AN ASSESSMENT OF PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES
IN COMMUNITY-BASED YOUTH-ADULT RELATIONSHIPS

A Thesis in
Agricultural and Extension Education

by

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The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and experiences of youth and adults engaged in various types of youth-adult relationships involving community projects (e.g., civic, service, service-learning, and fundraising). The objectives of the study were to: (1) examine perceptions of individuals engaged in youth-adult relationships at the community level; (2) examine experiences of youth and adults participating in various youth-adult relationships while working together as partners; and (3) identify critical elements that characterize various youth-adult relationships.

A concurrent triangulation design utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data sources (e.g., involvement and interaction rating scale, observations, and interviews) was employed. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-tests, and analyses of variance (ANOVA). Involvement and interaction rating scales were completed by 108 participants in groups from 10 states and 12 communities (10 rural, two urban). The rating scale measured three constructs: youth involvement, adult involvement, and youth-adult interaction. Qualitative data were analyzed using techniques including observations, semi-structured interviews of individuals, and multiple-case study analyses.

Appropriate statistical procedures (t-tests) were used to analyze differences between youth and adult participants. Differences by gender were also analyzed. Although the model indicated no significant difference between youth and adult participants, adults were more positive on the youth involvement, adult involvement, and youth-adult interaction constructs. There was a significant difference in perceptions
between male and female participants, with females being more positive on all three
constructs.

Analyses of variance were used to analyze differences between participants by
ethnicity, location (i.e., rural, urban, and suburban), and relationship type (i.e., Adult-Led
Collaboration, Youth-Adult Partnership, and Youth-Led Collaboration). There was no
significant difference between Whites/European Americans and African Americans,
although Whites were more positive on all three constructs. There was a significant
difference between rural and urban participants. The statistical model indicated that rural
participants were more positive than urban participants towards youth involvement.
There was a significant difference between all participants in Adult-led Collaborations
and Youth-Led Collaborations, with those participants in Youth-Led Collaborations
being more positive towards youth involvement. Adults in Youth-Adult Partnerships
were significantly more positive towards youth involvement and youth-adult interaction
than those adults in Adult-Led Collaborations. There was no significant difference
between youth in the various types of relationships, although the youth in Youth-Adult
Partnerships were less positive on all three constructs than their adult counterparts.

Multi-case study analysis was deemed appropriate for investigating the
experiences of the participants. Four of the 12 groups were included in the qualitative
analysis. Based on observations and interviews conducted by the researcher, Adult-Led
Collaborations had lower levels of youth involvement with the youth being dependent on
adult guidance. The youth seemed reluctant in taking on responsibilities and lacked
confidence in making some decisions. Most of the youth in these groups were younger
and inexperienced in working as partners with adults. The Youth-Led Collaboration had
high youth involvement, with youth being very independent in making decisions. These youth tended to be older, having some previous experience in working with adults. Both groups had high levels of adult support, although adult involvement and responsibility were higher among Adult-Led Collaborations than Youth-Led Collaborations.

Case studies also revealed critical elements that characterize the two observed youth-adult relationships. Those critical elements of Adult-Led Collaborations tended to be: high levels of adult involvement and adult support (in the form of soliciting youth decision-making and valuing of youth and their ideas); high levels of civility and mutual respect among participants; moderate to low level of community obligation among some youth and adults; low levels of decision-making among youth; little, if any, mutual learning between youth and adults; low to fair amount of youth responsibility on certain tasks, but few tasks initiated by youth; and youth voice solicited and considered by adults. The critical elements of Youth-Led Collaborations were: high levels of adult support; adult support valued by youth; high levels of civility and mutual respect among participants; at least a moderate level of community obligation on behalf of youth and adults; high levels of youth decision-making; little, if any, mutual learning among youth and adults; high level of youth responsibility and youth involvement; youth voice utilized by youth and solicited/highly-valued by adults. Although some of the elements appear to be unique to specific relationships, several of these elements (e.g., adult support, civility, mutual respect, and youth voice) emerged as characteristics of the positive interactions that must exist between youth and adults, regardless of the type of relationships. Thus, these characteristics can serve as a guideline for practitioners to assess the strength of meaningful youth-adult relations within programs.
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Communities often fall short of achieving total civic engagement of local citizens by not collaborating to form partnerships that engage those most affected by the decision-making (e.g., youth and vulnerable families) (Wolff, 2001). Adults are normally at the forefront of community affairs, including discussions about issues concerning local youth. Decisions are often made without consulting young people in regards to what opinions and thoughts they may have on a particular issue. Youth are well informed about what is needed from their perspective and are very familiar with the current problems facing youth in their neighborhoods. Strengthening local youth and adult relationships could potentially be a successful strategy for addressing issues and a tremendous learning process for both youth and adults. However, adults all too frequently perceive youth as most often in need of assistance rather than being community assets.

According to evidence from empirical studies, adults in the United States are ambivalent, at best, about youth and their roles in society (Guzman, Lippman, Moore, & O’Hare, 2003; Rennekamp, 1993; Zeldin, 2000). Researchers have documented that stereotyping of youth by adults limits the potential of young people at the community level (Camino, 2000; Glassner, 1999; Gilliam & Bales, 2001; Klindera, 2001; Yohalem & Pittman, 2001; Yohalem, 2003; Zeldin & Topitzes, 2002). For example, young people are by far one of the most under-utilized resources in communities. Benson (1997) reported that having youth serve as positive contributors and within meaningful roles are among the least common experiences for young people today. Many local leaders and
organizations fail to recognize the potential that youth are capable of bringing to a variety of community-focused endeavors. Several scholars have indicated that young people can and will solve these problems if empowered through participation (Flanagan & Faison, 2001; Kaba, 2000; McLaughlin, Irby & Langman, 1994; Ostrom, Lerner & Freel, 1995; Villarruel, Perkins, Borden & Keith, 2003; Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes & Calvert, 2000). However, many adults tend to view youth (adolescents, in particular) as “poor, misguided souls” with little direction, most often seeking assistance instead of being contributors to address problems (Klindera, 2001; Zeldin, 2000).

**Statement of the Problem**

Parents, teachers, faith communities, youth development professionals, and others are all asking similar questions pertaining to youth: “What does it take to create a community that will promote the positive development of all young people while engaging adults in the process?” “Can youth and adults form nurturing partnerships that function effectively, thus leading to community change?” (Perkins, Borden, & Villarruel, 2001). Providing youth with people, places, and possibilities by creating structured out-of-school experiences offers opportunities that develop important life skills critical to positive youth development (Perkins & Borden, 2003). One vital aspect of community youth development is having caring adults who are willing to work with youth at various stages of development. Adults, in turn, can experience youth as viable assets while simultaneously witnessing youth’s eagerness to make a difference.

There is a growing recognition that all young people need a variety of
opportunities for positive development, both in schools and in their communities.

*Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*, a recent book sponsored by the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, states:

Adolescents who spend time in communities that are rich in developmental opportunities experience less risk and show evidence of higher rates of positive development. A diversity of program opportunities in each community is more likely to support broad adolescent development and attract the interest of and meet the needs of greater numbers of youth. (Eccles & Gootman, 2002, p. 11)

Research results also revealed the impact that negative adult perceptions have on young people (Gilliam & Bales, 2001; Guzman et al., 2003). Camino (2000) reported that these preconceived negative stereotypes often hinder the growth of relationships between youth and adults. Moreover, a lack of cohesion among youth and adults results in an impasse due to resistance to power sharing. Such a negative experience for local residents can deter the progress of communities, by discouraging adults’ willingness to work with youth in order to pursue a common goal, such as community empowerment. Young people, on the other hand, may become reluctant to serve in a capacity where they do not feel welcomed or where they do not have an equal voice and vote. Youth may succumb to the sense that they cannot make a difference, when their abilities and knowledge on how to perpetuate the neighborhood is desperately needed.

As Pittman (2002) noted, young people not only need to be *fully prepared*, but also *fully engaged* as partners with adults, in the advancement of their communities. Several scholars built upon this notion of positive youth development by asserting that community youth development presents a more multilateral approach towards youth being fully engaged as community partners and decision-makers (Hughes & Curnan, 2000; Perkins, Borden, & Villaruel, 2001). Furthermore, youth-adult interaction can
serve as one possible strategy that provides young people with the guidance they need to enhance personal skills (e.g., communication, decision-making, leadership, and social). Adults are offered the fortune of experiencing the capacity of local youth when they are given the opportunity to serve their neighborhoods. There is indeed potential for positive community change when youth and adults engage as partners on community initiatives; however, further research is required to assess whether youth-adult partnerships are truly effective in mobilizing communities as a whole and the impact of such relationships on the partners.

Current Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and experiences of youth and adults engaged in various types of youth-adult relationships involving community projects (e.g., civic, service, service-learning, and fundraising). The study addressed the following questions:

(1) What are the perceptions of youth and adults toward their involvement and interaction with one another when working together on community projects?

(2) What is the experience like for youth and adults participating in various youth-adult relationships at the community level?

(3) What characteristics constitute various youth-adult relationship experiences?

This study examined youth and adults in the Northeast 4-H Region (i.e., Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and West Virginia) who participated in the Engaging Youth,
Serving Communities (EYSC) Initiative. The Engaging Youth, Serving Communities Initiative was jointly coordinated by the United States Department of Agriculture’s Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES) and the National 4-H Council as part of the National Rural Funders’ Collaborative. Specifically, participants of this Initiative were from rural areas and involved in a youth-adult relationship or partnering effort to address a community issue. In addition, community groups that involved youth and adults from the Philadelphia area were recruited to participate in this study to provide an urban sample.

This investigation involved an evaluation rating scale measuring youth and adult participants’ perceptions of one another and perceptions of their involvement and interaction with one another. The participants rated the quality of their experiences, based on youth involvement, adult involvement and youth-adult interaction in implementing a project that addressed community issues. From this information, as well as the groups’ activity ratings reported by EYSC coordinators and the urban adult leaders, the youth-adult groups were classified on a continuum of youth-adult relationships. In addition to this examination of the relationships these youth and adults formed, periodic observations were conducted at four pre-selected sites over a four-month time frame – February-June 2004. Interviews were also conducted with 2-3 youth and 2-3 adults per group. As part of the observations and interviews, the researcher also ranked the level of youth involvement, adult involvement and youth-adult interaction for each of the four groups. For this investigation, youth were defined as adolescents in secondary school, aged 13-18, and adults were defined as those age 19 and over involved in the community group.
**Operational Definitions**

The following terms used in the context of this study were defined as follows:

**Adults:** Participants aged 19 and over.

**Adult Involvement:** Adults working together to carry out specific group tasks (e.g., providing support for youth, guiding youth leadership, encouraging youth voice, and conducting meetings).

**Adult Support:** Adults serving as positive, responsible role models; Adults displaying willingness to accept and nurture youth leadership while actively and consistently consulting with youth on community projects.

**Civility:** Fostering a respectful and benevolent awareness of others’ needs; harmonizing one’s needs to preference with the needs of others (Forni, 2002).

**Community Obligation:** Youth and adults having a keen interest and commitment to contribute towards improving the community.

**Decision-making (of youth):** Level of youth competency and reliance upon themselves in arriving to conclusions.

**Mutual Learning:** Youth and adults both functioning as teachers and learners, helping one another develop new skills.

**Mutual Respect:** Youth and adults valuing/being considerate of the opinions, feelings and abilities of one another; youth and adults treating one another fairly.

**Youth:** Participants aged 13-18.

**Youth-Adult Interaction:** Youth and adults working collectively on one or more components of the project (e.g., providing support to one another, conducting meetings...
together, and making decisions) and fully exercising an equal opportunity to utilize
decision-making and other leadership skills.

**Youth Involvement:** Youth working together and demonstrating responsibility by taking
the initiative to carry out group tasks.

**Youth Responsibility:** Young people accepting and carrying out duties/tasks; youth
taking the initiative to complete group assignments/tasks.

**Youth Voice:** Youth having the opportunity to share ideas and discuss concerns about
issues that matter to them.
A partnership is when all parties have the opportunity to voice opinions and make key decisions that are recognized and valued (Norman, 2001). Hence, youth-adult partnerships employ the elements of power sharing for both parties that acknowledges and values the strengths that each brings to the table. Kaplan (1997) reported that through an action research study involving intergenerational community projects, youth and adult participants learned “critical thinking, communication and decision-making skills, how to use the art of negotiating, and developed a sense of citizenship responsibility” (p. 226). Genuine youth-adult partnerships create a learning environment where people come together in groups, with the willingness to share authority, accept responsibility, and highlight individual members’ abilities and contributions (Panitz, 1996). Through this process, youth and adults can gain an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses by working and learning together. Young people and adults who are willing to work together can form a nucleus that builds solidarity for community development and stronger relationships.

Camino (2000) identified specific concepts to assess approaches in identifying youth-adult partnerships, such as: youth having the opportunity to exercise decision-making power; their role in building strong communities; and the affect of adults’ negative attitudes toward youth in community program activities. Camino found that youth involved in community efforts demonstrated a keen interest in civic opportunities
through their willingness to get involved and establish relationships with peers and adults. She found there was an observable increase in communication, teamwork and coaching competencies, although some adults expressed negative views toward power-sharing with youth (Camino, 2000). Teaching and learning between adults and youth were also viewed as crucial elements, which distinguishes youth-adult partnerships from traditional youth-adult relationships (e.g., parent-child, teacher-student, and mentoring). Highlighting this potential benefit of youth-adult partnerships is not to negate the importance of these traditional caring relationships that have been found to be essential in the facilitation of growth and development (Benard, 2004; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Perkins & Borden, 2003).

Youth-adult partnerships have been explored qualitatively through the use of case study applications. Scholars such as Camino (2000) and Larson, Walker, and Pearce (in press) provided rich descriptions of the dynamics that exist within youth-adult partnering endeavors, thus providing a basis for the theoretical framework of this study. In addition, the extensive research on mentoring provided empirical evidence of one way to determine quality youth-adult relationships and how researchers may consider examining the effectiveness of such relationships. For example, Dubois, Holloway, Valentine, and Cooper (2002) reported successful programs that engage youth and adults tended to be those evaluated and rated (based on quality) by the actual participants. This study employed the strategy of allowing participants to rate the quality of the relationship and the experiences they encounter while working on a community project (e.g., organizing a cultural awareness day, promoting health and wellness). Youth-adult partnerships serve
as a type of relationship between youth and adults that can build upon the recently published findings of mentoring research.

More scientifically robust quantitative and qualitative studies are needed in order to fully understand youth-adult partnering effects on participants and their communities. A major impasse for research on this phenomenon has been the lack of a clearly-defined term. However, progress has been made through recent efforts in defining youth-adult partnerships. Based upon the limited empirical research, Jones and Perkins (2004) operationally defined youth-adult partnerships as follows:

Youth-Adult Partnerships: A fostered relationship between youth and adults where both parties have equal potential in making decisions, utilizing skills, mutual learning, and promoting change through civic engagement, program planning and/or community development initiatives. (Jones & Perkins, 2004)

This definition refers to the contextual environment in which a partnership among youth and adults may be most effective. Throughout a youth-adult partnership, a fostered relationship facilitates experiential learning between youth and adults, allowing partners the opportunity to assess individual abilities. In this case, such a nurturing environment suggests that youth and adults are caring, trustworthy and understanding of each others’ concerns and needs.

The word potential is fundamental in understanding the above-listed definition. Youth-adult partnerships may begin with the intentions of having an all-inclusive approach. However, many factors (e.g., cultural, social, and environmental) may affect how readily members are to become engaged. If youth partners grow up with the experience of being “seen and not heard” when among adults, they may, out of respect, yield to their perception of adult power. Moreover, adults may view young people as “isolates” who can only develop leadership if they do everything independent of adult
supervision (Youth Leadership Institute, 2002). Therefore, adults forfeit their opportunity to share in the decision-making process and ultimately serving as a mentor to young people. However, if a strong relationship is established, and a forum of idea sharing and decision-making is in place, the youth and adults can be more effective in applying their talents to promote community change. Hence, achieving skill development, effective decision-making and mutual learning are no longer potential goals, but concrete realities. Youth and adults working together effectively in this manner seem more likely to have the capacity to set attainable community goals. Residents mobilized for change can make a difference through civic engagement in local affairs, planning programs and other events that lead to community development initiatives.

**Youth-Adult Relationships within Programs: A Continuum Model**

It has been difficult to assess where society stands in terms of recognizing and valuing youth leadership. One challenge is due in part to the near non-existent literature on the practice of incorporating youth voice and participation in programming efforts. Only a few scholars have presented models to better explain how youth skills can be utilized in leadership roles. Hart’s (1992, 1997) ladder of children’s participation offered choices where young people may choose to participate at the level most suitable for their ability. Research on the role of student voice in school reform also contributed significantly to the understanding of youth participation and interaction with adults. Mitra (2000) presented a pyramid model that displays a hierarchy of three varying forms of student (youth) voice: information, collaboration, and autonomy. Her research focused on
older students (i.e., high school juniors and seniors) who have formed ideas about educational change, particularly at the high school level. The information level depicts the minimal and most common form of involvement, where students share their ideas with adults who sequentially interpret the data without youth input. The next level, collaboration, is where students and adults work together to define problems, interpret data and execute action plans to promote change. The last stage is the level of autonomy where students are self-directed to design and implement their own plans. This model serves as a clear indication that student voice can be solicited and utilized in numerous forms, thus allowing students to serve as valuable contributors in youth-adult relationships.

Both Hart’s ladder and Mitra’s pyramid attempt to explain how youth skills can be utilized in leadership roles with increased autonomy. However, Hart’s ladder is geared towards the involvement of children, not emphasizing the importance of adult interaction with youth in their role as mentors and being experiential learners during the process. In contrast, Mitra’s pyramid does address youth and adults collaborating together, but centers on groups within a school or classroom. Although Mitra’s concepts can be adapted from an environmental context, community organizations are much more varied; therefore, many programs may be inappropriately classified if only three categories were used. Both models also present a hierarchical framework, posing the threat of participants and practitioners feeling as though they may be unacceptably low on a ranked scale.

Jones and Perkins (2004) developed the *Continuum of Youth-Adult Relationships* model that specifically targets community efforts (see Figure 1). This model includes five key categories to identify groups consisting of varied levels of youth and adult
involvement. The *Continuum* focuses on individual choices, and enables organizations to exist at any point depending on the level of engagement of youth and adults. The categories on the *Continuum of Youth-Adult Relationships* include: Adult-Centered Leadership, Adult-Led Collaboration, Youth-Adult Partnership, Youth-Led Collaboration, and Youth-Centered Leadership. The categories are described in detail below.

