee member from one community found an almost insurmountable prospect: *"To be able to engage marginalized youth in a non-patronizing way, gain their trust and bring them into the system in a meaningful way is, I think, as rare as a brain surgeon's skills"* (personal communication, February 2008). Based on the YouthScape experience, four practices, along with properties, have been identified as critical to engaging marginalized young people:

- Investing in relationships
- Building on strengths
- Finding a common space, and
- Mutual accountability

For each, we describe the practice and its properties along with a few examples selected from YouthScape.

Investing in relationships

Relationships were identified as the number one overarching practice for working with youth, especially marginalized young people who often have trust issues, and may have experienced difficulties that can easily trigger problems in the relationship. The fact that YouthScape practitioners were willing to relate distinguished them from traditional

practitioners, who were figuratively described by one youth worker as: *"drive-by shooter[s] from a service agency."*

In YouthScape, we found that relationship-building began in outreach. Marginalized youth were often those who did not respond to regular outreach efforts, such as information sessions or bulletin boards. Instead, it was more important to find, and then go to the places where youth normally hung out, whether it was a popular corner-store, a fast food chain, or a bus-stop. After making contact with youth, efforts shifted to sustaining interest and commitment.

Practitioners' consideration of the lived-reality of the youth was also important; a youth concerned with belonging and making ends meet, or one who has to take care of a younger sibling came with certain preoccupations. Methods and focus of engagement needed to be adapted to the given context so youth felt safe and comfortable to open up, and become involved. One coordinator found the youth were not able to participate meaningfully until certain of their basic needs were met:

I know some of them are struggling for transportation, food or a place to sleep, and I can work with them to plan around some of that and put them in touch with community supports if

they ask for it. Now they trust me and are comfortable enough to share their situations and challenges a little more... (personal communication, March 2008).

Establishing trust and opening channels of communication encouraged youth involvement.

With relationships came commitment. As one young person candidly said: *"I feel proud of myself because I opened myself [up] and now I am contributing to the group."* Coordinators talked about the importance of being available and accessible, in person or by phone; of leaving office doors open for young people to come in and hang-out; and of offering rides to young people to bring them to meetings, etc. Support also meant entering into a young person's life in arenas that appeared to have little relevance to the engagement activity itself, such as helping a young person with difficulties in math or giving advice on safe-sex to a young girl who had run away from home and moved in with a boyfriend. Trust was earned as practitioners invested themselves, and agreed to meet young people on their turf.

Relationships are by definition two-directional. Thus, sharing one's own stories of struggle can be helpful. Seeing someone who has gone through difficult situations but is now playing a supportive role may inspire and provide young people with hope. One coordinator who shared her story found it strengthened her relationship with the youth: *"I tell*

them how I would not be here if I had not been given a second chance. It makes them all smile and giggle when they hear my story because they can relate to it." Another one also felt more closely bonded after telling her own story to the youth: *"Sharing my own personal experiences and challenges, although sometimes [making me] feel rather exposed, was a critical point in creating connection..."* These stories sent messages that people who have gone through hardship are strong and maybe even more capable of facing the challenges ahead. If the practitioner was perceived to have come from a privileged background, acceptance and respect were harder to earn. At times, commitment was tested.

Investing in relationships involves creating opportunities in which both youth and adults can learn from each other. Practitioners may have information and connections that the youth need to further their involvement, and youth may know best the issues and the solutions. Relationships based on reciprocal exchanges mean both youth and adults become more invested in advancing the goals of the program.

Building on strengths

Along with building relationships, the work needs to be anchored in a place of strength (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Brockern, 1990). However, too often work with marginalized young people has been dominated by a charity mentality and a focus on deficits (Levin, 2004). Youth coming to pro-

grams and services have been viewed as cases with problems that need to be fixed (Montgomery & Woodhead, 2003).

In our study, we found that even youth reasserted stereotypes associated with marginalization that were disempowering to youth from "less privileged" backgrounds. In one community, a girl questioned the ability of marginalized youth:

> For the most part, youth at the Steering Committee are not from marginalized communities — myself included.... For these [marginalized] youth to come [is difficult because] sometimes they have such basic needs to take care of that they are unable to progress to high level thinkers..

For her, participation was a luxury that marginalized young people could almost not afford. This is a view that may be consistent with the Maslow (1968) hierarchy of needs, but is also at odds with the view that youth engagement is an integral part of human development which cannot be disassociated from basic needs like food and shelter.

This study suggests that practitioners' acknowledgment of marginalization can be done in ways that are empowering, but not without reframing one's approach. Entering into a working partnership involves framing a person's history positively, and then intentionally focusing on those positive aspects that can be built upon. Thus, a first step is to acknowledge the richness of one's life experiences without judgement.

A youth worker responsible for a social entrepreneurship project with marginalized youth was encouraged by one of the young woman in YouthScape to view youth who were struggling with late arrival in terms of the range of skills these people were bringing to the project:

> A kid who has sold drugs and been on the streets has communication skills, math skills, negotiation skills.... They are very smart. They are not poor kids. They have an unbelievable knowledge of life. We need to look at them as having 'more than'. It is not about what you should be, and telling them how they fit in. You [as a supervisor] need to just ... keep it flexible. I know it may not always be practical.

As the young woman herself had experienced multiple challenges as a former crystal-meth user, she was able to articulate the need to value what youth could do, instead of dealing with what they could not.

A change in perspective made accommodations more agreeable to both the youth and the practitioners. Accordingly, practitioners working with marginalized youth need to focus on finding the skills, knowledge and talents of the youth they work with, and then together explore how these can be built upon. One coordinator pinpointed the nature of the issue: *"It is about meeting young peo-* *ple where they are at."* A marginalized young person said she liked to be involved because she felt valued. *"It makes us feel [that] we matter, because what we say is not going to be judged."* An emphasis on the strengths of marginalized youth opens the opportunities for collaboration, and ultimately creates healthier communities for youth. Indeed, accounting for all the strengths youth bring to the table requires a shift in mindset.

Finding a common space

In YouthScape, partnerships between marginalized youth and adults were not always smooth. Differences in relationships needed to be worked through, and a common ground for working together identified, often after trial-and-error.

For instance, imposing a Steering Committee structure with a 50/50 split between youth and adults membership often proved to be inappropriate for the involvement of marginalized young people. *"The format was not working. It was boring. Mostly adults were talking. We were not going anywhere. In the last one, I was almost sleeping,"* explained a young person in one community. In that instance, the Steering Committee was dissolved, and alternative modes of involvement established, including a "market place" where young people would lead open discussions on themes of impor-

tance. This approach was empowering as youth chose the topic and designed the format of the discussions. At times, building community among youth who share common lived experiences was a critical first step.

In another community, the call for change came from an adult member sitting at an oval table in a standard meeting room where "high functioning" youth dominated the discussion over marginalized participants, while adults sat back. The adult member asked, *"Why are we trying to make them fit? Should we not be creative, so young people can be full participants?"* The comment provoked an immediate response from one youth: *"It is very much us trying to fit in the adult world; maybe we can make it a blend."* Indeed arriving at partnerships required discussion, and creativity. It was not simply about providing physical space.

In a gathering of the communities, for instance, a young person said she did not feel she had been listened to, and that there was no space for her. Initially, a request was made for her to speak in one of the next sessions. In discussion with others, however, it was decided that this may not best serve the group, or herself. Frustration had been expressed around her taking too much space, and a development evaluator who assessed the

situation added, *"It may not be good for her to publicly share her intimate story, even if she was offering to do it."* Drawing on her own experience in care and with youth-in-care, the development evaluator found it necessary at times to challenge the idea that people had to divulge their stories. She asked, *"Was it safe for her and [did she have] the support systems?"* To this, another developmental evaluator added: *"What would be good for the common space?"* Instead, the person was invited the following day to open the session with a prayer and a few words; each person in the circle then shared where they were from, how they felt and why they were working with youth. The process re-established an inclusive community and a common ground where all young people felt they could be part of the table, instead of allowing one person to dominate the agenda. This illustrated the need for community-building, and sometimes, compromising.

Supporting marginalized young people may require adults to push boundaries, and at times challenge the status quo, perhaps even call for an organization's own rules to be changed in order to allow for transformation (Office of the representative for children and youth, 2006). In one case, an established organization in YouthScape undertook a review of its policies for working with young people because the coordinators realized that many of its rules were too restrictive. A board director of the organiza-

tion explained how a new approach was needed: *"[the organization] has had a focus on being risk-averse... [We are now] saying we should loosen it up. The executive committee of the Board is working on developing a policy for working with youth."* As youth and adult find common ground, they contribute to systemic changes that can lead to more inclusive communities.