![Figure 1. Continuum of Youth-Adult Relationships](image)

**Adult-Centered Leadership**

Leadership has been defined in many ways; however, Nahavandi’s (2000) definition of leadership represents the most accurate description of Adult-Centered Leadership as defined by Jones and Perkins (2004). According to Nahavandi (2000), leadership is a social and cultural term, consisting of a process that results from the interaction among a leader, the followers, and the situation. This category of the Continuum consists of programs that are conceived and driven completely by adults. Activities within this category include school or other types of formal education where youth are instructed by adults. Included in this definition are community programs where adults plan and implement, while youth serve as participants only, with no voice in implementation or evaluation at this point along the Continuum. One example would include youth being invited to participate in a church youth camp, but the youth were not
previously asked what they would like to do at the camp and have no role in the implementation.

**Adult-Led Collaboration**

An Adult-Led Collaboration includes programs or situations where adults provide some guidance for youth, but there is more camaraderie among youth and adults as opposed to adult-centered leadership. Thus, the youth have some input in decision making albeit limited by adults’ discretion. Mentoring programs would fit into this category, because such programs promote bonding between adults and youth in hopes of developing and sharing ideas and commonalities. Nonetheless, adults remain in power and are the driving force in making the relationship a meaningful success. For example, adults may provide youth with several options of places to go for weekly outings. However, before presenting these options, the adults review the possibilities and determine the most conducive activities.

**Youth-Adult Partnership**

The Youth-Adult Partnership is located centrally on the *Continuum*. This is a point of stasis where a partnership is achieved between youth and adults. Youth and adult participants have equal chances in utilizing skills, decision-making, and independently carrying out tasks to reach common goals. Both also acknowledge learning from one another through participation. Ideally, there is a balance between youth interaction among youth, adult interaction among adults, and youth and adult interactions through working together effectively to reach desired goals.
Due to the fact that either youth or adults must generate a plan to ultimately initiate a willingness to form a partnership, most Youth-Adult Partnerships often begin as a collaborative effort (whether youth-led or adult-led). The collaboration can then gradually increase to more balanced levels of decision-making and utilization of skills to the point where a mutual partnership is achieved. Adults may want to organize a summer program at a local community center by initially gathering input on what the neighborhood youth want. For instance, youth being invited to the table to express their opinions and to help implement their ideas serves as an effective Youth-Adult Partnership. Another example would be youth going to the local health department for assistance on how to address obesity among teens. The youth could organize a health and wellness fair focused on weight loss/control at the health department or their school. Health professionals could assist in the planning process by serving as guest speakers while the youth (the key organizers of the event) serve as workshop facilitators.

**Youth-Led Collaborations**

Youth-Led Collaborations are programs or projects where youth primarily develop the ideas and make decisions with limited support from adults. For example, young people may determine a particular need for their community. They then design and incorporate a program or project to address the issue. Depending on the experience of the young people, they may even evaluate the program or project. Within this category, adults typically provide assistance with the evaluation process, as well as some preliminary procedures, such as securing funding and addressing personnel concerns. One example would be youth identifying and initiating a fundraiser for a teen center.
Another example is youth engaging in school reform for educational change. In any situation within this category, young people take the lead in seeing that the project is carried out from inception to completion. However, the assistance of adults is crucial for the success and completion of the project.

**Youth-Centered Leadership**

Youth-Centered Leadership is at the far right end of the *Continuum* and includes programs or activities led exclusively by youth, with little or no adult involvement. Although the assistance of adults may be solicited at a later time period, when that happens, there is a shift to the Youth-Led Collaboration category. Very few Youth-Centered programs or situations occur in structured environments because that would often necessitate adult support (e.g., through managing the facilities and providing supplies). For example, young people have been known to channel their energies through this form of leadership from rallying for more youth-related activities to simply meeting after school to play a sport or game of their choice. However, youth involved in Youth-Centered Leadership may also organize engagement in negative behaviors. Gang affiliation is an example of an entirely youth-centered leadership that often leads to mischief and violence instead of productive community activities.

**A Need for Positive Youth–Adult Relationships**

Among communities in the United States, there is a widening degree of separation between adults and young people that often restricts youth participation (Benson, 1997;
Irby, Ferber, Pittman, Tolman, & Yohalem, 2001). Youth, more often than not, have misconceptions of adults, while adults seem to have little faith in the abilities of young people. This is even more perceptible among community organizations that most often solicit adult participation, but minimal youth involvement in local activities and decision-making. Matters (1990) developed a guide to describe intergenerational programs and the formal and informal interactions that are seldom occurring between senior adults and youth. Matters concluded that intergenerational programs could help dispel negative stereotypes that youth and older adults may have about each other. She further stated that successful programs provide rewarding experiences for both parties, such as opportunities for sharing skills, knowledge, and newly found friendships. Although Matters’ (1990) literature review discussed a program development process, it provided no empirical evidence as to how this was proven. Nonetheless, the lack of interactions among generations denotes a need for opportunities that foster positive youth-adult relationships, whether between senior adults and youth or middle-age adults and youth. Indeed, Benson (1997) concluded from his research with Search Institute that young people are too often isolated from the rich experiences of intergenerational relationships with adults of all ages. In a study conducted by Search Institute (2002) during the 1999-2000 school year, it was reported that only 30% of 217,000 middle and high school students had adults in their lives that they considered as role models. Youth partnering with adults on community efforts can serve as a venue for instituting relationships that form bonds between young people and caring adults.

Wunrow and Einspruch (2001) discussed a youth-adult partnership model as an outgrowth of youth development and youth empowerment. They based their youth
development approach on social control theory involving the bond between youth and society. Wunrow and Einspruch further acknowledged that youth-adult partnerships are needed to develop, implement, and evaluate initiatives that impact youth. If youth are going to be the beneficiaries of these initiatives, then a balance of power between adults and youth in program planning and decision-making is necessary as a means of valuing youth voice.

In 2000, Camino presented exploratory and descriptive research on youth-adult partnerships, one of the first empirical endeavors focused on this type of youth-adult relationship. Based on data from a range of diverse neighborhoods across the United States, Camino identified the dimensions that comprise the constructs of youth-adult partnerships and the conditions affecting the practice of these partnerships. Camino’s (2000) research consisted of three major premises: (1) strong communities are built on active participation and civic engagement of adult and youth members; (2) youth development is predicated on a larger focus of building healthy communities; and (3) adults can overcome negative attitudes and misinformation about youth if they join with youth to address community concerns.

Camino (2000) employed three national data sets in her investigation – two secondary data sets and one data set from an investigation she conducted. The first data set was an initiative called Bridging the Gap of Isolation (BTG), involving 10 rural communities that were ethnically and geographically diverse. The second data set, involving youth leadership programs, was comprised mostly of urban and suburban neighborhoods. The final data set was collected by Camino from videotaped interviews on youth-adult partnerships. A total of 43 transcribed interviews were reviewed,
consisting of youth and adults throughout the country who reported working in youth-adult partnerships. The three datasets were triangulated to find similarities and to increase the validity of thematic patterns. In addition, the extended case study method was employed to compare the researcher’s knowledge and findings with other literature sources. Camino (2000) concluded that youth-adult partnerships are a multi-dimensional construct containing principles and values, such as: nurturing leadership and decision-making among all participants. Moreover, Camino found that there is a set of values, skills, and competencies that should be acknowledged and/or developed in order for youth and adult participants to implement within collaborative efforts. Training of individuals to stimulate desirable attitudes toward power-sharing and on-going support are both needed in community work when using strategies that are new to residents.

Camino’s (2000) study provided a practical contribution to the phenomenon of youth-adult partnerships as a type of youth-adult relationship. The analysis of the concepts provided future researchers with a framework of themes, factors and assumptions to establish more rigorous, quantifiable studies. Her findings enable future research projects to examine some of the elements presented as critical to youth-adult partnerships. However, although Camino (2000), Kaplan (1997) and others (Israel & Ilvento, 1995; Zeldin, et al., 2000) identify characteristics associated with youth-adult partnerships (i.e., critical thinking, improved decision-making skills, and mutual teaching and learning) no empirical evidence exists about the degree to which these characteristics are more likely to occur within youth-adult partnerships as compared to traditional youth-adult relationships. As previously stated, it has been well documented that youth and adults participating in intergenerational programs help to promote positive perceptions
among those working together. However, is there one type of youth-adult relationship that is more effective in transforming perceptions than the others? More research efforts are needed in exploring perceptions of youth and adults and the role attitudes play in building successful community partnerships.

**Adult Perceptions of Youth**

Existing research focused on youth and their opinions of adults. Although equally important, adults’ attitudes toward youth have not been examined as comprehensive as to reveal obstacles that impede upon improving youth-adult relationships. For example, Walker and Grossman (1999) discussed positive youth outcomes occurring as a result of viable youth policy and youth development programs, including intergenerational projects. However, the authors indicated that, while young people are most often surveyed as program participants, adults tend to be left out as a source for data collection and analysis. This results in most research targeting the perceptions of youth and not addressing the importance of analyzing adults’ perceptions of youth. Due to the lack of research in this area, few studies in the fields of youth development and adult education have addressed adults’ knowledge about youth. Research studies are needed to understand youth and adult perceptions toward each other and how to overcome any perceptual barriers that may exist in order for positive relationships to be formed between the two groups.

Studies have reported adults’ perceptions of youth as being less than accurate and unaware of major trends in youth development (Gillian & Bales, 2001; Guzman et al.,
Stereotypes, perceived by adults, constrain the potential of young people at the community level by hindering their ability to relate to adults and even causing youth to doubt their own competence (Glassner, 1999; Guzman et al., 2003; Kaplan, 1997; Klindera, 2001; Males, 1999; Zeldin & Topitzes, 2002). Furthermore, the experiences of adults when they were young are crucial in understanding youth-adult relationships (Galbo, 1983). Youth-adult relationships are challenged because working with young people may cause adults’ painful memories of their own youth experiences with parents and other adults to resurface (Atwater, 1983; Gilliam & Bales, 2001). For instance, in a study of 121 adolescents and 121 parents (i.e., one parent from each of the youth’s families) Scheer & Unger (1995) examined whether “storm and stress” (e.g., identity crisis, rebellion, and parental disappointment) during the adolescent years of parents surveyed would correlate with relationships between their own teen-aged children. Approximately half (48%) of the parents described their adolescent years as stormy and stressful. Parents, who viewed their own adolescence as stressful, were found to have greater parent-child conflict and less satisfaction with their own families. However, the retrospective data are limited in that select memory may be occurring; that is, parents of more rebellious children may select to remember only rebellious actions of their youth to normalize what they are experiencing now as parents.

Research has also reported findings supporting Scheer and Unger (1995) by finding that internal and not just external factors influence perceptions. Zeldin and Topitzes (2002) studied a sample of adults living in an urban area, and found no consistent findings that individual, neighborhood, and family characteristics were associated with adult attitudes. However, perceived neighborhood safety was most
strongly associated with adult attitudes toward youth and the only variable associated with adult attitudes regarding youth and community connectedness. Adults who felt safe in their neighborhoods were most likely to report feeling confident in the potential leadership of youth as community decision-makers. A strong sense of community connectedness was also a predictor of adults having more confidence in youth leadership. Zeldin and Topitzes further concluded that one’s identification and feelings about her/his neighborhood and the people within are much more influential than cultural stereotypes of young people.

In a 2001 report, Search Institute surveyed 1,425 American adults on actions that are most important to young people. From the list of 19 actions, 48% of the adults indicated that young people should have opportunities to make their communities better places. However, only 13% of the adults reported that these opportunities exist. Nearly half (48%) of the adults believed that youth should be sought out for their opinions when making decisions that affect them. Yet, only 25% of the adults acknowledged actively seeking the opinions of youth. Moreover, in a more recent survey of 2,000 adults and youth, Search Institute (2002) reported that 46% of adults deemed it important to seek out youth opinions. Forty-one percent of the youth participants felt it was important to give youth the opportunity to make a difference in their communities. However, the adults’ views toward providing youth opportunities either were not examined in this study or were not included in the report.

Gilliam and Bales (2001) used both qualitative and quantitative methods to develop a strategic frame analysis of public opinion towards America’s view of teens. This approach, common in communications research and practice, was utilized to discern
what deeply-held world views and widely held assumptions Americans have about youth in society. Strategic frame analysis relies on multiple methods adapted from opinion research, media studies, survey research, interviews, focus groups, content and metaphor analysis, and media affects tests to determine the impact attitudes have on youth-related social policies (Gilliam & Bales, 2001). Semi-structured interview formats and observations were used to study participants engaged in their own reasoning about particular issues. Focus groups were conducted to observe group dynamics to determine how well strong cultural models held up to public discussion and group critique. Gilliam and Bales (2001) found that adults believe teens are “different” than they were in the past and that teens have rejected traditional American values. When presented with news stories about teenagers over the course of six focus groups with parents, the adults consistently overlooked the positive data and focused instead on the negative trends. However, adults did describe youth in positive terms when referring to activities such as group sports, performing arts, and volunteer/community service. Furthermore, the researchers analyzed newscasts on television and found that only one of every 12 stories on local newscasts and one of every 25 stories on network (national) news dealt with youth (Gilliam & Bales, 2001). The most frequent topics dealt with crime and accidents involving young people. In a more recent study, Lee, Farrell, and Link (2004) also found supporting evidence that media consumption about a particular group without direct exposure to that group (e.g., youth) fosters negative attitudes toward that group.

The aforementioned studies provide strong evidence that adult perceptions of youth are often negative and may impact the rate of young people readily engaging in community affairs. Adults can serve as mentors that can guide youth in becoming
effective leaders; however, negative attitudes possessed by adults toward youth can serve
as a major hindrance. Adults with positive perceptions of youth can enable those adults to
engage youth in community issues, thus energizing youth to contribute to their
communities and become more assertive in reaching their full potential.

Youth Perceptions of Adults

Researchers have found substantial evidence that youth perceptions of adults
affect their relationships with adults. Most of the work has been in schools where
researchers assessed students’ attitudes toward teachers and, in some cases, their parents.
Nonetheless, the findings are well established and potentially applicable to most settings
where youth and adults interact with one another. Before beginning to address the
disconnection between youth and adults, researchers must identify the origin of this
division. In order to improve youth-adult relations, more investigations are critical to help
understand factors that affect youth development over the course of a young person’s life.

Several researchers pursued scholarship that focuses on the influence of youth-
adult relationships and the influence on the attitudes of youth. Lynch and Cicchetti (1997)
conducted a notable study addressing youth perceptions of their relationship with adults
and peers. The study examined 1,226 low-risk elementary and middle school children,
ages 7 to 15. Students in a chosen school district were administered a questionnaire that
asked them to think about four different relationship partners: mother, best friend,
teacher, and classmates. Descriptive data reported that middle school students had more
positive perceptions of their relationships with peers and less positive perceptions of their
relationships with adults than elementary school students. Students rated relationships with teachers the lowest of the four relationships. Lynch and Cicchetti (1997) concluded that, during the middle school years, most students experience classes with multiple teachers, which may contribute to fewer youth forming a strong, positive relationship with one specific teacher.

Lempers and Clark-Lempers (1992) reported similar findings in their study of 1,110 youth (aged 11-19) and their perceptions of five significant relationships: mother, father, sibling, best friend, and teachers. Relationships with mothers and fathers rated highest by all adolescents on three (of nine) attributes: being perceived as highly important sources of affection, instrumental aid, and reliable alliance. Best same-sex friends were rated highest on attributes of companionship, nurturance, intimacy and satisfaction. Siblings were also viewed as important sources of intimacy and companionship, along with being highly rated on nurturance and conflict dimensions. The perceptions of their relationships with their teachers; however, received low ratings on nearly all attributes. Hendrey, Roberts, Glendinning, and Coleman (1992), in a study of 197 early and mid-adolescents, also found that their participants, adolescents, particularly females, were unlikely to choose teachers as the most significant individuals in their lives. Researchers argue that this scenario typically holds true if parents or other adults are available and supportive (Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1992).

These findings provide direction for future research related to identifying strategies that strengthen the relationships between youth and non-parental adults. Promising alternatives may include engaging youth and non-parental adults through programs and settings that make use of effective mentoring, communication, and
community partnering. Research suggests that focusing on intergenerational experiences where youth and adults interact and share common goals helps reduce negative attitudes (Couper, Sheehan, & Thomas, 1991; Pinquart, Wenzel, & Sorenson, 2000; Trent, Glass, & Crockett, 1979).

One dilemma that appears to widen the gap between youth and adults is that fewer opportunities for partnerships between adults and youth are available. Many programs fit into the traditional program structure where youth are “receivers” and adults are the providers. As youth enter middle adolescence (ages 14-17) they need to have more decision-making power; thus, tradition program structure may tend to perpetuate the impression that adults are in charge and not interested in youth voice. This can discourage those youth who want to be contributors and bond with adult role models. Not allowing these opportunities can foster resentment, thus leading to youth being unwilling to partake in meaningful relationships with adults. As a result, negative perceptions abound and successful intergenerational social ties remain a foreign experience for both youth and adults.

Social contact between those groups that are often segregated can lead to more positive perceptions and reduced prejudices (Allport, 1954). In order to assess the effect of intergroup contact on attitudes, Caspi (1984) conducted a study where children (N = 38) attending a traditional preschool were compared to children attending an age-integrated school, which included a large number of elderly (over age 60) substitute teachers. While the children at the age-integrated school obviously interacted with older adults through an Adult-Centered Leadership type relationship, in comparison, the children at the traditional school had no direct contact with elderly persons in their
school. Children who were in contact with the elderly teachers were more consistent in choosing positive adjectives in describing the elderly and held more favorable attitudes towards them than children who attended the preschool without elderly teachers.

Caspi (1984) discussed these findings as a conceptualization of intergroup contact theory. If certain variables within intergroup contact theory can facilitate the development of more positive attitudes toward racial/ethnic groups, Caspi suggested that similar variables may also facilitate positive attitudes between youth and adults. The study had two major limitations: a lack of a pretest and no randomized control group. Therefore, there is no certainty as to whether the children’s perceptions changed over the course of the study due to their interaction with the elderly adults. Furthermore, one cannot determine whether positive experiences occurred because of the children’s contact with the elderly teachers or from interaction with other adults outside of the school. Nonetheless, the study’s findings are convincing and future research may want to examine intergroup contact theory in terms of developing a framework for understanding the dynamics of youth-adult relationships.

**Intergroup Contact Theory**

As previously mentioned, recent discoveries acknowledge that community connectedness and social ties are important to the perpetuation of local neighborhoods. It may prove futile in attempting to achieve such a goal if there is no significant focus on the potential among residents. Although youth and adults may be positive towards their communities in general, there is often a personal aversion to their interacting outside of
the home (parent-child) or school (student-teacher). Youth and adults must have experiences of working together in order to change the negative attitudes that exist among them. As previously mentioned, intergroup contact can provide an option for young and older residents to foster a holistic approach to improve and sustain community endeavors.

Intergroup contact theory is based on social psychology research centering on the desegregation of schools during the Civil Rights Movement. Much of the literature stems from Allport’s (1954) contact hypothesis, which argues that bringing members of different groups together in an interactive setting will have positive effects on ingroup members’ (i.e., those possessing power, privilege, and status) attitudes toward outgroup members (i.e., those outside of the ingroup circle that are less connected and often seen as undesirables) and ultimately lead to reduced prejudices. Allport (1954) reported that in order to achieve successful intergroup relationships, four key conditions must be present: (1) equal status within the situation, (2) common goals, (3) intergroup cooperation, and (4) support of authorities, law or customs.

*Equal status within the situation.* Research supports Allport’s notion of equal status needing to exist among groups (Cook, 1984; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Lee, Farrell, & Link, 2004; Norvell & Worchel, 1981). Brewer and Miller (1984) reported that the de-emphasizing of status among group members promotes more equality and less separation. Furthermore, Hewstone’s (1996) Mutual Intergroup Differentiation Model suggested that equal status among individuals reduces intergroup bias and improves attitudes when group members have different areas of expertise that are recognized and valued by other members. Gaertner and Dovidio (2000) found in two separate studies that
attitudes were more positive in groups where tasks are differentiated. Yet other researchers reported that establishing equal status can be perceived as threatening the power of the status quo and has potential to exacerbate social competition (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

**Common goals.** Pettigrew (1998) stated that prejudices, often resulting from negative attitudes and stereotypes, are reduced when opportunities are available for individuals in groups to have active, goal-oriented endeavors. Setting and attaining common goals foster ingroup members, such as adults in control, to benefit from the acceptance of outgroup members (e.g., youth), by changing their perceptions when they see the potential in having a more diverse group of stakeholders. In one report, for example, Gaertner & Dovidio (2000) noted that information exchange among members stimulates more accurate impressions of outgroup members who typically would not be at the decision-making table to demonstrate their abilities.

**Intergroup cooperation.** Researchers have documented that cooperative interaction between groups mediate attitudinal and behavioral change (Aronson & Patnoe, 1997; Cook, 1984; Lee, Farrell, & Link, 2004). Others also found that, when cooperative interaction occurs, members tend to focus on the personal qualities of others, thus gaining increased knowledge about other group members or partners (Miller & Brewer, 1984; Stephan & Stephan, 1984). Furthermore, group cooperation and collaboration on a goal or project reduce boundaries established by the ingroup. This, in turn, prompts group members to conceive of themselves as one group rather than two separate entities (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). However, as Brewer & Miller (1984)
found, not successfully completing a task or reaching a goal could spark dissention and resentment among group members.

_Support of authorities, law or customs._ Intergroup contact theorists noted the critical role that shared values, in reference to support of authority, norms, and customs, bring to the groups’ experience (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Cook, 1984; Pettigrew, 1998). Brewer and Miller (1984) stated that when norms favor intergroup equality and simultaneously encourage individual expressions, there is “adherence to such values, providing an alternate source of positive self-identity” (p. 295). In other words, there is a de-categorization of individuals being negatively stereotyped and _re-categorized_ into a group reflecting various commonalities.

Several limitations and key questions have been noted within intergroup contact theory. For example, there is much debate as to how much contact constitutes greater levels of reduced biases and more positive attitudes. According to Cook (1984), many studies on the contact hypothesis involve subjects that are already in contact with one another at the time of investigation. Therefore, differences cannot be directly linked with the intergroup contact experience. In addition, Pettigrew (1998) offered evidence that intergroup contact has positive effects even when all of the key conditions presented by Allport (1954) are not met. Lee, Farrell, and Link (2004) reported recent findings that supported this argument. In their national study of the public’s attitudes towards the homeless, all types of exposure (i.e., observations, face-to-face interaction, outgroup membership, and information from third-party sources) were found to positively affect attitudes of the public. Pettigrew further noted that selective bias limits the scope of cross-sectional studies of contact theory, for prejudiced people or members of the elite
ingroup may avoid contact with outgroups. More specifically, ingroup members most often associate with other ingroup members, thus avoiding those who are not in their social networks. Pettigrew noted that certain methods can overcome this limitation, including: finding intergroup situations that limit choice to participants, using statistical procedures to compare the reciprocal paths of cross-sectional data, and conducting more longitudinal studies.

Pettigrew (1998) cited recent work suggesting that learning about an outgroup is pivotal in promoting attitude changes. Moreover, he argued that repeated group contact (e.g., individuals meeting and working together frequently) reduces anxiety among group members. However, Pettigrew acknowledged the fact that, although positive group experiences can promote a sense of comfort, adverse experiences can increase dissonance between individuals or groups. He also presented the need for ingroup reappraisal, which forces a group to dismiss paradigms and embrace new perspectives that reshape their attitudes toward individuals outside of the ingroup’s social network.

Intergroup contact theory can be useful in constructing a theoretical framework for the development of youth-adult relationships, because the theory proposes that group interaction can promote mutual learning and equal voice through working together in pursuit of common goals. In order for youth-adult partnering to be successful, there must be a sharing of power among youth and adults that, in essence, reflects Allport’s (1954) condition of equal status among group members. Youth and adults are more likely to have higher levels of interest in community efforts if they have ownership in a project and feel as though their time and commitment make a difference (Cargo, Grams, Ottoson, Ward, & Green, 2003; Forum for Youth Investment, 2004; Mitra, 2003; Mueller,
Wunrow, & Einspruch, 2000). This resonates with Allport’s conditions of intergroup cooperation and importance of sharing common goals. Finally, the intergroup contact theory literature states the importance of having those members who support authority, norms, laws, and/or customs. This is closely related to the literature of youth development that calls for movement from youth tokenism to higher levels of participation while providing mutual respect for individuals (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Hart, 1992; Hohenemser & Marshall, 2002; Lerner, 2004; Perkins et al., 2001). Thus, intergroup contact theory presents criteria that mirror the benefits of youth-adult interaction, while also aiming to address parallel issues that often jeopardize the success of community partnering.

The potential of youth-adult relationships can be even further examined by investigating the present models of intergroup contact (Miller, 2002) that portray the benefits of interaction. Brewer and Miller (1984) presented three models of intergroup contact: Category-based, differentiated, and personalized (see Figure 2). In the category-based model, the outgroup is seen as being distinctive from the ingroup both being tightly bound together as isolates. This correlates closely with the classic relationships between youth and adults, where both prefer functioning in their own separate groups to avoid interaction, unless adults (as the ingroup) are serving in an authoritative role over the youth (outgroup). The differentiated model reflects perceptions of both ingroup and outgroup members, where a group as a whole distinguishes itself from the other. However, there are some members of both groups that are atypical, thus causing more permeable boundaries that serve as links to more open-mindedness among ingroups and outgroups. Certain individuals do not categorize all members of the opposite group as a
prototype (Miller, 2002). In youth-adult relationships, this occurs when some youth and adults in their prospective groups are willing to work with one another.

(A) Category-Based Model

(B) Differential Model

(C) Personalized Model

Figure 2. Brewer and Miller’s Three Models of Intergroup Contact
This eagerness may generate from the fact that some members of each group have had positive experiences in working with members of the other group and are willing to make an attempt at forming collaborations. In personalized interaction, group membership is a minute matter. Individuals are categorized based on similarities (e.g., common goals and interests). Outgroup members are seen accurately depicted as being akin to ingroup members. The key comparison process involves recognizing the essential attributes and talents of all individuals (Miller, 2002). Here, all youth and adults would recognize the potential of both groups and strive to access the skills of the members of both groups. Inherently, there is no “outgroup” or “ingroup,” but one group where a partnership is nurtured and community strengths are maximized.

Although youth and adults can be viable assets within neighborhoods, they are oftentimes viewed as going in opposite directions and not as making attempts to improve their communities. Adults tend to be the privileged party in coming together to decide what is best for the youth. Hence, for youth to be assets within neighborhoods, community-based organizations may want to consider adopting a personalized model approach, such as youth-adult partnering, or to at least provide young people with opportunities to enhance their leadership skills through a youth-led collaboration.

The approaches, based on intergroup contact theory, acknowledge the attributes of youth and adults and aims to utilize all assets to improve communities. Many communities fail to realize that if youth are asked for their opinions and encouraged to take action, there is potential for the emergence of higher levels of civic awareness and action among young people and strong social ties between youth and adults. As a result,
community pride may ascend which, in turn, may lead to an increase in viable partnerships, skill development, social capital and ultimately, empowered communities (see Figure 3). However, in order to achieve ultimate levels of community empowerment, youth must be fully prepared for the challenges ahead (Forum for Youth Investment, 2000).

![Figure 3. Conceptual Framework of Youth-Adult Partnering](image-url)
Importance of Youth-Adult Interaction and Programs that Foster Relationships

For a majority of young people, parents are the most important adults in their lives. Nevertheless, there is a large amount of empirical evidence from resiliency research (Matsen & Coatsworth, 1998; Perkins & Borden, 2003; Werner & Smith, 1982, 1992) on the significant role that non-parental adults play in providing a supportive environment for adolescents. Masten (2001) found that the presented connection to competent and caring adults in the family and community is a global factor associated with human adaptation and development. Kumpfer (1999) previously suggested that youth often seek out these nurturing adults who foster protective processes through positive socialization and care-giving. In their comprehensive literature review on resiliency, Perkins and Borden (2003) found that having a caring non-parental adult was the single most common protective factor regardless of the risk outcomes being examined.

Thus, youth need to connect with adults, not only through parent-child relationships, but also by having access to caring adults who serve as role models in all capacities. A recent study by Beam, Chen, and Greenberger (2002) examined the importance of positive relationships between youth and non-parental adults. A sample of 243 eleventh graders from a Los Angeles high school completed a survey to measure the students’ perceptions of their relationships with adult “VIPs,” or those significant adults other than parents. In addition, interview data were collected from a sub-sample of 55 adolescents and the 55 adults whom the adolescents identified as VIPs in their lives. Eighty-two percent of the adolescents who completed the surveys reported having a non-parental adult who plays an important role in their lives. Based on survey and interview
responses, adolescents reported a high level of support provided by non-parental adults, while both youth and adults indicated that they never or very seldom experienced conflict. The adults also played a role that was unique from parents, being perceived as a source of guidance because of their social experience and interest in the youth as an individual (Beam et al., 2002). Indeed, the authors reported that 60% of the youth interviewed said that they felt more comfortable talking to non-parental adults about certain issues than their parents. In contrast to having assigned mentors, the authors encouraged practitioners and program planners to consider utilizing such naturally occurring relationships where youth and adults are permitted to gradually connect with one another. Thus, various types of youth-adult interactions may provide an opportunity to cultivate positive relationships within community settings. Youth-adult partnering is one possible strategy that may be used to form strong positive linkages and bonds between youth and non-parental adults.

Recent research addressed contrasting dynamics between various types of youth-adult relationships. Larson, Walker, and Pearce (in press) described two models of structured relationships within youth programs – adult-driven and youth-driven. Similar to the adult-led category of the *Continuum of Youth-Adult Relationships* (Jones & Perkins, 2004), Larson et al. (in press) explained that adult-driven models situate adults as the leaders of activities, recognizing them as most capable of directing and/or teaching youth. In contrast, youth-driven models are those programs where youth are the leaders of the activity and adults fulfill supportive roles. Larson and his colleagues offered rich ethnographic descriptions of four youth programs (two adult-driven and two youth-driven) providing examples of the distinguishing components of each model and the
culture of the environment in which they exist; however, several limitations exist. First, Larson and his colleagues provided no information on the selection process of the programs for their study; thus, one cannot be sure if and how the programs were determined to be of quality before the analysis. Providing this information would possibly help practitioners and researchers to better understand what critical elements exist within successful youth-adult relationships. Second, although the researchers reported some declining youth ownership in each of the programs, the narratives clearly described the programs located in schools as having a higher degree of adult ownership and a lower degree of youth ownership. The researchers did not offer a rationale in their discussion as to why this may have been the case. Nonetheless, Larson and his colleagues’ detailed account did provide support for the Continuum of Youth-Adult Relationships.

Youth-adult interactions that result in positive relationships are the cornerstone of mentoring programs. Recent research documented these positive effects of mentoring on several outcomes (e.g., academic achievement, school attendance, and engagement in risk behaviors) (Herrera, Sipe, McClanahan, Arbreton, & Pepper, 2000; Rhodes, 2002). In a Public Private Ventures (P/PV) study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Herrera and colleagues (2000) examined volunteers’ experiences and relationship development within one-on-one community and school-based mentoring programs. The authors examined closeness, emotional support, and instrumental support (i.e., providing help to develop skills) as three aspects of relationship quality. They found that those mentors in the closest and most supportive relationships: were matched with mentees with similar interests; were in contact with their mentors more than 10 hours per month; engaged in
various social and academic activities; perceived their relationship with youth to be of high quality; solicited ideas from youth and then made decisions together about group activities; and, went through six hours of pre-match training and at least two hours of post-match training (Herrera et al., 2000). Although the mentoring relationships were with young children, these findings present characteristics that may be parallel to what is often needed for all youth-adult relationships to thrive.

Research on Mentoring: An Adult-Led Collaboration

Several researchers conducted exploratory investigations to discover how a youth-adult partnership looks and exists in all practicalities (Camino, 2000; Larson, Walker, & Pearce, in press). However, there has yet to be testing of any model of youth-adult relationships. Recent research conducted on mentoring may assist in the understanding of youth-adult relationships. Mentoring by definition is an adult-led, collaborative relationship that engages youth and adults.

Dubois et al. (2002) employed meta-analysis to review a total of 55 evaluations of the effects of mentoring programs for youth. The study examined the effects of mentoring programs on youth and investigated possible program impact based on factors relating to program design and implementation, youth characteristics, mentor-mentee relationships, and assessment of outcomes. Effect sizes were computed to express the difference between comparison group means (i.e., type of methodology, program features, youth characteristics, mentor-mentee relationship, and measurement characteristics or assessments). Dubois et al. (2002) utilized a theory-based index of best practices derived
from previous programs: monitoring of program implementation, screening of prospective mentors, matching mentors and youth, on-going training, supervision and support group for mentors, structured activities for mentors and youth, parent support, and expectations for both frequency of contact and length of relationships (Freedman, 1992; Hamilton & Hamilton, 1992; National Mentoring Working Group, 1991; Saito & Blyth, 1992). Although no single characteristic indicated positive trends in outcomes for program effectiveness, several theory-based index practices were significant individual moderators of effect size (Dubois et al., 2002). Those practices that may be important in achieving desired results included: on-going training for mentors, structured activities for mentors and youth, frequency of contact, mechanisms for support, parental involvement and monitoring of overall program implementation (mean d = .18). These practices were also included in a multivariate analysis and found to be consistently strong predictors of positive, effective mentoring programs.

The literature on mentoring programs is relevant as a form of youth-adult relationship and has increased tremendously in recent years. For example, Sipe and Roder’s (1999) *Mentoring for School-Age Children* study reported a classification of mentoring programs based on a survey administered to staff members from 722 programs. The program included: group and one-on-one models, and site-based (i.e., meeting in one location) and community-based (i.e., meetings in various locations) programs. The majority of programs in the sample were one-on-one models. The study sought to answer two related questions: (1) How can we usefully characterize the new types of mentoring programs operating today? (2) Are any of these new types effective in developing meaningful relationships between mentors and youth?
Approximately 45% of the programs were site-based, with a majority (72%) of those being located in schools. The level of infrastructure (i.e., type of volunteer screening, amount of orientation and training, and on-going support to mentors) was thorough and high among most programs, which met the benchmarks that characterize quality programming as exemplified by Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America’s (BB/BSA) national standards (Sipe & Roder, 1999). However, many programs minimize the importance of developing long-term relationships, a strategy that has been deemed in recent literature as vital to mentor-mentee relationships (Dubois et al., 2002; Rhodes, 2002).

Unlike findings related to high-quality mentoring programs, research findings related to the effectiveness of group-mentoring programs (such as those existing as various types of youth-adult relationships; see Jones & Perkins, 2004) in fostering positive relationships between youth and adults are mixed at best. For example, researchers acknowledge that little is known about the impact group mentoring has on youth and whether it renders the same quality and benefits as one-on-one (youth-adult) mentoring relationships. On the other hand, where there is normally one-on-one interaction, there are situations where the mentor (adult)-youth relationship loses zeal due to unsuccessful matches (Rhodes, 2002). Group models of youth-adult relationships, such as youth-adult partnerships, provide an avenue for youth to “choose” from several positive adults who they may want to emulate. Sipe and Roder (1999) noted that group models of mentoring not only address the often-insufficient numbers of volunteers in one-on-one programs, but also reduce the cost of implementing and maintaining mentors without sacrificing quality. In addition to addressing the deficient numbers of role models
and recruitment, various relationships, as identified by Jones and Perkins (2004), can offer nurturing environments for young people who are urgently in need of adult allies, while also assisting youth in developing life skills for community building. Hence, further research on youth-adult relationships may provide practical insights related to fostering youth development through various means such as group mentoring.

**Learning from Youth-Adult Relationships**

Research reports that youth and adults interacting together can result in positive perceptions. As youth experience an affirmative environment that includes supportive adults and adults encounter responsible, dedicated young people, there is a shift in the myths that one group has about the other. Furthermore, as youth and adults work together in their communities, they may often have the fortune of learning from one another, while relying on the skills of others to accomplish a task. For example, adults may educate youth on handling fiscal matters, while youth may help adults become more proficient in using computers to disseminate information and keep records. This form of mutual teaching and learning allows youth and adults to realize the wealth in acknowledging what others bring to the table if given the opportunity.

Kolb (1984) defined learning “as the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experiences” (p. 38). According to Smith (1991), the ideal learner is active, confident, and carefully monitors learning-related activities and continually reflects on outcomes. Smith added that learners demonstrate flexibility when having to modify plans. If these attributes are relevant to becoming an ideal learner, then
community engagement may potentially give youth the opportunity to develop skills that will allow them to matriculate into productive learners. Working directly with adults who provide youth with an opportunity to make meaning of their experiences creates the chance for young people to reflect on what they learn. Adults, in turn, will embark upon a different experience that might change or enhance their beliefs and attitudes about community engagement and youth (Imel, 1998). Working alongside young people provides adults with direct exposure to the abilities of local youth and the contributions they can offer if given an opportunity. Mezirow (1997) described this notion as transformative learning, when individuals allow their experiences to change their frame of reference by reflecting on new ways of thinking. This form of enlightenment might promote a restructuring of the perceptions adults have acquired about youth over their lifetimes, as well as frame youth perceptions of adults.

Mezirow (1994) defined learning as “the social process of construing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience as a guide to action” (p. 222). His notion of transformative learning theory centers on transforming our personal frame of reference to better understand the meaning of our experiences. Mezirow stressed that individuals often resist learning anything that is contrary to our meaning structures. This appears to be the case with youth and adults, whose attitudes towards one another are overwhelmingly negative (Gilliam & Bales, 2001). Positive youth-adult relationships have the potential to change what Mezirow (1994) described as a “meaning scheme” (p. 223); that is, indicative of ways we perceive certain individuals, groups, situations or things. Youth-adult partnering serves as a process for youth and adults to learn and critically reflect on viewpoints that are most
functional in attaining community empowerment. In other words, partnering may provide opportunities for youth and adults to become immersed in social and cultural experiences that may lead to positive forms of mutual learning.