Mutual accountability

While pursuing relationships, drawing on strengths and finding a common space, practitioners and young people need to hold each other accountable. Creating inclusive communities cannot, in the long run, depend on one-sided accommodations. On several occasions in YouthScape, the zealous efforts to involve marginalized youth were at the expense of adults. *"I feel like I shouldn't say anything... What is the role of the adults? It's like they almost have to become disengaged in order to engage youth?"* Perhaps such disengagement was a necessary step for youth to assume leadership, but in the long-run, youth also needed adult decision-makers to "see what [their] role is and what [they] can do for the group."

Often, adults assume that giving leadership to youth is about being hands-off. In YouthScape, we realized that youth leadership did not exclude 'co-construction'. Reflecting back on failed attempts at youth taking leadership on a project

> **Drawing on her own experience in care and with youth-in-care, the development evaluator found it necessary at times to challenge the idea that people had to divulge their stories.**

By not challenging youth and holding them accountable, opportunities were missed for youth to learn, and exercise commitment and responsibility.

initiated by adults but handed to youth without support, a coordinator reflected that "as adults we need to be mature to support the youth—in other words we need to have the ability to be self-aware and self-critical...Did the lack of clarity in the role and responsibilities of youth prevent the youth leadership to emerge? There should have been a clearer line of accountability" (personal communication, September 2008). By not challenging youth and holding them accountable, opportunities were missed for youth to learn, and exercise commitment and responsibility (see also Camino, 2000). With accountablity comes clarity in roles and expectations, and improved practice.

In hiring marginalized young people, there were challenges in figuring out how the ideas and contributions of staff that were intimidated or unable to write could take place. Conventional job descriptions based on timelines, outcomes and deliverables, however, prevented the responsiveness and emergence required of someone who works with marginalized youth. An administrator found fault with the traditional hiring models: *"It is an interesting relationship bringing youth at risk on staff when from one day to the next they can become homeless...so they cannot deliver...it is such a different world... funders need to know that working under a business model does not work."* However, involving marginalized young people should not be understood to mean removing ex-

pectations; this is in fact a disservice to youth.

Distinguishing between adults supporting youth leadership, adults taking control and adults using a laissez-faire approach can at times be challenging. Coordinators talked about the importance of having fun, responding to the varying moods of young people, and of not necessarily pressuring young people when they did not want to be involved in a certain activity. This meant that schedules and agendas at times needed to be tossed out, and tasks redefined. While young people's refusal to participate is often indicative of discomfort, in other cases, practitioners need to work with young people to find an agreeable and alternative route. Holding each other accountable involves adults providing constructive feedback, as well as challenging youth. Indeed, lines of accountability need to be established, as well as boundaries negotiated in order to find formats and processes agreeable to both.

Practitioners working with marginalized youth also need to acknowledge systemic realities, be willing to position themselves and denounce inequalities and take action to break cycles of discrimination. As expressed by Aboriginal academic and artist Lilla Watson, "If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time; but if you are here because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." Acceptance and respect are earned; commitment will be tested. Doing one's

homework, setting aside presumptions, listening and recognizing inequalities will all be required.

Adult accountability lies in accepting the responsibility to speak out and open doors for marginalized people to participate in decision-making that has been closed to them, as well as engaging in a process of changing systems that are not supportive.

Framework to guide practice

When combined, the four key practices that emerged from YouthScape, along with properties, provide a guide for practitioners to support marginalized youth to contribute in empowering ways (see Figure 1). These can be summarized as follows:

1. In investing in relationships, trust, care, safety and reciprocal exchanges are identified as properties. Creating a safe and caring envronment is necessary to bring marginalized youth to the table. Trust and reciprocal exchanges reflect a need for both youth and practitioners to have opportunities to learn from and interact with one another.
2. In building on strengths, skills, competence and empowerment are identified as defining properties. These are part of reframing the focus from what youth don't have to seeing the
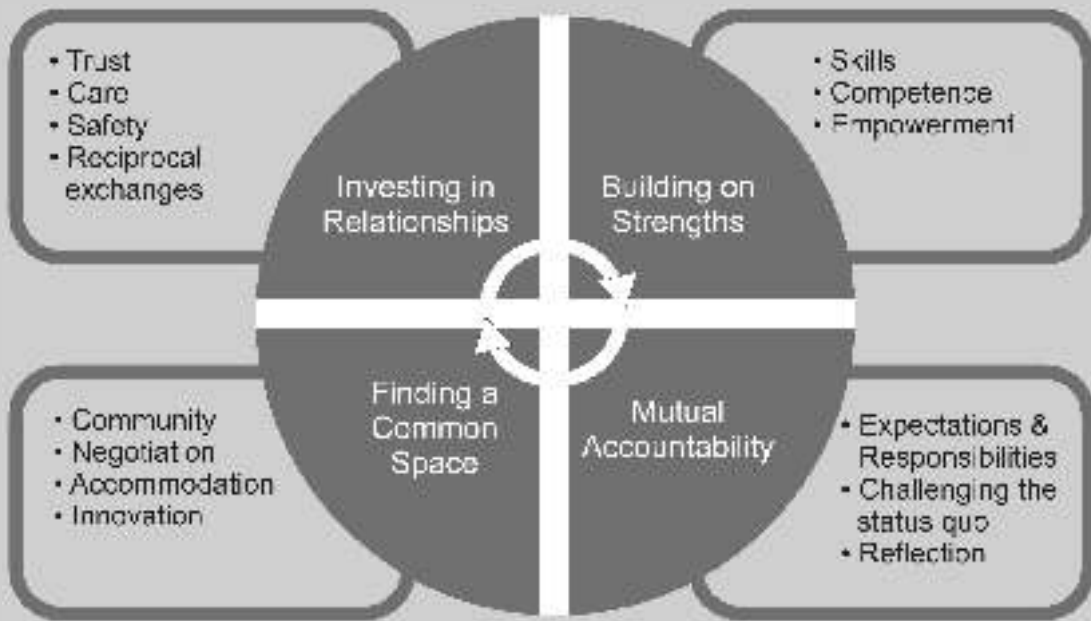
Figure 1: Practices and properties for engaging marginalized youth

competence and knowledge that they are bringing to the program or activity.

3. In finding a common space, building community, negotiation, accommodation, and innovation are identified as properties. The ideas and processes that emerge in finding common spaces both among marginalized youth themselves and in bridging to others can lead to more inclusive communities.

4. In holding both young people and adults accountable, there is a need to acknowledge lived realities, to identify mutual expectations and responsibilities, to challenge the status quo, and to reflect. Improved practice comes from both marginalized youth and adults having and taking on roles and responsibilities.

The framework is a potential complement to models like the Circle of Courage by Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Brockern (1990) in that it provides guidelines for practitioners to use in their practice. Similar to values, properties stand as goals. As practices, their application will be tried out, and accommodations made to the specific context of a community and program. They must not be mistaken to constitute prescribed rules of engagement. In practice, they will only be achievable to certain degrees.

Conclusion

Real progress in the field of youth engagement involves recognizing that, as practitioners and decision-makers, differing lived realities and preoccupations call for renewed methods of support. As identified in a growing literature, meaningful engagement of marginalized youth requires departing from the hierarchical separation (see also Zeldin, Larson, Camino, & O'Connor, 2005) between youth and adults, here referred to as practitioners. Traditional program structures in which youth are receivers and adults are the providers are ineffective for all youth, but even more so for

marginalized youth (Perkins et al. 2003).

According to the participant observation of YouthScape, acknowledging marginalization is important to bring attention to the disparities that exists among youth, and the reality that equality of opportunity is non-existent. Associated with labels, however, are stereotypes which need to be more clearly understood. As shown here, labels can become empowering when they are "unpacked" and the term is discussed with stakeholders, thereby opening channels of communication for systemic change.

Consistent with a growing literature that identifies learning and change as a necessary aspect of implementing youth participation (see Blanchet-Cohen, 2009; Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010), this study has shown that supporting marginalized youth involves more than creating an opportunity; it is about applying practices that allow youth and adults to figure out new ways of working together. As authors coming from different perspectives, it is through discussion and negotiation that we went beyond our own horizons. Youth and adults need to be given the tools to become active agents of change (Blanchet-Cohen, 2009).

While further research is necessary to verify appropriateness and broader application of the framework, it is clear that the engagement of marginalized youth requires challenging past approaches and adopting practices that are empowering, mov-ing away from one-directional 'drive-by shooter' practices. This study supports the efforts of the City of Toronto, in which over 50 per cent of the youth population is of colour, and which is promoting the adoption of anti-oppressive frameworks, including rethinking of outreach and recruitment methods, to better engage youth (City of Toronto, 2006). If practitioners are going to change their approaches, we need other applied research studies that document the nature and value of renewing support.

In renewing support, we are establishing fertile ground on which systemic changes can take place, where both youth and adults can contribute to the creation of better programming, and ultimately stronger and healthier communities.

References

Blanchet-Cohen, N. (2009). *Children, agency and violence: in and beyond the UN Study on Violence Against Children*. Innocenti Working paper 2009-10. (see http://www.unicef-irc.org/cgi-bin/unicef/Lunga.sql?ProductID=564).