**Experiential Learning**

Experiential learning is one of the more widely accepted theories within adult education (Merriam & Cafferella, 1999). In this theory, learning is a derivative of personal experiences, whether in formal, non-formal, or informal settings. These experiences are often results of encounters, whether consciously or subconsciously. A person can be in direct contact with a thing, situation and/or place or, on the other hand, have a recollection, thus reconstructing an experience in an attempt to frame its effect upon the individual (Newman, 1999). Experiential learning theorists aimed to transcend traditional educational programs, where lecturing and testing has been the dominant form of evaluating one’s knowledge gain. Kolb (1984) noted that the experiential learning model provides a method to examine and strengthen links between education, work and personal development. In the past, Kolb indicated that several scholars labeled the theory as too simplistic and pragmatic for most academicians. However, as evidence from research about this theory’s efficacy increases, more practitioners begin to prefer experiential learning strategies in formal, as well as non-formal, educational settings, while researchers become more receptive to similar models as a method of instruction in colleges and universities (Kolb, 1984). The basis for this theory was established from the efforts of educator John Dewey (1938) and psychologists Kurt Lewin (1948) and Jean Piaget (1966). The Kolb (1984) model of experiential learning presents interrelated
learning phases within a cyclical process, moving in the following order: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

Key proponents of experiential learning include Dewey’s (1938) argument of the quality of an experience, as a result of continuity and interaction and Kolb’s (1984) adaptation of socio-emotional development. Dewey (1938) stressed that “everything depends on the quality of one’s experiences,” often noting that those experiences that do not influence progression are a “mis-educative experience” (p. 27). He proposed that quality experiences occur as a part of a “continuity of experiences” that are connected to past experiences and somehow modify the quality of those that are forthcoming. In connection with continuity, Dewey (1938) also presented the principle of interaction referring to the action of an individual having an experience with her/his environment (e.g., objects and/or other people). Dewey’s work has been called some of the most attentive observations of lived experiences in connection with learning (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). His propositions that learning is a direct result of experiences have served as the basis for the experiential learning phenomenon, as well as other adult learning theories (Merriam, 1998).

As noted earlier, Kolb (1984) encountered criticism by some scholars who perceived his model as being one-dimensional (Britzman, 1998; Fenwick, 2000; York & Kasl, 2002). Regardless, he argued that Dewey’s pragmatic observations formed the “philosophical rationale for the primary role of personal experience in experiential learning” (p. 18). Piaget’s (1966) contribution, according to Kolb (1984), stems from his in-depth description of assimilated and accommodated experience. Moreover, Kolb noted
Lewin’s (1948) work on T-groups, and action research as being very instrumental in articulating experiential learning concepts. A part of Lewin’s work centers on group dynamics, which creates a learning environment that challenges and stimulates the perspectives of group members.

As a whole, these scholars (i.e., Dewey, Kolb, Lewin, and Piaget) provided a comprehensive theoretical base that has grounded experiential learning theory. Their models and strategies have been applied and found to offer strong evidence as to the validity of this theory about the role of experience in creating a change in a person’s understanding or behavior. However, despite the widespread application of theoretical experiential learning models (Edwards, 1994; Jarvis, 1987; Knowles, 1980; Usher, Bryant, & Johnston, 1997), uncertainty exists as to how to best utilize the aspects in different educational settings (Merriam & Cafferella, 1999).

Experience has been venerated as a highly valuable resource and a definitive attribute for adults and the learning process (Knowles, 1980; Lindeman, 1961). Experiential learning affords the learner an ability to focus on her or his own interests (Brookfield, 1986), thus motivating the individual to be actively engaged and stimulating the potential for higher levels of learning. Although acquiring knowledge from experiences is viewed as essential to the learning process, limited research exists on the connections between learning experience and how to capture the extent to which learning in formal and non-formal settings occur (Merriam & Cafferella, 1999).

Experiential learning theory, although utilized heavily in the discipline of adult education, can be applicable to all age groups. Kolb’s (1984) mention of Piaget’s (1966) work with children demonstrated the benefit that practical experiences of knowledge
have upon their learning. Youth development research (Camino & Zeldin, 2003; Flanagan & Faison, 2001; Perkins et al., 2003) indicated that youth can gain valuable social leadership skills when fully engaged in their communities. These experiences provide reflection-on-action (Merriam & Cafferella, 1999) that may be associated with responsible, civic-mindedness as youth enter into adulthood. The impact of those experiences seems to constitute a degree of learning, regardless of age. Although adults may be assumed to have more sophisticated experiences than youth, this may not always hold true. A young person that has traveled extensively to other countries certainly has more global, cultural experiences than an adult that has never traveled outside of her/his home state. One way to ensure individuals gain valuable experience is by taking advantage of hands-on opportunities. This immersion process offers a chance to learn by doing.

Community Participation and Experiential Learning

When considering education, the vision of individuals in structured formal environments most likely comes to mind. However, in order to be effective in community affairs, the most sufficient preparation has normally occurred within non-formal or informal settings. Many people may not have the privilege of attending an institute for community organizing, but are driven by a desire to make a difference. Those people who seek opportunities to get involved may notice that their own neighborhood is fertile ground for an educative experience. On the other hand, there are many that may desire for change to occur, but because of a lack of prior civic participation, they may feel helpless and believe that their opinions and actions will not matter.
Mayo (2000) asserted that community participants need access to appropriate education and training in order to engage in effective community capacity building. The researcher further noted that the process of participation, in itself, can provide learning experiences “both for individuals and for community organizations, through learning from active citizenship” (Mayo, 2000, p. 23). Mayo explored varying implications for learning from participation in community regeneration (e.g., revitalization) programs in terms of learning required for and achieved from community participation. She conducted a survey of 100 key individuals, representing an array of community organizations. Of the 43 adult respondents, most agreed that decision makers must learn more about issues affecting community participation. In addition, the respondents stated that local leaders must build on their existing knowledge and skills in order for successful community participation to be reached. Mayo reported that the respondents appreciated action-based learning opportunities that were specifically tailored to building upon the learning that occurred among the group.

The same respondents also indicated their views on learning from participation in communities. As they reported a need to build self-confidence, several reported they had experienced increased levels of confidence and had become more successful in coping with new challenges. Mayo (2000) also noted that respondents often referred to the practical knowledge they had gained, which included learning more about the administrative processes of implementing a community program. However, despite these positive learning lessons, Mayo reported evidence that negative outcomes were also present. There were instances where respondents acknowledged alienated effects and feeling undervalued, which ultimately caused levels of non-participation on their part or
by other individuals. Although Mayo’s research presented data obtained from leaders in community organizations, many remained apprehensive and often acknowledged the areas where they felt less than competent. Mayo (2000) noted that these situations were problematic, particularly due to the fact that those representatives of marginalized groups were more often likely to feel detached from the community. The respondents of the study indicated the difficulty they experienced in getting these residents to fully engage in community endeavors. Young people, along with ethnic minorities and economically disadvantaged populations, are categorized as a contrast from those residents who are frequently involved in community affairs. Thus, the findings of this investigation must be tempered by the limitations presented in Mayo’s study (e.g., the low response rate and sample size). Clearly, further research is needed to better understand the effectiveness of community participation opportunities for young people, and especially for those adults who have limited leadership skills and experiences in working with the diverse populations of their own communities. Involvement at the local level helps to build communities by strengthening the abilities of those who often go unnoticed for what they can bring to the table if given a chance.

Zeldin et al. (2000) examined youth in decision-making roles and in working as partners with adults. Nineteen youth and 29 adults from 15 organizations across the country participated in interviews and focus groups. The research concluded that, through mutual contributions by youth and adults, synergy is created to propel decision-making to greater levels of innovation and productivity (Zeldin et al., 2000). They further reported that a youth-adult partnership provides an atmosphere for reflection and on-going learning that encourages youth and adults to become more committed to attending
meetings and to creating a grounded, civil climate. They also found that youth brought first-hand knowledge and concerns that were not accessible to the participating adults, while adults learned more about the youth’s potential, thus increasing their confidence in working with and relating to youth.

Although Zeldin and his colleagues provided insight to the benefits of youth decision-making within youth-adult partnerships, very little reference is directed toward other types of relationships that may exist between youth and adults. They noted that positive youth development presented a firm foundation that is allowing current research to focus on practice and sustainability. However, given the literature on mentoring, resiliency, and community youth development, arguably, the attributes raised by the researchers could be generated not only through youth-adult partnerships, but in other situations where youth and adults are engaged in meaningful relationships. Furthermore, it is unclear as to whether genuine partnerships were actually identified and how. With only 38 participants spread across 15 organizations, it seems unlikely that the youth and adults were in an “atmosphere” that nurtured equality in terms of decision-making.

This proposed study explored the perceptions that youth and adults have toward working together on community projects and to determine what the experiences are like for youth and adults in various youth-adult relationships within communities. The researcher also observed characteristics that identify various youth-adult relationships. Reflection-in-action (Merriam & Cafferella, 1999) and formative evaluation techniques were employed to better understand what dynamics exist when youth and adults form relationships under such situations. For example, are certain types of relationships (e.g., Adult-Led, Youth-Adult Partnership, and Youth Led) more conducive to mutual learning
from experiences of teamwork than other types? In the youth-adult partnership category, youth have the opportunity to be mentored by adults, while adults have a better understanding of the competencies of young people and their awareness of issues that affect them.

However, a major challenge for this category may be that these participants’ experiences may hinder their ability to grow and be open to exposure of new ideas. This challenge is linked to Dewey’s (1938) notion of mis-education, which indicates that a negative experience can hinder one’s progress in learning or advancing. The challenge may be more of a concern with the adults, who most often decide as to whether youth should be included in decision-making. If adults encounter bad experiences working with youth, they may become apprehensive to solicit youth support in the future. Youth, on the other hand, may feel they have little or no experiences and therefore succumb to overbearing adults. Although these issues may become a reality, there still remains an opportune learning experience nonetheless for the participants, as well as a worthy contribution to the knowledge base within the youth development field.

**Generating Social Capital through Youth-Adult Relationships**

Social capital has become a more prevalent concept in sociological research over the last 15 years. Social capital, according to Coleman (1988), includes features of trustworthiness, social norms and networks used to improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions. Specifically, Coleman defined social capital as a complex social mechanism that is garnered to produce something of value for those individuals
who are directly involved. Putnam (2000) also acknowledged that it particularly implies to connections among individuals through social networks and civic virtue.

Putnam (2000) noted that social capital is often simultaneously a “private good” and a “public good” (p. 20). While local groups and organizations provide services to the local community they, in turn, build friendships and business connections that relinquish personal benefits. Research provided evidence that youth-adult partnering may be ideal in giving young people a stronger voice and building connections in their communities (Zeldin et al., 2000). Schools and community-based organizations often operate as a basis for the emergence of social capital, allowing persons from various backgrounds to come together to foster networking opportunities through common interests. However, traditional youth development approaches can often pose a threat to the growth of social relationships among local institutions (Sandefur & Laumann, 1998). Typical community organizations have historically garnered adult-centered leadership, with low tolerance for young people having equal rights as older citizens. Moreover, they often encourage group thinking (Janis, 1972) thus forcing organization members to think a certain way or “within the box,” seldom welcoming outside input. What may begin as an innovative school board or board of directors with new ideas may soon dissipate, resulting in mediocre outcomes. Those same individuals may continue their authoritative reign, thus eliminating chances for new members to join and offer a unique perspective. As a result, the building of relationships is severely altered.

Due to mutual trust and loyalty to communities, extended families are by far one of the richest sources of social capital. Coleman and Hoffer (1987) concluded in a report that adults in a young person’s family and community are highly important to the
development of today’s youth. Utilizing components of the notion that “it takes a village to raise a child” creates an array of social support that instills confidence in knowing that children are cared for and protected (Coleman, 1988). Over thirty years of resiliency research has provided strong evidence of the importance of positive relationships with parents as well as non-parental adults (Benard, 2004; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Masten, 2001; Perkins & Borden, 2003; Rhodes, 2002; Scales & Leffert, 1999).

Although strong inter-familial relations can equate to higher levels of neighborhood participation, these ties can also serve as a means to shut out other communities that are also in desperate need of nurturing adults. Swisher and Whitlock (2004) reported research findings that suggest how family and group bonds may inhibit individual members’ eagerness to pursue options outside of their immediate neighborhoods. Those localities with an abundance of caring parents may be so committed to their own families that they are often oblivious to the needs of others who are less fortunate. In addition, it can also be extremely difficult for newcomers to penetrate the existing bond of a close-knit community. Those who may have a desire to contribute often become discouraged and unwilling to offer more social capital due to the exclusive network of the old guard.

Youth-adult relationships, when utilized to address community issues or local projects, bring talent and enthusiasm of youth and the skills and mentoring of adults from all facets of the community and beyond (Zeldin et al., 2000). Allport’s (1954) contact hypothesis and the research of other intergroup contact theorists supported the notion that bringing individuals and groups from different backgrounds (e.g., culture and age) together helps to build relationships which, in turn, forges community connectedness.
Young people from different neighborhoods and schools may become exposed to more heterogeneous groups than they would normally encounter (Flanagan, Gill, & Gallay, in press), experiencing an opportunity to intermingle on a more personal level. Adults, in turn, can take advantage of communicating and learning from those who represent different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. Youth-adult relationships help to form what Swisher and Whitlock (2004) referred to as “bridging ties” (p. 226) that may aid in linking neighborhoods on a citywide or even a national scope.

Furthermore, relative to intergroup contact theory, youth-adult interaction brings to the forefront what most scholars deem imperative to a continual resurgence of social capital via social relationships. These social relationships can serve as investments, which generate social capital as a resource to enhance opportunities across generations (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995). As group contact demonstrates a way to promote positive attitudes, youth-adult relationships can provide the chances for youth and adults to get to know one another on a more intimate level and to dispel the myths that each perceive about the other. The major hindrance that challenges the success of youth-adult partnering revolves around the negative stereotypes that affect the attitudes of individuals (Klindera, 2001; Zeldin & Topitzes, 2002).

Partnerships as a form of youth-adult relationships can also serve as what Wilson (1997) described as social buffers for those youth in communities with fewer resources, thus increasing the social capital of youth. When working together, young people are allowed to connect through their commonalities, despite differences in SES backgrounds, while adult professionals are provided a platform to help mold disadvantaged youth for success. Hence, although youth-adult partnerships employ the importance of teamwork
and leadership among peers, adults serve in irreplaceable roles that are critical for achieving successful outcomes and building social capital among youth.

When young people work only with other youth, they are restricted in their development and limited in acquiring new knowledge and skills. Young people who grow up in the same neighborhoods and attend the same schools bring diminutive levels of diverse experiences to their network. Adults, on the other hand, rely heavily on the strong ties they have among themselves when attempting to envision what is best for the community’s young people. Despite the fact that parents, teachers, youth workers, and other adult allies are at the decision-making table, not having youth present to express their opinions on what is best for them is counter to the community youth development framework. When youth and adults work together, they liberally increase the realm of their networking circles. This change in the social system’s structure is tantamount to the establishment and attainment of larger goals, building of trust, and a sense of the community to have a mutual obligation towards uplifting local neighborhoods (Sandefur & Laumann, 1998). Forming youth-adult partnership efforts can solicit the help of all involved, thus maximizing the leadership potential possessed by each individual and increasing the level of social capital through the networks of all participants. Establishing these relationships between young and older residents aims to keep social capital steadfast in communities for years to come.
Prevalence of Youth-Adult Partnering

Communities have recently begun to experiment with what they perceive as true youth-adult partnerships. Israel and Ilvento (1995) initiated a needs assessment project in Immokalee, Florida with the assistance of local youth. The focus of this Adult-Led Collaboration was to generate information for community leaders’ decision-making and to supply high school students with enhanced educational experiences. About 60 students (i.e., juniors and seniors) from a local high school participated in activities including a questionnaire design workshop and interview training sessions. A total of 434 telephone interviews were completed - 287 completed by students and 147 by adults. After completing the project, the authors interviewed the students who indicated having a better understanding of the needs assessment process and the development of interviewing skills (Israel & Ilvento, 1995). The authors noted that students reported learning more about their communities through the views of the people they interviewed. From a practical standpoint, the results of the survey conducted by the youth and adults provided information to the YMCA on recreational needs for middle-school youth. In addition, the local Chamber of Commerce incorporated some information into their economic development activities. The authors concluded that the successful implementation of community needs assessments and other similar projects illustrate students’ abilities to contribute to community development issues. Through the use of youth on a voluntary basis, they were also able to keep costs low. However, this was not a partnership, as the methods employed a “top-down” approach where adults disseminate instructions and the youth do what they are told, in turn, representing an Adult-Led Collaboration. In contrast,
youth-adult partnerships involve equal decision-making efforts from both parties, while adults may provide guidance based on their experience and political power.

Within the literature and practice, there remains a lack of clearly defined criteria for what signifies a youth-adult partnership and how to determine its effectiveness. The literature presents various types of relationships, all possessing different characteristics, from those that are adult-centered (i.e., only allowing youth to participate) to those where youth lead the collaborative efforts. The current study will build upon the knowledge base by classifying youth-adult relationships into five categories: Adult-Centered Leadership, Adult-Led Collaboration, Youth-Adult Partnership, Youth-Led Collaboration, and Youth-Centered Leadership. These categories exist along the Continuum of Youth-Adult Relationships created by Jones and Perkins (2004). This model identifies and categorizes the variations in relationships between youth and adults. As noted earlier, research on certain types of youth-adult relationships, such as mentoring, provides insight into the essential characteristics that might identify where a specific youth-adult relationship is positioned along the continuum. Therefore, the emphasis of the current investigation is to employ the Continuum model to distinguish the categories of youth-adult relationships. Youth-adult partnerships are the phenomena and a form of youth-adult relationships that are of particular interest in this investigation.

**What Constitutes a Youth-Adult Partnership?**

This study addresses the question, “What do various youth-adult relationships look like?” By exploring current literature on youth-adult partnerships and reviewing the work of meaningful relationships that involve youth and adult interaction, this study
identified a set of criteria that can be useful in determining effective youth and adult relationships, including partnering.

As previously indicated, an extensive amount of research had been conducted in the area of mentoring. One important characteristic researchers noted as fundamental to successful mentoring is the quality of interactions between youth and adults (Dubois & Neville, 1997; Herrera, et al., 2000; Jekielek, Moore, Hair, & Scarupa, 2002; Rhodes, 2002). This interaction addresses how youth are connecting with their peers, how adults are getting along with other adults and, most importantly, how well youth and adults connect with one another. Grossman and Johnson (1999) also noted that relationship quality is often perpetuated through more frequent contact between individuals. The participants’ perception of the relationship has also been documented as a major component of relationship quality (Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention, 1998; Dubois et al., 2002). Although these characteristics can be utilized to identify quality adult-led collaborations, such as mentoring, they may also be important criteria for establishing other quality youth-adult relationships, including those where youth and adults function as partners. Mentoring is an adult-led collaboration and not a youth-adult partnership because this type of relationship does not involve an equal level of power-sharing, voting privileges, utilization of skills, and mutual learning between youth and adults. Of course, developmentally, youth need to have positive experiences in as many of the different youth-adult relationships as outlined on the Continuum. Yet, the prevalence of youth-adult partnerships, in particular, appears to be minuscule, at least as indicated by the lack of identification in the literature. Through the observation and rating of involvement and group interaction, this study will attempt to more precisely assess
youth-adult relationships employing the *Continuum of Youth-Adult Relationships* Model (Jones & Perkins, 2004).

**Summary**

The literature review of research presented here indicates that youth-adult partnering may be one potential strategy for building youth-adult relationships as well as community development initiatives. Findings presented from mentoring and intergenerational research provides an initial framework for future studies to explore the benefits and outcomes of youth-adult relationships. However, further research is needed to examine whether negative youth and adult attitudes towards one another are transformed into positive perceptions which may, in part, be due to transformative learning. Furthermore, studies must aim to discover what both youth and adults involved in each of the youth-adult relationship categories learn through the process of working together. The major conclusion drawn from the current literature review is inclusive at best and provides strong evidence for more empirical research. This research would provide a better understanding of the role and effectiveness of youth-adult relationships in communities. The majority of existing research is either tangentially related or consists of vaguely-defined descriptive studies.

Stronger positive interactions developed through youth-adult relationships can be worthwhile endeavors in the realm of community youth development. One strategy to promote experiential learning and to generate more social capital among youth and adults is to incorporate youth in the decision-making process; however, such power sharing may challenge adults. There is very little empirical research on the benefits of youth-adult
relationships and even less on what is learned through these collaborations and partnerships. This leads to many unanswered questions relating to how adults and youth can begin to better understand one another and work together on behalf of their communities.
Chapter 3
PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY

The Present Study

The purpose of this study was to examine how various youth-adult relationships influence youth and adult perceptions and experiences and to identify characteristics that are unique to various youth-adult relationships. This study addressed the following questions:

(1) What are the perceptions of youth and adults toward their involvement and interaction when working together on community projects?

(2) What is the experience like for youth and adults participating in various youth-adult relationships at the community level?

(3) What characteristics constitute various youth-adult relationship experiences?

This study involved seven phases: (1) review of the literature; (2) identification of youth-adult groups for participation; (3) categorization of groups based on the continuum of youth-adult relationships; (4) assessment of youth and adult perceptions and experiences through a rating scale; (5) observation of four groups involved in youth-adult relationship/partnering; (6) interviewing of 2-3 youth and 2-3 adults in each of the four groups, and; (7) analysis of critical elements and examining factors that influence various types of youth-adult relationships.
Population and Sample

This investigation is part of a larger evaluation study of the Engaging Youth, Serving Communities (EYSC) Initiative. The University of Arizona is the lead university coordinating the evaluation of the EYSC initiative. Penn State University is coordinating the evaluation for the Northeast 4-H Region State Cooperative Extension Services (i.e., Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and West Virginia). The EYSC evaluation focuses on the three core program areas that characterize the Engaging Youth, Serving Communities (EYSC) programs: youth-adult partnerships, 4-H after-school, and professional and volunteer development. The major aims of the national evaluation were documenting: (1) the effectiveness of local EYSC sites in the three core program areas; (2) the national reach of EYSC programs consistent with the core program areas; and (3) the process, strengths, and potential improvements for national initiatives like the EYSC.

The EYSC Initiative participants focusing on youth-adult partnerships comprised the sample for this current investigation. Thus, this study included a convenience sample (Patton, 1990) of youth and adults who participated in the EYSC Initiative in the Northeast 4-H Region State Cooperative Extension Services. Those states participating in the EYSC Initiative were: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and West Virginia. The Northeast Region EYSC Initiative focused on the core area, youth-adult partnerships. According to the Initiative’s Request for Proposal, this core area provides the opportunity for youth and adults to gain valuable skills on how to understand one another and work together, while being contributing members of society. Each participating state received a
$25,000 grant from the National Rural Funders Collaborative, administered by the USDA/Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES) and the National 4-H Council to provide rural youth with enhanced opportunities in their communities by partnering with adults to address community issues.

During the summer of 2003, community groups from each Northeastern state, including youth and adults, were trained by extension specialists to work in partnerships. Approximately 120 youth and adults participated in the training sessions. Those participating in the training sessions, along with the local extension educator, identified residents in their counties interested in working as a team to improve the community. Most of the groups were already formed prior to the training, while only a few were formed after the summer training. Less than half of those participants who attended the training actually became involved with projects. A large majority of those involved with this study did not participate directly in the summer training session. However, all groups were orientated to the youth-adult partnership concept by their state EYSC coordinator and/or the local extension educator.

In addition, other participants from the Philadelphia area were recruited for this project to provide an urban sample. Two groups (i.e., Camden, NJ and Haddington, PA [a section of West Philadelphia]) were selected to be in this study because they are in the beginning stages of bringing youth and adults together to promote community change. Within the past year, the Philadelphia group participated in a day-long session on how youth and adults can effectively work together. They also participated in monthly trainings, where consultants conducted hour-long workshops on best practices for youth and adults to work together as partners. The Camden group did not partake in a training
that orientated them to the youth-adult partnership concept. However, the group attended a one-day youth development conference that focused on civic engagement and expanding youth roles in community action. They also participated in the Youth Leadership Institute, sponsored by Prudential Insurance Company, which addressed topics relating to youth as decision-makers. In addition, the Camden group has also been working together for approximately one year on various community issues. However, they introduced the youth-adult partnering concept to the group in the beginning of 2004.

Participants from 10 different states and 12 communities were involved as respondents in this study (see Table 1). The largest groups were from the two urban areas, with 29.6% (n = 32) being from Philadelphia and 18.5% from Camden, New Jersey (n = 20). The remaining participants were from rural counties in Connecticut (n = 2, 1.9%), Delaware (n = 10, 9.2%), Maine (n = 8, 7.4%), Massachusetts (n = 3, 2.8%), New Hampshire (n = 2, 1.9%), New Jersey (n = 1, .9%) New York (n = 7, 6.5%), Pennsylvania (n = 9, 8.3%), West Virginia (n = 7, 6.5%), Vermont (n = 7, 6.5%).

Table 1

Location of Participating Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City/State</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camden, NJ</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Approximately 51% of the participants were youth (n = 55), while 49% were adults (n = 53). The youth participants were comprised of 33 females (30.6%) and 22 males (38.9%), while the adults consisted of 42 females (20.4%) and 11 males (10.1%). A total of 69% of the sample were females (n = 75) and 31% (n = 33) were males. The largest ethnic group was European American/White (n = 52, 48.1%), followed by African American (n = 37, 34.3%), Hispanic Americans (n = 6, 5.6%), Asian Americans (n=5, 4.6%), Native Americans (n = 1, .9%) and others (n = 7, 6.5%). Forty-one percent (n=44) of the participants lived in rural areas, while 43.5% (n = 47) lived in urban areas. The remaining 15.7% (n = 17) indicated living in suburban communities. Of the 108 participants responding, 36% (n = 39) indicated that this was their first time participating in a youth-adult partnering effort in their community (see Table 2).

Approximately 41% (n = 22) of the youth were 15-16 years of age, followed by 33% (n = 18) aged 17-18, and 24% (n = 13) aged 13-14. The majority of the adults (90%, n = 48) were ages 26 and over, while 10% (n = 6) were between the ages of 19 and 25. All of the African-American participants were from urban or suburban areas, while the rural groups consisted primarily of White/European participants. Although there were only a few adult male participants among all groups, most were members of the two urban groups (8 of a total of 11 male participants).
Table 2

Frequency and Demographics of Participants in the Study (N = 108)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age Classification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth (13-18)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult (19 and older)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic American</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/European American</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural/farm</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban/City</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First time partner with youth/adults</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>63.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A majority of the participating groups were a significant distance away from University Park, posing a disadvantage in allowing the researcher to visit every group. Therefore, four groups were selected (i.e., Camden, NJ; Kent County, DE; Mifflin County, PA; Philadelphia, PA) as a sample of convenience. These groups held regularly scheduled meetings that met at least once to twice a month and appeared to be making progress with their community projects. These groups also included the largest number of participants (66% of the entire sample) and were the most ethnically diverse. Two groups were located in urban communities and two were in rural areas. Also, the two rural groups consisted mostly of White/European-American participants, while the two urban groups were fairly heterogeneous, consisting of African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans and European-Americans/White participants.

Although only two urban sites participated, in contrast to several (10) rural communities, the research sample is based on the concept of youth-adult relationships rather than a comparison of groups based on locations. Therefore, it was not pertinent to obtain an equal number of urban and rural sites for comparative purposes. Specifically, this investigation focused on comparing the various types of diverse relationships along the Continuum of Youth-Adult Relationships. This study was designed to examine youth-adult relationships formed in communities to address pressing issues affecting those communities. Furthermore, this investigation examined how these relationships influenced the perceptions and experiences of youth and adults when participating in community projects (i.e., civic, service, and service-learning).

The researcher began contacting the EYSC state coordinators, requesting each to identify a group in her/his state that was making substantial progress in implementing a
community action plan. The coordinators were to complete a *Group Activity Rating Scale* (see Appendix A) that indicated the type of youth-adult relationship, based on the *Continuum of Youth-Adult Relationship* (see Figure 1, page 13). The coordinator also provided the researcher with the name and contact information of each group’s adult leader. Once the coordinator’s rating scale was received with the contact information of the adult leader, the researcher then contacted the groups’ adult leaders by email or phone. The adult leaders were asked to describe the type of project(s) the group was working on, the number of youth and adults involved, and the schedule of the group’s meetings.

The urban groups were identified by a program officer at the William Penn Foundation. The program officer suggested that the researcher contact the two groups because they were in the beginning stages of organizing youth and adults to work together. The groups were contacted and the directors of the two groups were given a *Group Activity Rating Scale* (i.e., same scale given to the EYSC coordinators) to rate their groups.

In order to examine experiences of individuals, all participants (in rural and urban localities) were asked to rate youth involvement, adult involvement, and youth-adult interaction within their groups. These data were collected by having the participants complete an *Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale* (see Appendix A).

Six face-to-face and 12 telephone interviews were also conducted with a sub-sample of participants (i.e., nine youth and nine adults) in order to more thoroughly explore their experiences with their group members while working on community projects. Observations were also made by the researcher among the four groups (i.e., two-
three observations per site). Table 3 provides information pertaining to the schedule in which rating scales, as well as parent and participant consent forms were mailed.

Table 3

Mailing Schedule for Consent Forms and Rating Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument/Document</th>
<th>Approximate Mailing Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Activity Rating Scale</td>
<td>January 29, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Consent Form</td>
<td>January 23 - March 16, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale(^a)</td>
<td>February 12 - March 23, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth and Adult Consent Forms(^a)</td>
<td>February 12 - March 23, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Consent Form (for youth interview)(^b)</td>
<td>April 15 - May 15, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth and Adult Consent Form (for interview)(^b)</td>
<td>April 15 - May 15, 2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)The rating scales and the youth and adult consent forms were delivered to the Pennsylvania EYSC group by the researcher on February 20, 2004. The rating scales and the youth and adult consent forms were also delivered and administered to the Camden, NJ youth-adult group on February 20, 2004.

\(^b\)The consent forms for interviewing were given to the adult leader or participants (identified by the adult leader) during the researcher’s visit to the groups’ site.

The researcher mailed each adult group leader the parental consent forms. These forms were to be taken home by the youth. If parents approved of their child’s participation, they did not have to return the form. However, if they did not want their child to participate, they were to sign a copy and return it to the research team. A period of at least two weeks was to pass from when the letters were taken home to when the youth were to complete the *Youth-Adult Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale*. No consent forms were returned by parents; therefore, all youth were eligible to participate in the study.
The adult leaders informed the researcher when the rating scales would be administered to the participants. Most of the youth received the involvement and interaction rating scale at least two weeks after receiving the parent consent forms. With two particular groups (i.e., Delaware and Maine) where the adult leaders were in contact with the youth and their parents on a frequent basis, the involvement and interaction rating scale was administered slightly less than two weeks prior to the parents’ receiving the consent forms. This was a concern, as the protocol called for the researcher to inform the adult leader whether a parent had returned a consent form indicating that they did not want their child to participate. However, the researcher addressed this concern by contacting the adult leader of the groups, asking them to wait the two full weeks before mailing the *Youth-Adult Involvement and Interaction Rating Scales* to the research team. If the adult leader received a letter from a parent declining their child’s participation during this time, they were to discard that particular young person’s rating scale before mailing the rating scales to the research team. However, none of the parents indicated that they did not want their children to participate; therefore, all of the rating forms were employed in the current investigation.

In addition to obtaining parental consent, all youth and adult participants were required to indicate their willingness to participate by signing a consent form (see Appendix B). They were also given a copy of the consent form to retain for their records. The youth and adult consent forms were mailed to the adult leaders along with the rating scales, and were signed and returned with the completed rating scales. Those youth and adult participants who participated in the interview conducted by the researcher also signed a consent form, indicating their willingness to participate. These participants
received the consent forms during the researcher’s visit to the group sites. The youth and adults both received a copy of the interview consent form to retain for their records. The youth participants were also given parental consent forms to take home to a parent/guardian. If parents approved of their child serving as an interview participant, they did not have to return the form. If they did not want their child to participate, they were to sign a copy and return it to the research team. No parents returned signed consent forms, thus indicating their willingness to allow their child to participate in the interview.

**Research Design**

The design of this study employs a concurrent triangulation strategy (Creswell, 2003). This model generally uses separate quantitative and qualitative methods as a means to capitalize on the strengths of both types of methods. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered in the same phase of the research study. Quantitative and qualitative data analyses were also conducted simultaneously and compared in order to strengthen the knowledge claims or explain any lack of convergence that may occur (Creswell, 2003). The strategy best allowed the researcher to use a mixed methodology approach to confirm findings within this multi-dimensional study. Quantitative and qualitative methods have equal priority for this investigation in order to obtain well-validated results and to strengthen the knowledge claims (Creswell, 2003). Collecting both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously is more advantageous than sequential approaches for this study, due to the short availability of time. Also, both
forms of data are equally critical in conducting a thorough investigation of community programs and projects that impart the efforts of youth-adult partnering.

Quantitative data were collected by administering the *Group Activity Rating Scale* to the EYSC coordinators and the *Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale* to the youth and adult participants. To collect qualitative data, multiple case study analyses were employed to observe several youth-adult relationships. The qualitative data consisted of observed involvement and interaction during meetings or some other scheduled event. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the youth and adult participants. These interviews were taped and transcribed. These data were then examined by comparing individuals’ statements and experiences to one another in order to identify themes and patterns, which aided the construction of the theoretical framework, based on grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 1998; Van Manen, 1997), to describe the dynamics of youth-adult relationships.

Triangulating different data sources (i.e., rating scales, observations, and interviews) of information was conducted to validate the accuracy of the qualitative and quantitative methods and the research findings. The researcher examined evidence from these data sources to build a sound justification for themes (Creswell, 2003). Thick, rich descriptions were also utilized to convey the findings through narratives. In order to measure validity of the observations, the researcher shared these data with an adult leader of one of the participating groups to determine if there was some level of accuracy reported in the findings. Also, peer debriefing were used to enhance accuracy. Peers were asked to review and raise questions about the qualitative procedures so the methods resonated with those other than the researcher (Creswell, 2003). Inter-coder agreement
was employed to determine the validity in the researcher’s selecting of themes for the participants’ responses. The researcher classified the participants’ responses by the specified themes and recruited a colleague to do the same. Cohen’s Kappa was used to measure the level of consistency between the ratings (Huck, 2004), resulting in a satisfactory inter-rater reliability (Kappa = .789). This indicated a high degree of consistency between the researcher’s classification of the participants’ responses and the colleague’s classification. Inter-rater reliability was also utilized to examine correlations between the researcher’s ratings and the coordinators’ and participants’ ratings.

Moreover, this concurrent design also incorporated an exploratory strategy. The objective of this investigation was to explore the youth-adult partnership phenomenon and to examine elements of emergent theories relating to the influence of youth-adult relationships on participants. In addition, since the research was testing newly developed instruments (i.e., the Group Activity Rating Scale and the Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale), it is appropriate to recognize the design for this study as being exploratory in nature (Creswell, 2003).

The design integrates a modified version of a static group comparison design (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993) and two qualitative data collection techniques (i.e., observations and interviews). Since the participants were selected as a convenient sample, there is an inability to randomly assign subjects (Tuckman, 1994). A comparison was conducted on the participating groups that were classified into one of the five categories of the Continuum of Youth-Adult Relationships (see Figure 4).
In addition, interviews of participants and observations of youth-adult relationships in action were conducted to better understand experiences of the participants and to critically examine youth and adult involvement and interaction. Pinquart and colleagues (2000) stressed the importance of observing interactions between groups, reporting that previous studies noted that if there is no personalized contact between groups, no common interests and no participant enthusiasm, the results could present less positive or even negative effects. Therefore, examining these relationships and partnering efforts through multiple methods is essential in capturing the dynamics of youth-adult involvement and interaction.

The independent variable for the quantitative component of this study was the type of youth-adult relationship. The five levels of the independent variable were drawn from the Continuum: Adult-Centered Leadership, Adult-Led Collaboration, Youth-Adult Partnership, Youth-Led Collaboration, and Youth-Centered Leadership. The dependent variables were: youth perceptions of other youth’s and adults’ involvement on the

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**Figure 4. Research Design of the Study**

*Note. O₁ = Rating Scale; O₂ = Observations; O₃ = Interviews (Conducted among four selected groups) X = Comparison Groups (X₁ = Adult-Centered Leadership; X₂ = Adult-Led Collaboration; X₃ = Youth-Adult Partnership; X₄ = Youth-Led Collaboration; X₅ = Youth-Centered Leadership)
project, adult perceptions of youth’s and other adults’ involvement on the project, and the participants’ perceptions of youth-adult interaction within the groups.

The modified static group design was employed in part because it is useful in controlling internal validity threats in the areas of subject characteristics, instrumentation, testing, history, regression threats and maturation (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993). Due to this study’s aim to measure differences in perceptions of age groups (i.e., youth and adults), as well as differences in those individuals and groups involved in various forms of youth-adult relationships, statistical techniques (filtering of selected/specific cases or groups) were employed to minimize the unintended influence of subject characteristics and selection bias.