Brendtro, L., Brokenleg, M. & Van Brockern, S. (1990). *Reclaiming youth at risk: Our hope for the future*. Indiana: National Education Service.

Camino, L. A. (2000). Youth-adult partnerships: entering new territory in community work and research. *Applied Developmental Science*, *4*, 11-20.

City of Toronto. (2006). *Involve youth. A guide to meaningful youth engagement*. Retrieved August 30, 2009, from http://www.toronto.ca/involveyouth/index.htm

Clark, A. & Percy-Smith, B. (2006). Beyond consultation: Participatory practice in everyday spaces. *Children, Youth and Environments*, *16(2),* 1-9. Retrieved June 20, 2008, from http://www.colorado.edu/journals/cye

Checkoway, B., & Gutierrez, L. M. (Eds.). (2006). Youth participation and community change [special issue]. *Journal of Community Practice*, *14*,1-2.

Cook, P. (2008). Understanding the effects of adolescent participation in health programmes. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, *16*, 121-139.

Cook, P., Blanchet-Cohen, N., & Hart, S. (2004). *Children as partners: Child participation promoting social change*. Victoria, BC: University of Victoria, IICRD.

Khanlou, N. (2008). Psychosocial integration of second and third generation racialized youth in Canada. *Canadian diversity/Diversité canadienne*, *6(2),* 54-57.

Jenson, J. (2000). Backgrounder: Thinking about marginalization: Who, what and why? *Canadian Policy Research Network.* Retreived June 30, 2008, from http://www.cprn.com/documents/15746_en.pdf

Lansdown, G. (2001). *Promoting children's participation in democratic decision-making*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti.

Levin, B. (2004). Students at -risk: A review of research. Paper prepared for The Learning Partnership, Toronto. Available from: http//:www.thelearningpartnership.ca

Maslow, A. H. (1968). *Toward a psychology of being*. New York: Van Nostrand Company.

Monette, D.R., Sullivan, T.J. & DeJong, C.R. (2008). *Applied Social Research. A tool for human services*. Australia: Thomson Wadsworth.

Montgomery, H., Burr, R., & Woodhead, M. (2003). *Changing childhoods. Local and global*. Chichester: Open University.

Office of the Representative for children and youth. (2006). *Youth engagement: conversations about change*. Unpublished report: Victoria.

Omidvar, R. & Richmond, T. (2003). *Immigrant settlement and social inclusion in Canada*. Working Paper Series: Perspectives on Social Inclusion. Laidlaw Foundation.

Percy-Smith, B. & Thomas, N. (2010). *A handbook of children and young people's participation. Persepctives from theory and practice*. London: Routledge.

Perkins, D.F., Borden, L. M., Keith, J. G., Hoppe-Rooney, T. L., Villarruel, F. A. (2003). Community youth development: partnership creating a positive world. In F.A. Villaruel, D.F. Perkins, L.M. Borden, & J.G. Keith (Eds.), *Community youth development. Programs, policies and practices* (pp. 1-23). London: Sage publications.

Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Zeldin, S., Larons, R., Camino, L., & O'Connor, C. (2005). Intergenerational relationships and partnerships in community programs: Purpose, practice and directions for research. *Journal of Community Psychology, 33*, 1-10.

Zeldin, S., Petrokubi, J. & MacNeil, C. (2008). Youth-adult partnership in decision-making: Disseminating and implementing an innovative idea into established organizations and communities. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 41*, 262-277.

Werner, E. & Smith, R. S. (1982). *Vulnerable but Invincible: A longitudinal study of resilient children and youth*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Natasha Blanchet-Cohen *is Assistant Professor of Applied Human Science at Concordia University. She teaches community youth development. From 1997 to 2009, she worked at the International Institute for Child Rights and Development in Victoria where she led the research for the YouthScape initiative. Dr. Blanchet-Cohen's research spans a wide range of community and social topics in Canada and abroad, including issues around children's rights and sustainability, and the creation of child-youth friendly cities.*

Jorge Salazar, *originally from Colombia, has worked mainly with immigrant and refugee youth but has also been privileged to connect and work with youth and community members from indigenous communities in Canada and Latin America, people with disabilities and other marginalized communities in Canada and around the globe. Jorge worked at the International Institute for Child Rights and Development – University of Victoria — as a Youth Community Developer and as YouthScape Youth Engagement Facilitator for Child and Youth Friendly Calgary.*