The investigation occurred over an eight-month time period; this short period of time reduced the chance for a large number of participants to drop out of the study. Based on the adult leaders’ comments about youth being less involved in their groups’ activities during the summer, as well as the researcher’s experience as a practitioner, the researcher took into consideration that some of the youth would most likely become less engaged in programs during the summer months (e.g., particularly those programs that are connected with schools and most active during the academic year). This would make it more difficult for the adult leaders to stay in consistent contact with the youth that were involved. On the other hand, adults typically take vacations during this time. Due to these factors, the researcher completed data collection by the time the youth began their summer break. In addition, groups were studied as opposed to individuals. Although individuals were interviewed, the researcher interpreted the experiences of the participants as a group, based on the information provided by the individuals who
represented those groups. By using comparison groups, the loss of a few participants would not pose a major mortality threat while also aiding to prevent regression threats.

Quantitative procedures were important in order to analyze the perceptions of the participants and to determine what type of relationships influence positive or negative perceptions of youth and adults. There have been few, if any, studies conducted that investigated the perceptions of youth and adults working together as community change agents. By determining what factors influence these perceptions and how they differ among various types of relationships, this study has the potential to make major contributions to the field of youth development. Qualitative procedures were used to describe the various types of relationships identified. Although examining the perceptions was vital, qualitative measures complimented the quantitative methods. The qualitative procedures afforded the researcher with a better understanding of the participants’ experiences within these groups. Interviewing the youth and adults afforded the participants with the opportunity to “tell their story,” while observations by the researcher strengthened the validity of the findings. Although observations are highly subjective, this is a valid technique that provides knowledge of specific contexts and aid in understanding the dynamics that take place among participants. Furthermore, interviews were also used in conjunction with observations to substantiate the findings (Merriam, 1998). Because the groups in this study were desirous of achieving a youth-adult partnership, their interviews alone may have indicated that all relationships and interactions were positive. Observations revealed those incidents potentially existing in various types of youth-adult relationships that an interview and quantitative surveys would not capture.
Data Collection

Quantitative

State coordinators of the EYSC initiative were asked by the researcher to identify a group within their state that qualified for the study and to classify the group based on the Continuum of Youth-Adult Relationships (Jones & Perkins, 2004) using the Group Activity Rating Scale. The adult leaders in charge of the urban youth-adult groups were asked to rate those groups accordingly, using the same scale as the EYSC state coordinators. Based on the EYSC coordinators’ and the urban groups’ adult leaders’ ratings, the groups were classified into one of the relationship categories of the Continuum. The Group Activity Rating Scale was also used to determine the coordinators’/adult leaders’ understanding and opinions of critical elements of youth-adult relationships and more specifically, what constitutes each category along the Continuum (i.e., dependent variable).

During a meeting near the middle of the participating teams’ projects, youth and adult participants were administered a rating scale to determine their perceptions of the relationship quality among their group (i.e., dependent variable). The instrument was adapted from the Engaging Youth, Serving Communities survey, as well as from existing semantic differential scales that measure relationship/interaction and program quality (see Camino, 2002; Yohalem, 2002; Zeldin, Day & Matyzik, n.d.). In most cases, the instrument was mailed to the adult leader to administer to the group. The researcher provided detailed instructions (see Appendix 4) for the adult leaders to have the participants sign their consent forms and complete the rating scale. Upon completing the
documents, the participants were to place them in a large postage-paid envelope (provided by the researcher). The adult leader was to seal the envelope in front of the participants and mail it back to the research team.

The groups ranged in size from two members (i.e., one youth, one adult) to 32 members (i.e., 12 youth, 20 adults). One group (i.e., Cape May County, New Jersey) only had one adult member to complete the scale at the time this study began. The rating scale from the one adult member was included as a source of data in assessing perceptions, with the expectation that more rating scales would be received from the group. However, no additional rating scales from other members were received and the group was not considered for any further in-depth analyses. Table 4 presents the groups along with the number of youth and adult participants.

Table 4

Number of Participants per Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Youth</th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berkshire County, MA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden, NJ</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape May County, NJ*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent County, DE</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mifflin County, PA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monroe County, NY</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New London County, CT</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford County, ME</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orleans County, VT</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strafford County, NH</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wirt County, WV</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>55</strong></td>
<td><strong>53</strong></td>
<td><strong>108</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. * Although Cape May County, NJ is included in this table, they were not included as a group for the in-depth analysis, being that only one individual completed a rating scale for this group. However, all groups were aggregated to assess the perceptions of all youth and adults.
Qualitative Measures

Four groups (i.e., Camden Youth-Adult Group, Philadelphia Youth-Adult Group, Delaware Youth-Adult Group, Pennsylvania Youth-Adult Group) were purposefully selected that would best help the researcher address the research questions. The researcher also completed an *Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale* to assess critical elements of the various youth-adult relationships among the groups. Observations of the groups were conducted, in which field notes were gathered to assess the behavior and activities of the individuals. Interviews of participants were conducted to obtain views and perceptions from the participants of the study. Nearly all of the interviews were recorded on audiotapes and transcribed. (During the phone interview of one adult, the researcher did not have access to a speakerphone and tape recorder). Interviewing was conducted and deemed necessary, for it was not always possible to gain a clear understanding of behaviors, thoughts, and expectations through observations. In addition, the researcher had a limited time frame (i.e., six months) for observations. In order to capture the experiences of the four groups, interviews of key informants were the most practical method of conducting case study investigations (Merriam, 1998). Table 5 lists the subjects and research inquiries of the study and the procedures for data collection. See Appendix D for a timeline in which the data were collected.
### Table 5

Inventory of Methods for Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Research Inquiries</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Youth-Adult Relationships</strong></td>
<td>Perceptions of youth and adult involvement and interaction(^a)</td>
<td>Group Activity Rating Scale (used as selection criteria) – (Qualitative and Quantitative)</td>
<td>EYSC state coordinators; Urban youth group leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth/Adult Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale (Quantitative)</td>
<td>Youth and adult participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experiences of youth &amp; adult participants(^{a,b})</td>
<td>Interviews (Qualitative)</td>
<td>2-3 youth and 2-3 adults from selected groups ((n = 4))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observations/Narratives (Qualitative)</td>
<td>Two rural/Two urban groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical elements of youth-adult relationships/partnerships(^c)</td>
<td>Group Activity Rating Scale (Qualitative)</td>
<td>EYSC state coordinators; Urban youth group leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observations/Narratives of selected groups (Qualitative)</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth/Adult Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale (Qualitative)</td>
<td>Researcher’s ratings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. The superscripts located next to the research inquiries coincide with the research questions:

\(^a\) What are the perceptions of youth and adults toward their involvement and interaction when working together on community projects?

\(^b\) What is the experience like for youth and adults participating in various youth-adult relationships at the community level?

\(^c\) What characteristics constitutes various youth-adult relationship experiences?*
Measures

Previous studies reported that determining the effectiveness of a program is based on how participants’ perceived the quality of existing relationships (Assibey-Mensah, 1997; Dubois et al., 2002; Office of Juvenile Justice, 1998; Rhodes, 2002) and interaction between groups (Herrera et al., 2000; Jekielek et al., 2002; Pinquart et al., 2000). Thus, quantitative (rating scale/instrument) and qualitative (i.e., observations and interviews) methods were employed to determine individual perceptions and the critical elements of specific youth-adult relationships along a continuum. This section discusses all measures (e.g., Group Activity Rating Scale, Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale) that were utilized to collect data for the study. The researcher also used an interview protocol to guide the interviewing of participants and an observational protocol to document the dynamics of the groups and situations as they occurred.

Quantitative Measures

Group Activity Rating Scale

Initially, the researcher proceeded with this study in a manner that would investigate youth-adult partnerships. Being that the EYSC groups were to strive to achieve a youth-adult partnership, the first research design identified the critical elements of this form of relationship. However, based on the literature and upon talking to the coordinators, the researcher discovered that most of the groups did not appear to be in the form of what is considered a youth-adult partnership.
The EYSC coordinators were asked to explain what criteria were used to select groups to participate in the EYSC summer training. They were also asked if groups were already formed prior to the training and, if not, how individuals were selected to attend the training. Both the EYSC group coordinators and the urban group leaders were asked to define a youth-adult partnership and to describe what they believe an effective youth-adult partnership should look like. As no previous definition of youth-adult partnerships was available, the researcher assumed that the coordinators’ understanding of youth-adult partnerships would be varied. Hence, the *Continuum of Youth-Adult Relationships* was created, in part, to help the coordinators more accurately assess the type of relationship for each group.

The EYSC coordinator was, in most cases, a state 4-H specialist or area 4-H agent/educator, serving as the state contact for the group. The coordinators were to complete the *Group Activity Rating Scale* (see Appendix A) to indicate the groups’ level of participation and progress with their community action plan (to the best of the coordinator’s knowledge). As noted earlier, the urban groups were identified by a program officer at the William Penn Foundation in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The program officer put the researcher in contact with the adult leaders of these groups. These adult leaders also provided the same information as the EYSC groups by completing the *Group Activity Rating Scale*.

The *Group Activity Rating Scale* consisted of nine items on a five-point scale that indicated whether the group was more of an adult-driven or youth-driven program/project or a youth-adult partnership. As a means of measuring consistency and assuring content and criterion-related validity, the coordinators and adult leaders were to choose what type
of relationship along the *Continuum*, would they consider a group: Adult-Centered Leadership, Adult-Led Collaboration, Youth-Adult Partnership, Youth-Led Collaboration, or Youth-Centered Leadership. The researcher assigned each relationship a number from one to five. The number assignment was as follows: 1 = Adult-Centered Leadership; 2 = Adult-Led Collaboration; 3 = Youth-Adult Partnership; 4 = Youth-Led Collaboration, and; 5 = Youth-Centered Leadership. These numbers coordinated with the 5-point scale that consisted of nine items. For instance, all of the nine items at the level of “1” were considered activities or characteristics of an Adult-Centered Leadership. The items at the level of “3” on the scale were considered activities or characteristics of a Youth-Adult Partnership and a level of “5” indicated activities or characteristics of a Youth-Centered Leadership. This technique was used for each type of relationship as they corresponded to the items. The researcher calculated a mean score of all nine items for each coordinator’s/adult leaders’ rating. Eleven of the 12 coordinators’/adult leaders’ mean averages matched the number/type of relationship that the coordinator or adult leader had selected. For example, if a coordinator indicated that a group was a Youth-Led Collaboration (n = 4) and the mean of the nine items equaled “4.1,” then there was some level of consistency in the categorization of the group. This strategy was also used by the researcher in classifying each of the four groups selected for observation and to examine whether administrators viewed those youth-adult relationships the same as the researcher.

A Spearman correlation model was used to determine if there was a high correlation or level of agreement between the researcher’s rating of the four selected groups chosen for an in-depth analysis and the coordinators’/adult leaders’ ratings. Three of the four (i.e., Camden, NJ; Kent County, DE; Mifflin County, PA) correlations were
significant (p < .01). The correlations between the ratings for the four groups chosen for an in-depth analysis were: Camden, NJ (.76); Kent County, DE (.82); Philadelphia, PA (.13), and; Mifflin County, PA (.86).

Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale

The Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale was used as a survey instrument to assess youth and adult perceptions of youth involvement, adult involvement and youth-adult interaction as pertained to a community project team (see Appendix A for the Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale). The purpose of using the Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale as a survey instrument was to identify characteristics and attitudes of individuals within the various types of relationships. The group participants, both youth and adults, were asked to rate the quality of their existing youth-adult relationship with members of their project. Relationship quality was rated on a 10-point scale that assessed the given constructs (i.e., youth involvement, adult involvement, and youth-adult interaction). The scale ranged from: 1-2 (very poor); 3-4 (poor); 5-6 (fair); 7-8 (good); 9-10 (excellent). The 46-item rating scale included bipolar (i.e., positive and negative; see Appendix A for instrument) statements to measure participants’ perceptions of their experiences. Parallel forms were developed for youth and adult participants. The constructs used were selected and adapted from existing instruments (see Camino, 2002; Yohalem, 2002; Zeldin, Day & Matyzik, n.d.) related to this study to more accurately fit the uniqueness of this investigation. Some of the items were based on the mentoring and youth-adult partnership literature and modified to accomplish the objectives of this study. Negative statements were reverse coded to reflect positive aspects.
The Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale contained items that measured youth involvement. These items were used to assess whether young people demonstrated high or low levels of youth voice and decision-making, responsibility, and commitment to the project. A high rating in youth involvement also indicated that youth worked primarily with their peers to carry out a task (e.g., organizing an event, collecting signatures for a petition) related to the project. A high rating in adult involvement entailed only adults working together in a given situation (e.g., raising funds or handling other administrative duties). The construct, adult involvement, utilized items that measured adults’ support, through their commitment to nurturing youth voice and decision-making and their dedication to the project. A high rating of youth-adult interaction/partnering indicated that youth and adults worked collectively, engaging one or more components of the project and fully exercising an equal opportunity to utilize decision-making and other leadership skills. High youth-adult interaction would also reflect civility and mutual respect for one another. A comparison of individual responses between the various groups was made to determine the differences in relationship quality, experiences, and level of youth and adult involvement to further distinguish the contrasts between the various types of relationships identified along the Continuum.

The Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale also assessed how the participants of the four observed groups rated their relationship experiences based on themes formed by the researcher (i.e., adult support, civility, community obligation, decision-making, mutual learning, mutual respect, youth responsibility, and youth voice). These themes were utilized by the researcher because they were discussed in recent literature (Camino, 2000; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Herrera et al, 2000; Mayo, 2000; Rhodes, 2002; Zeldin
et al., 2000) as being potentially critical elements among successful, positive youth-adult relationships. These themes were also considered appropriate because the EYSC coordinators’ and adult leaders’ generated the same or very similar terms to determine what defines an effective youth-adult partnership. The researcher used these formed themes to categorize the responses of the interviewed participants as well.

The group participants, both youth and adults, were asked to rate the quality of their existing youth-adult relationship with members of their project. Each theme was computed as a separate index variable, based on the items that comprised the Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale. The researcher calculated a mean score of each groups’ overall rating for each theme. The themes used for this assessment are listed below.

**Adult support.** Initially five items comprised the index for the participants’ rating of adult support. The items were: “Adults display a willingness to accept and nurture youth leadership/Adults display a sense of wanting to control youth,” “Adults tend to be followers of youth leadership/Adults display a tendency to want to guide youth,” “Adults always listen to the suggestions of youth/Adults never listen to the suggestions of youth,” “Adults actively and consistently consult with youth on project activities/Adults do not consult with you on project activities at all,” and “Adults provide direction and mentoring for youth/Adults provide little or no direction and mentoring for youth.” One item, “Adults tend to be followers of youth leadership/Adults display a tendency to want to guide youth” was deleted due to the low reliability coefficient. Three of the four remaining items were reverse coded so that high scores indicated a more positive rating of adult support. Cronbach’s alpha for adult support was .73.
Civility. Participants’ rating of civility, which indicated whether youth and adults were cordial to one another and getting along, was derived from a three-item index. These items were: “Youth and adults get along well together/ There is arguing and tension among youth and adults,” “Youth appear uneasy and intimidated by adults/Youth seem comfortable working with adults,” and “Adults seem comfortable working with youth/Adults appear uneasy and afraid of youth.” Two of the items were reverse coded to indicate a more positive rating of civility. Cronbach’s alpha for civility was .65.

Community obligation. Community obligation was used as a theme to determine if youth and adults seemed committed to improving their communities. Five items comprised the index for participants’ rating of community obligation. The theme included the following items: “Youth are not fully committed to their duties/Youth are fully committed to their duties,” “Youth are very excited about their involvement with this project/Youth have little or no respect in being involved with this project,” “Youth are not concerned with community change/Youth are very concerned with community change,” “Adults have little or no interest in being involved with this project/Adults are very excited about their involvement with this project,” and “Adults are very concerned with community change/Adults are not very concerned with community change.” Two of the items were reverse coded to reflect a higher score for positive rating. Cronbach’s alpha for community obligation was .75.

Decision-making. Four items were employed to create the index for level of decision-making among participants. The following items were included: “Youth rely on themselves to make key decisions/Youth make few decision for themselves, often relying on the decisions of adults,” “Youth have full access to information that is needed to make
decisions/Youth have very little access to information that is needed to make decision,”
“Youth always go along with the decisions of adults/Youth never go along with adults and always make their own decisions,” and “Youth and adults often agree on most decisions/Youth and adults rarely agree with one another.” All four items were reversed coded to reflect a more positive rating of the theme. Cronbach’s alpha for the theme, decision-making, was .42. One potential reason may be that most of the items are related to youth decision-making while the last item is directed towards youth and adult agreement on decisions. As previously indicated, the literature indicates that opportunities for decision-making are vital to successful youth-adult partnering efforts. Therefore, the researcher used the index as a measure of decision-making among participants, despite the low reliability coefficient.

Mutual learning. Mutual learning was indexed by four items that pertained to youth and adults’ rate of learning from one another. The items were: “Youth help one another in developing new skills/Youth do not help one another in developing new skills,” “Adults learn new skills from one another/Adults do not learn new skills from one another,” “Youth and adult indicate mutual learning from one another/Youth and adults learn little from one another,” and “Youth and adults rarely help one another develop new skills/Youth and adults frequently help one another develop new skills.” Three of the four items were reverse coded. Cronbach’s alpha for mutual learning was .60.

Mutual respect. Six items were used to create the mutual respect (between youth and adults) index: “Adults never totally take over everything when working on project activities/Adults always take over everything when working on project activities,” “Adults are very considerate of youth opinions/Adults are not at all considerate of youth
opinions,” “Youth are not at all considerate of adult opinions/Youth are very considerate of adult opinions,” “Youth and adults always engage in respectful conversations/Youth and adults never engage in respectful conversations,” “Youth do not trust adults to handle power responsibly/Youth trust adults to handle power responsibly,” and “Adults trust youth to handle power responsibly/Adults do not trust youth to handle power responsibly.” Four items were reversed coded to indicate a more positive rating.

Cronbach’s alpha for mutual respect was .80.

Youth responsibility. Four items comprised the index for participants’ rating of youth level of responsibility: “Youth take lots of initiative in working on projects/Youth take little initiative in working on projects,” “Youth are sitting around with nothing to do/Youth are busy with several tasks,” “Youth are sitting around with nothing to do/Youth are busy with several tasks,” “Youth arrive to meeting and events on time/Youth show up late for meetings and events,” and “Youth are given little or no responsibilities for specific tasks or assignments/Youth are given major responsibilities for specific tasks or assignments.” Two of the items were reverse coded. Cronbach’s alpha for youth responsibility was .70.

Youth voice. Five items were used for the index of youth voice: “Youth never have the opportunity to discuss their concerns about group decisions/Youth always have the opportunity to discuss their concerns about group decisions,” “Youth frequently share ideas about things that matter to them/Youth rarely share ideas about things that matter to them,” ”Youth do not have an equal vote in the decision-making process/Youth have an equal vote in the decision-making process,” “Adults never take the ideas of youth seriously/Adults always take the ideas of youth seriously,” and “Adults encourage youth
to come up with their own ideas/Adults command youth to follow the directions of adults.” Two items were reverse coded to reflect higher ratings as being more positive. Cronbach’s alpha for youth voice was .74.

The Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale was reviewed by a panel of individuals with knowledge in survey design. The panel consisted of three agricultural and extension education students and five faculty members in the Departments of Agricultural and Extension Education, Education Theory and Policy, and Adult Education at Penn State, who reviewed the instruments for content and face validity and cultural sensitivity. An evaluation team from the United Way’s Center for Youth Development (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) also reviewed the instrument. Adaptations were made based on feedback from the panel and the evaluation team. The study was approved according to the rules and guidelines of The Pennsylvania State University Office of Regulatory Compliance (IRB # 17706) on January 16, 2004.

As a measure of reliability for the Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale, a post-hoc test was conducted by the researcher, which reported an overall Cronbach’s Alpha of .94. The instrument contained three groups of items that measured the following attitudinal constructs: youth involvement, adult involvement and youth-adult interaction. The Cronbach’s Alpha reliability coefficients for each of the constructs were as follows: Youth Involvement (.83), Adult Involvement (.84), and Youth-Adult Interaction (.87).
Qualitative Measures

Although the rating scale provided pertinent data that examined the perceptions of participants, the researcher also conducted interviews and observations to gain a more in-depth analysis of how participants felt about their experiences and to observe some of the events that took place and the levels of youth and adult involvement and youth-adult interaction. The following questions were addressed through qualitative analyses: (1) What is the experience like for youth and adults participating in various youth-adult relationships at the community level? and (2) What characteristics constitute various youth-adult relationship experiences?

Interview Protocol

One-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted to further explore factors that positively or negatively affected participation in various youth-adult relationships. This strategy enhanced the case study approach of observing and documenting the interaction between youth and adults by providing an in-depth examination of those dynamics (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994). Comparing experiences of the youth-adult relationships (i.e., adult-centered, adult-led, youth-adult partnership, youth-led, and youth-centered) aimed to provide a rich description that helped to define program quality. Table 6 lists all of the main questions used in the interview protocol (see Appendix A for a complete list of questions).
Table 6
Semi-Structured Interview Protocol Questions

- How would you describe yourself as a decision-maker?
- What motivated you to participate in a youth-adult partnering project?
- What were your perceptions toward youth/adults before/after working on this project?
- What did you learn from participating in a youth-adult partnering project?
- What should be done to improve relationships between youth and adults involved in community programs or projects?
- What advice would you give to others who are considering forming a group of youth and adults to work on a project in their community?
- Are you willing to work with youth/adults on future projects? Why or Why not?

Nine youth and nine adults from four pre-selected sites (i.e., Camden, NJ; Kent County, DE; Mifflin County, PA; Philadelphia, PA) were interviewed to gain a qualitative perspective. The four sites were chosen because they were in close proximity to Penn State, were the most diverse of the groups, had the largest number of participants, and were making ample progress with their projects. The researcher asked adult leaders from the four sites to identify youth and adults as potential key informants. These key informants were to provide insight to their individual experience and their perceptions of their group’s interaction among members.

Once the individuals were identified, the researcher talked with individuals during a site visit to discuss the purpose of the interview and gave each a consent form that explained this component of the study in further detail. The participants then signed a copy of the consent form and retained a copy for their records. The youth were also given a waiver-of-parental consent form that was to be taken home to their parent/guardian. At
the time of the visit, the researcher also retained contact information (i.e., phone numbers and email addresses) either from the participants directly or from the group’s adult leader.

The researcher waited at least two weeks before contacting the participants who agreed to partake in the interview. This allowed youth’s parents enough time to receive the consent forms and to decide whether or not to allow their child to participate. After this time, and having received no returned parental consent forms declining participation, the researcher concluded that all parents were in agreement to allow their children to participate.

All participants that were asked if they would partake in an interview agreed to do so and were contacted to schedule a time for interviewing. Six participants were interviewed face-to-face. The remaining 12 interviews were conducted via telephone due to the location or because this was the best alternative for the participant due to time constraints. The researcher did not notice any major differences between the face-to-face and phone interviews. All participants had become familiar with the researcher by the time the interviews took place and were willing to share information. However, there were two female youth that were very shy and rarely talked during their group meetings. The researcher decided to conduct a phone interview with them while they were in the comfort of their own home. The researcher noticed that the girls were apparently much more at ease as they were more open to talking via phone.

Observations

Observations were conducted to witness the youth and adults working together on projects as well as their interaction during meetings. The goal was to determine
differences in the behavior of participants and to see if youth and adults in various relationship experiences become involved at different rates and if one group or type of relationship fosters youth involvement, adult involvement, and youth-adult interaction more so than others. The researcher utilized focused observations that were tailored specifically toward the processes which were most essential to the study’s research questions (Flick, 2002). The researcher developed an observational protocol (Creswell, 2003; see Table 4) for recording field notes to organize observations of the physical settings and the researcher’s commentary (i.e., feelings, reactions, and initial interpretations) (Merriam, 1998). Data were also reported in the form of potential themes created by the researcher. Those themes or constructs were: adult support, civility, community obligation, decision-making, mutual learning, mutual respect, youth responsibility, and youth voice. The researcher used guiding questions in order to determine whether these themes/constructs were present among the groups (see Table 7).
Table 7

Research Observational Protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Group/Location:</th>
<th>Brief Description of group/project:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting location/setting:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes/Constructs Measured</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult Support</td>
<td>Do adults display willingness to nurture youth leadership? Do adults follow or guide (offering suggestions) youth? Do adults consult with youth? Are adults providing direction (giving specific instruction for youth to follow)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civility</td>
<td>Are youth &amp; adults getting along? Do youth/adults appear uneasy around adults/youth? Do youth/adults seem comfortable working together?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Obligation</td>
<td>Do youth seem committed to their duties? Are youth/adults excited about the project? Do youth/adults seem concerned with community issues/change?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-Making</td>
<td>Are youth relying on themselves to make decisions? Do youth seem to have access to info to make decisions? Are youth going along with the decisions of the adults? How often do youth and adults agree (never, sometimes, frequently, always)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Learning</td>
<td>Are youth/adults helping one another develop new skills? Is there an indication of mutual learning? Explain. (This indication is most likely to come from interview) Do youth &amp; adults often help one another develop skills?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Respect</td>
<td>Are adults taking over when working together? Are youth/adults considerate of adults/youth? Do both parties engage in respectful conversations? Do both parties seem to trust the other to handle power responsibly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Responsibility</td>
<td>Do youth take initiative in working on projects? Are they busy with major responsibilities? Punctual for meetings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Voice</td>
<td>Are youth given the opportunity to discuss their concerns? Share their ideas? Do youth have equal vote in the decision-making process? Do adults take youth ideas/opinions seriously? Are adults encouraging youth to develop their own ideas?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The researcher strived to conduct observations in a way that would influence the flow of events as little as possible. This presented a challenge that often occurs in qualitative research - balancing the observer’s level of involvement (e.g., participation and observations only) in the study to lessen the chance of biased opinions. To minimize this concern, the researcher took on a role of “observer as participant” (Creswell, 2003; Flick, 2003; Merriam, 1998). In this capacity, where the observer’s role is known to the group, the researcher is allowed to interact closely enough with members to establish an insider’s identity (Merriam, 1998) without fully participating in the group’s activities. However, it was inevitable for the researcher to participate at some degree. The researcher chose to interact during the meetings by asking questions about upcoming events and getting involved with group activities. For example, the researcher was an active participant during one group’s team building exercises and assisted another group with a service project by helping to set up and clean up. During the service project, the youth made sure that everyone was fully engaged; this included giving the researcher assignments. This established a sense of comfort between the researcher and those being observed. Furthermore, the researcher’s analyses of the data and interpretations had a higher degree of ecological validity due to direct interaction (Flick, 2002). Although the researcher attempted to remain unbiased and to not show favor to any of the four groups, there was a stronger connection with one group that insisted on his participating in projects and activities.

The researcher recorded written notes during observations, but also wrote more detailed notes immediately following a group’s meeting or scheduled event/activity. The
researcher was only able to attend 2-4 meetings with each of the four groups due to distance. Table 8 indicates the groups and the number of visits made by the researcher.

### Table 8

Number of Group Visits Made by Researcher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Number of Visits</th>
<th>Point of Saturation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camden, NJ</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3 visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haddington, PA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent County, DE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mifflin County, PA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 visits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The point of saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) where additional observations did not provide any further knowledge was reached at three of the four sites. Most of the visits to these groups involved meetings in which the researcher observed very similar scenarios that provided analogous data. At one site (Kent County, DE), the youth-adult group had various on-going projects that may have revealed more information if the researcher had been able to visit more than twice. However, this group was chosen as an alternate after another site did not participate due to a conflict in scheduling. Thus, the timing only enabled the researcher to attend the last two scheduled events. Although only two visits were made, the observations presented detailed evidence of youth-adult interaction on community projects and the data gathered from the interviews did reach a
point of saturation. All of the youth and adult interview participants reported the same or similar responses.

Observational data were gathered and reported in the form of potential themes created by the researcher, descriptive notes (e.g., description of the setting and accounts of particular activities) and reflective notes (e.g., researcher’s personal thoughts and interpretations). Those themes that were rated on the experiences of the participants were: adult support, civility, community obligation, decision-making, mutual learning, mutual respect, youth responsibility, and youth voice. Each theme was computed as a separate index variable, based on items of the Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale (see Appendix A). The researcher calculated a mean score for each groups’ overall rating of each theme.

Data Analysis

Two steps were completed for the data analysis. First, quantitative data were processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 12.0) available through The Pennsylvania State University. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. The researcher chose the approach of using descriptive statistics because the sample of convenience that was used may not be generalized beyond the 108 participants of this study. Descriptive statistics included frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, and correlations. Analyses of Variance and Independent T-tests were used to develop models to measure the perceptions of the youth and adult participants. Once all of the Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale instruments were compiled, the data were analyzed to compare youth and adult perceptions of their youth-adult relationship.
Second, qualitative procedures included 18 semi-structured interviews of participants involved in the four groups that were selected for an in-depth analysis. Detailed descriptions and background information of the groups were also provided. Narratives from the transcribed interviews were summarized, which included the participants’ description of their experiences in a youth-adult relationship. The researcher printed a list of all the participants’ responses, organized them categorically, reviewed on a repetitive basis, and coded the responses by themes (i.e., adult support, civility, community obligation, decision-making, mutual learning, mutual respect, youth responsibility, and youth voice). The researcher formed these themes based on characteristics most often referenced in the literature as being important among positive youth-adult relationships. This procedure is commonly used with qualitative data analyses that incorporate theoretically-based group comparisons (Flick, 2002). Themes were also generated based on the terms EYSC coordinators and adult leaders used to describe and define a Youth-Adult Partnership. The participants’ responses were categorized into separate themes or classified as “miscellaneous” if a response did not seem to “fit” any of the above-listed themes.

A multi-case analysis (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994) was used to further examine the interviews for differences in youth and adult responses and making comparisons of similar and varied comments. Observations were also conducted by the researcher to witness what dynamics were occurring, to identify the type of youth-adult relationship existing within each group, and to rate the relationships accordingly. The researcher compiled a list of all observational notes that were made of each group. Strengths and weaknesses of four groups’ relationships were presented, based on the responses of the
interviewed participants and the observations conducted by the researcher. Although the groups had been previously classified by the coordinators and adult leaders, the researcher also categorized the groups into what he perceived to be the type of relationship, based on the observations and interviews conducted.

There were two stages of the analysis for this multi-case study: within-case analysis (i.e., where each case or relationship was treated as a comprehensive case in and of itself) and the cross-case analysis (i.e., to build abstractions across cases) (Merriam, 1998). The youth and adult responses were compared within each group for the within-case analysis. The researcher’s observational notes were classified into the same themes that were used for the interview responses and were used to note whether a group exhibited these characteristics (e.g., adult support, civility, community obligation, decision-making, mutual learning, mutual respect, youth responsibility, and youth voice) that have been identified in the literature review as pertinent to positive youth-adult relationships.

Once compiled, the observation data were compared to differences and similarities across cases. Based on responses of the participants and observations of the groups, the researcher interpreted the level of youth involvement, adult involvement and youth-adult interaction. The cross-case analysis helped to assess and compare the level of involvement and interaction between the groups. In order to identify distinguishable characteristics of various youth-adult relationships, the researcher created a matrix/table to indicate whether there were high or low levels of youth involvement, adult involvement and youth-adult interaction among each of the four groups. These data were gathered from interview responses, observations and the participants’ rating of their
experience via the *Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale*. The *Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale* was also used to note specific thematic characteristics of the four groups.
Chapter 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and experiences of youth and adults engaged in various types youth-adult relationships that involved community projects. A secondary purpose was to identify characteristics that are unique to various types of youth-adult relationships. This chapter presents the findings of the statistical analyses of the data from (1) the rating scales completed by the EYSC coordinators and adult leaders and (2) the Involvement and Interaction Rating Scales completed by youth and adult participants. The data were analyzed to measure the participants’ perceptions of their experiences within their groups. The Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale was also used to allow participants to rate their experiences in order for the researcher to identify critical elements of various youth-adult relationships.

The results from the qualitative analyses follow the quantitative analyses. Qualitative analyses were based upon the researcher’s observations of four groups and interviews with youth and adult participants. These data were used to assess participants’ individual experiences within their groups. Findings in this chapter are organized into the following sections: (1) demographic profile of youth and adult participants; (2) summary of groups; (3) evaluation of youth and adult perceptions toward youth involvement, adult involvement, and youth-adult interaction within groups; (4) description of the four groups observed for in-depth analysis; (5) experiences of youth and adults who are involved in various types of youth-adult relationships at the community level; and (6) elements that are identifiable characteristics of various youth-adult relationship experiences.
Demographic Profile of Participants

The demographic characteristics of all the youth and adult participants who completed the rating scales were observed within a group, and participated in a one-on-one interview with the researcher. Participants are described in this section to provide information on who was involved in the study. These data were utilized for comparisons between youth and adults, males and females, and to report any notable differences in the number of youth, adults, males or females in any particular type of relationship. Participants were asked to report the following: location of their group, whether they were a youth or adult, ethnicity, gender, age group, description of the area in which they live and, whether this was their first time participating in a youth-adult partnering effort.

Approximately 51% of the participants were youth (n = 55), while 49% were adults (n = 53). The youth participants were comprised of 33 females (30.6%) and 22 males (38.9%), while the adults consisted of 42 females (20.4%) and 11 males (10.1%). A majority of the sample (69%) were females (n = 75) and 31% (n = 33) were males. The largest ethnic group was European American/White (n = 52, 48.1%), followed by African American (n = 37, 34.3%), Hispanic Americans (n = 6, 5.6%), Asian Americans (n = 5, 4.6%), Native Americans (n = 1, .9%) and others (n = 7, 6.5%). Forty-one percent (n = 44) of the participants lived in rural areas, while 43.5% (n = 47) lived in urban areas, and 15.7% (n = 17) living in suburban communities. Of the 108 participants responding, 36% (n = 39) indicated that this was their first time participating in a youth-adult partnering effort in their community.
Summary of Groups

This section provides descriptive data for the twelve groups that were examined in this study. The data further report the EYSC coordinators’ and adult leaders’ ratings of their groups. The section also presents findings about the groups that were contrary to the researcher’s expectations. Because of the variation in perceptions, the researcher asked each coordinator/adult leader to first define a Youth-Adult Partnership and to describe what an effective Youth-Adult Partnership looks like. From their responses, the researcher developed themes to categorize the following: youth and adult participants’ personal inventory of their experiences (based on interview data), observational notes (conducted by the researcher), and characteristics of various youth-adult relationships.

Ten groups were existing participants in the EYSC Initiative. The 10 EYSC groups included a convenience sample of youth and adult groups that were a part of the Northeast 4-H Region State Cooperative Extension Services project. Those states with groups participating were: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and West Virginia. All participants completed the Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale. However, only four groups were a part of the in-depth case analysis. Some of the groups had a very low number of participants and could not be considered as a comparison group for multi-case analysis. Although the numbers were low in these groups (i.e., Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey), the participants’ completed rating scales were used to determine perceptions of youth and adults engaged in community relationships, and not as comparisons by groups.
In order to explore the groups’ efforts of youth and adults working together, the groups had to be identified by the type of relationship. Given that there was little direction from previous research as to what to expect in terms of various types of relationships, the researcher assumed that all of the groups would mirror a youth-adult partnership. However, based upon the literature and after discussing the groups’ objectives and the role of the youth and adults with the EYSC coordinators and the adult leaders of the urban groups, the researcher learned that each group was very unique. Some of the groups reflected strong potential for partnerships, while others clearly did not. As a previous definition of “youth-adult partnership” was not available, the researcher assumed that the coordinators’ understanding of youth-adult partnerships would be varied. The coordinators were asked two questions: (1) How would you define a youth-adult partnership? and (2) What do you believe an effective youth-adult partnership should look like? Tables 9 and 10 report the responses of the EYSC coordinators/adult leaders.
Table 9

Summary of EYSC Coordinators’ and Adult Leaders’ Definition of a Youth-Adult Partnership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of Group</th>
<th>Question 1: “How would you define a youth-adult partnership?”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berkshire County, MA</td>
<td>A team relationship with both parties contributing and the adults using “guidance” to help youth develop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden, NJ</td>
<td>Youth and adults work together in collaboration to accomplish their goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape May County, NJ</td>
<td>A partnership where youth and adults work together, combining the knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities of all parties to accomplish a goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
<td>Youth/adults work together to make decisions, from small details all the way up to the large issues; Both are able to take the lead on areas of expertise, but for the most part, all work together to make decisions. Few decisions are made without the input of all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent County, DE</td>
<td>Youth and adults working together for a common goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mifflin County, PA</td>
<td>A relationship between youth and adults where there is shared and equal responsibility and respect for one another. Youth are seen, heard and valued for their ideas/opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monroe County, NJ</td>
<td>Equal levels of youth/adult decision-making, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New London County, CT</td>
<td>Having respect for each other, having an equal say in the project, having equal responsibilities for the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orleans County, VT</td>
<td>When both youth and adults share decision-making, share views and experiences, work on common projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford County, ME</td>
<td>A mutually supportive, encouraging and challenging environment in which youth exercise every opportunity to empower and develop themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strafford County, NH</td>
<td>Youth and adults both have uniqueness to the table; Each comes from a different experience base and has that to teach the other; Shared learning, shared success – chances to evaluate together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wirt County, WV</td>
<td>Positive working relationship when youth and adults respect and share a vision to accomplish goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10
Summary of EYSC Coordinators’ and Adult Leaders’ Description of an Effective Youth-Adult Partnership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of Group</th>
<th>Question 2: “What does an effective youth-adult partnership look like?”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berkshire County, MA</td>
<td>Respect for youth by adults; respect for adults by youth; willingness to work together and both learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden, NJ</td>
<td>Youth and adults share leadership and decision-making equally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape May County, NJ</td>
<td>A project/program designed and run by youth and adults in full, equal partnership; Equal levels of responsibilities, decision-making and implementation to provide the best results possible; Mutual understanding of where each are coming from; Respect for each other’s thoughts and ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
<td>Youth/adults work together to make decisions, from small details all the way up to the large issues; Both are able to take the lead on areas of expertise, but for the most part, all work together to make decisions. Few decisions are made without the input of all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent County, DE</td>
<td>Effective teamwork; Ability to work together; Willingness to share ideas, listen to each other and collaborate on ways to develop successful programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mifflin County, PA</td>
<td>Respect; Values (shared); (Adults’) Understanding of youth culture; Understanding desired goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monroe County, NJ</td>
<td>Both parties must work together with no particular group leading; Team effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New London County, CT</td>
<td>Respect for each other; equal say in project; equal responsibilities; adult providing additional training and support for the teens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orleans County, VT</td>
<td>Time, commitment, mutually shared responsibilities and participation, understanding of youth-adult partnership and willingness to work toward that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford County, ME</td>
<td>Informed, educated, caring adults; Open minds (youth and adults)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strafford County, NH</td>
<td>Trust, open-mindedness, flexibility – setting ground rules; recognizing everyone’s strengths and weaknesses; Willingness to have some things not being quite perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wirt County, WV</td>
<td>Respect, open communication, vision, goals/objectives to complete goal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Several themes emerged from the responses given by the EYSC coordinators and adult leaders of the urban groups. When asked how they would define a youth-adult partnership, the most frequent responses were youth and adults: working together to accomplish a goal (five responses); making decisions together/having equal say in decision making (four responses), and; having shared/equal responsibility (three responses). In addition, there was also an indication that mutual respect was a very important element used in defining a youth-adult partnership (three responses). One respondent indicated that in this regard youth are “seen, heard and valued.” Moreover, three respondents noted that a youth-adult partnership is first and foremost a “relationship” between youth and adults. Other respondents noted themes including mutual support, youth empowerment and shared/mutual learning ad defining a youth-adult partnership.

Similar themes emerged from the responses of the coordinators and adult leaders when asked what an effective youth-adult partnership looks like. Nine adult respondents noted that mutual respect must be present in order for a youth-adult partnership to be successful. Five indicated that there must be a willingness to work together/have effective teamwork. Shared leadership (four responses) was another common theme, while shared decision-making, equal responsibility and understanding of common goals all were mentioned by three respondents. Other themes included: adult support, flexibility, mutual learning, shared values, time, commitment, trust, and communication. Table 11 provides a summary of the major themes generated by the EYSC coordinators and adult leaders. Several of these themes were identified in the literature as being essential to positive youth-adult relationships (i.e., adult support, decision-making, mutual learning, mutual
respect, and youth responsibility). Because of the acknowledgment in previous empirical studies and due to the coordinators’ and adult leaders’ repetition in noting these themes as critical characteristics, the researcher used these themes (i.e., adult support, decision-making, mutual learning, mutual respect, and youth responsibility) to categorize the responses of interviewed participants and as constructs to measure youth and adults ratings of their experiences.

Table 11

Summary of Major Themes Generated by EYSC Coordinators and Adult Leaders in Describing Youth-Adult Partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A youth-adult partnership is defined as having:</th>
<th>An effective youth-adult partnership reflects:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Mutual respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal decision-making</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal responsibility</td>
<td>Shared responsibility/leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual respect</td>
<td>Equal decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A relationship</td>
<td>Adult support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual learning</td>
<td>Mutual learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual support</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth empowerment</td>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication between youth and adults</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To help in identifying youth-adult partnerships and other forms of youth-adult relationships, the researcher utilized the *Continuum of Youth-Adult Relationships* that portrayed a range of relationships in which a group could identify. The continuum consisted of the following types of relationships: Adult-Centered Leadership, Adult-Led Collaboration, Youth-Adult Partnership, Youth-Led Collaboration and, Youth-Centered
Leadership. The EYSC coordinators and the adult leaders were to choose which type of relationship existed among their groups.

Table 12 lists the groups by state/location and how they were classified along the Continuum. This information was pertinent to the study, for the researcher used these classifications to make comparisons between the groups (cases). The mean score, located in parentheses, notes how they ranked on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being an Adult-Centered Leadership and 5 being a Youth-Centered Leadership. However, all groups were categorized by the coordinators and adult leaders into three relationships: 2 = Adult-Led Collaboration; 3 = Youth-Adult Partnership; and 4 = Youth-Led Collaboration. Since the purpose of the groups was to encourage youth and adults to work together, it was predicted that all of these groups would reflect some level of youth-adult partnering.

Table 12

Classification of Youth-Adult Groups (Mean Rating)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult-Led Collaboration (2)</th>
<th>Youth-Adult Partnership (3)</th>
<th>Youth-Led Collaboration (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camden, NJ (2.3)</td>
<td>Berkshire County, MA (2.7)</td>
<td>Kent County, DE (4.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape May County, NJ (2.3)</td>
<td>Mifflin County, PA (3.1)</td>
<td>Monroe County, NY (4.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia, PA (2.3)</td>
<td>Oxford County, ME (2.8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New London County, CT (2.3)</td>
<td>Strafford County, NH (2.7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orleans County, VT (2.7)*</td>
<td>Wirt County, W. VA (3.0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Although the mean score for Vermont is at the “youth-adult partnership” range of “3,” the coordinator indicated that the group was an adult-led collaboration. This may be due to the fact that the adult in the group was in the process of getting more youth and adults involved, but no progress had been made at the time of data collection for this study.

The groups ranged in size from two members (i.e., one youth, one adult) to 32 members (i.e., 12 youth, 20 adults). One group (Cape May County, NJ Youth-Adult
Group) only had one adult member and no youth members at the time this study began. The rating scale from the one adult member was included as a source of data, with the expectation that more rating scales would be received from the group. However, no additional rating scales were received; therefore, the group was not considered for further analyses.

**Group Activities**

The groups’ activities varied greatly. Most focused on local issues that aimed to improve community situations. For example, some of the projects that were indicated by the groups included: Getting campgrounds ready for the county fair/raising money for camp supplies (West Virginia); character building and violence prevention (Maine); environmental awareness/cleaning up local parks (New York); and planning a day-long youth-adult partnership training at 4-H camp (Vermont).

**Question 1: What are the perceptions of youth and adults toward their involvement and interaction when working together on community projects?**

Participants responded to a series of 38 items concerning their perceptions toward their experiences working together as a group. This study included three constructs: (1) level of youth involvement within a group; (2) level of adult involvement within a group; and (3) level of youth-adult interaction within a group. Each of the 38 items on the instrument was measured on a semantic differential scale, using bipolar statements, ranging from 1 to 10. Thirteen items related to youth involvement, eight items focused on adult involvement, and 17 items related to youth-adult interaction among a group.
A confirmatory factor analysis was used in order to determine if there was a goodness of fit for the items for the specified constructs created by the researcher. The researcher was aware that the sample size of this study was much smaller than recommended for this form of multivariate analysis. General guidelines have ranged from a minimum of 100 participants for less than 10 variables/items to 10 participants per item (Kachigan, 1986). However, this analysis was employed for two reasons: the exploratory nature of this study and the basic purpose of confirmatory factor analysis seemed to deem this analysis appropriate. The basic purpose of confirmatory factor analysis is to discover which items correlated with one another (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001) under the researcher’s predetermined constructs (factors). Each of the three constructs was named prior to the confirmatory factor analysis. Those items that were related to youth involvement, adult involvement and youth-adult interaction, respectively, were entered into three separate confirmatory factor analyses to determine whether the statistical models would be similar to the researcher’s grouping of the items. Table 13 includes the list of items organized by constructs. These items were used on the Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale.
Table 13

List of Items Used in Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model for Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Involvement</td>
<td>1. Youth take lots/little initiative in working on projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Youth are sitting around with nothing to do/busy with several tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Youth arrive to meetings late/on time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Youth are given little/major responsibilities for specific tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Youth rely on themselves/adults to make key decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Youth have full access/very little access to information for making decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Youth never/always have the opportunity to discuss their concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Youth frequently/rarely share ideas about things that matter to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Youth do/do not have an equal vote in the decision-making process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Youth do/do not help one another in developing new skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Youth are/are not fully committed to their duties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Youth are very excited/have little interest about their involvement with this project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. Youth are/are not concerned with community change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Involvement*</td>
<td>14. Adults display a willingness to accept and nurture/control youth leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. Adults always/never listen to the suggestions of youth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. Adults never/always take over everything when working on projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17. Adults learn/do not learn new skills from one another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18. Adults never/always take the ideas of youth seriously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19. Adults do/do not encourage youth to come up with their own ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20. Adults have little interest/are very excited about their involvement with this project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21. Adults are/are not very concerned with community change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth-Adult Interaction</td>
<td>22. Youth and adults get along well together/argue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23. Youth appear comfortable/uneasy and intimidated by adults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25. Adults do not consult/actively consult with youth on project activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26. Adults do/do not provide direction and mentoring for youth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27. Youth always/never go along with the decisions of adults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28. Youth and adults often/rarely agree on most decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29. Youth rely on adults’ experiences/their own experiences when making decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30. Youth and adults work separately/together on project tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31. Youth and adults indicate little learning/mutual learning from one another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32. Youth and adults rarely/frequently help one another develop new skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33. Adults are very/not at all considerate of youth opinions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34. Youth are not/very considerate of adult opinions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35. Youth and adults always/never engage in respectful conversations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36. Youth do/do not trust adults to handle power responsibly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37. Adults trust/do not trust youth to handle power responsibly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38. There is a low/high youth to adult ratio.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *Initially, the construct “adult involvement” contained nine items. However, the confirmatory factor analysis revealed a negative variable. As a result, the item, “Adults tend to be followers/want to guide youth” was removed from the analysis.*
The eigenvalues of each construct utilized a maximum likelihood solution for interpretation. This extraction estimated values of factor loadings that maximized the probable likelihood of yielding a sample that correlates between the variables (items) and the constructs (Harman, 1960; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The factor matrix, shown in Table 14, displays the means, standard deviations, communality, factor loadings, eigenvalues, and variance percentages of each item. The communality reflects the sum of the variance of a particular variable or rating scale item, thus indicating the degree to which each item is related or unrelated to the others. The factor loadings are the correlations between the values of an item and the combination of all items that make up the given construct. The eigenvalues in the tables below indicate that the constructs account for as much variance in the data as would 4.69 variables (re: Table 14) on average. Lastly, the variance and cumulative variance explained is the total variance that is explained by all of the items that make up the construct.
Table 14

Final Statistics of Maximum Likelihood Solution for Items Selected for Youth Involvement Construct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Communality</th>
<th>Factor Loadings</th>
<th>Eigen Value</th>
<th>% Var. Explained</th>
<th>Cum. Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V1</td>
<td>6.96</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>.274</td>
<td>.524</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2</td>
<td>6.63</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>.355</td>
<td>.596</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>.245</td>
<td>.495</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4</td>
<td>6.53</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>.440</td>
<td>.663</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5</td>
<td>6.52</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>.203</td>
<td>.451</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V6</td>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>.347</td>
<td>.589</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V7</td>
<td>7.05</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>.302</td>
<td>.550</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V8</td>
<td>7.91</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>.246</td>
<td>.496</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V9</td>
<td>6.71</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>.326</td>
<td>.571</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V10</td>
<td>7.41</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>.130</td>
<td>.360</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V11</td>
<td>6.89</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>.167</td>
<td>.408</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V12</td>
<td>7.73</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>.246</td>
<td>.496</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V13</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>.312</td>
<td>.558</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Chi Square p < .001. For items v1-v13, see table 13.

A confirmatory factor analysis model was used to compare the researcher’s grouping of the items for the construct “youth involvement” with the factor loadings of the statistical model (see Table 14). The goodness of fit test revealed a significant Chi Square value (p < .001). This indicated a discrepancy between the construct (youth involvement) organized by the researcher and the loadings based on the confirmatory factor analysis model. However, the 13 items selected to confirm the construct explained 28% of the total variance. All items had loadings that were approaching or greater than .4, thus indicating strong correlations and a level of representativeness of the construct (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Together, these items also resulted in a reliability coefficient of .83.
A second confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to determine the level of consistency between the researcher’s categorization of the eight items for the construct “adult involvement” as compared to the statistical model. The goodness of fit test indicated a significant Chi Square value (p < .001). This indicated a discrepancy between the construct (adult involvement) items selected by the researcher and the loadings based on the confirmatory factor analysis model (see Table 15). Initially, nine items were used in the model. However, one item, “Adults tend to be followers/want to guide youth,” did not fit with the other items, as it was a negative variable in the model. Therefore, the researcher omitted the item from the analysis. The eight items selected to confirm the construct explained 42% of the total variance, with a reliability coefficient of .84.

Table 15

Final Statistics of Maximum Likelihood Solution for Items Selected for Adult Involvement Construct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Communality</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
<th>Eigen Value</th>
<th>% Var. Explained</th>
<th>Cum. Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V14</td>
<td>7.70</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>.391</td>
<td>.627</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V15</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>.747</td>
<td>.865</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V16</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>.431</td>
<td>.659</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V17</td>
<td>7.92</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>.354</td>
<td>.595</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V18</td>
<td>6.86</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>.403</td>
<td>.632</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V19</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>.534</td>
<td>.731</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V20</td>
<td>7.63</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>.378</td>
<td>.612</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V21</td>
<td>8.02</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.363</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Chi-Square p < .001. For items 14-21, see table 13.

A third confirmatory analysis model was conducted to determine the level of consistency between the researcher’s categorization of the items for the construct “youth-
adult interaction” as compared to the statistical model. The goodness of fit test yielded a significant Chi-Square value (p < .001), thus indicating a discrepancy between the researcher’s selected items for the construct and the statistical model. However, the 17 items explained 33% of the total variance (see Table 16). Together, the items resulted in a reliability coefficient of .87.

Table 16
Final Statistics of Maximum Likelihood Solution for Items Selected for Youth-Adult Interaction Construct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Communality</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
<th>Eigen Value</th>
<th>% Var. Explained</th>
<th>Cum. Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V23</td>
<td>8.01</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>.389</td>
<td>.624</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V24</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>.428</td>
<td>.654</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V25</td>
<td>8.04</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>.400</td>
<td>.632</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V26</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>.403</td>
<td>.635</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V27</td>
<td>8.06</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>.340</td>
<td>.583</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V28</td>
<td>6.49</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V29</td>
<td>6.92</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>.407</td>
<td>.638</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V30</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>.200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V31</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>.325</td>
<td>.570</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V32</td>
<td>7.66</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>.506</td>
<td>.711</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V33</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>.336</td>
<td>.580</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V34</td>
<td>7.68</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>.412</td>
<td>.642</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V35</td>
<td>7.16</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>.431</td>
<td>.657</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V36</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>.446</td>
<td>.668</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V37</td>
<td>7.31</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>.353</td>
<td>.594</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V38</td>
<td>6.28</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>.435</td>
<td>.661</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V39</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Chi-Square p < .001. For items 23-39, see table 13.

Mean scores were computed for each of the three constructs, thus creating a separate index variable for youth involvement, adult involvement, and youth-adult
interaction. A t-test was used to determine significant differences in perceptions of the three constructs between female and male and youth and adults participants.

As shown in Table 17, both female and male participants had positive perceptions of the level of youth involvement in their groups. However, there is a statistically significant difference between males and female participants. Females were significantly more positive than males in terms of their rating of youth involvement (mean of 7.38 and 6.53, respectively) and adult involvement as well (mean of 7.77 and 6.96, respectively). Moreover, female participants were significantly different from male participants in their perceptions of youth-adult interaction among their groups (7.14 and 6.50, respectively).

Table 17
Youth Involvement, Adult Involvement, and Youth-Adult Interaction as Perceived by Female and Male Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>7.38</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>.006**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6.53</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>7.77</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>.022*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6.96</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth-Adult Interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>7.14</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>.038*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * = p < .05; ** = p < .01 Scale ranged from 1-10.
In addition to the above comparisons, t-tests were computed to determine significant differences between youth and adult participants. Regardless of whether they were youth or adults, all participants were positive towards youth involvement, adult involvement, and youth-adult interaction. No statistical significance between youth and adults on any of the three constructs was found. However, the mean scores indicate that adults had a tendency to be more positive on all three constructs than the youth participants (see Table 18).

Table 18
Youth Involvement, Adult Involvement, and Youth-Adult Interaction as Perceived by Youth and Adult Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>7.01</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>.440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>7.24</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>7.28</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>89.21</td>
<td>.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>7.79</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth-Adult Interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6.76</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>.126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>7.19</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1-10.

An analysis of variance was employed to determine if statistically significant differences existed between participants by ethnicity and their perceptions of youth involvement, adult involvement and youth-adult interaction. The one-way analysis of
variance indicated no significant differences between African Americans, Whites/European American and Other participants (i.e., Asian-Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans and Others). However, although all participants had positive perceptions, Whites had a tendency to have more positive perceptions toward all three constructs (see Table 19).

Table 19
Youth Involvement, Adult Involvement, and Youth-Adult Interaction as Perceived by African American, White/European American, and Other Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>White/European American</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Involvement</td>
<td>6.76</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>7.31</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(29)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(45)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Involvement</td>
<td>7.40</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>7.61</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>7.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(32)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(49)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth-Adult Interaction</td>
<td>6.59</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>7.15</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>7.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(26)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(48)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1-10.

An analysis of variance was used to determine the relationship between the location of the groups (i.e., rural, n = 41; urban, n = 36; and suburban, n = 15) and the participants’ perceptions of youth involvement, adult involvement, and youth-adult interaction. The means of the groups are presented in Table 20. There was a significant difference between rural (7.50) and urban participants’ (6.67) perceptions of youth
involvement. Rural participants were more positive towards the level of youth involvement within their groups than the urban groups. All three groups were positive towards adult involvement and youth-adult interaction within their groups with no significant difference by location. Although not significant, there was an apparent difference in the rural participants’ (7.30) perceptions of youth-adult interaction as compared to the suburban (6.83) and urban groups (6.59) with rural participants being more positive.

Table 20
A Comparison of Rural, Suburban, and Urban Participants’ Perceptions toward Youth Involvement, Adult Involvement, and Youth-Adult Interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Suburban</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Involvement</td>
<td>7.50*</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>7.16</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>6.67*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(41)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Involvement</td>
<td>7.75</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>7.59</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>7.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(42)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(17)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth-Adult Interaction</td>
<td>7.30</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>6.83</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>6.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(44)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(13)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(36)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Scale ranged from 1-10. * Mean values were statistically significant only between rural and urban groups. ** p < .05.

An analysis of variance was used to determine any significant differences between participants’ perceptions based on their groups’ type of youth-adult relationship. The data were useful in determining if participants’ perceptions were influenced by the
type of relationship. Mean scores indicated that participants in youth-led collaborations had more positive perceptions of the level of youth involvement, adult involvement, and youth-adult interaction within their groups than participants in adult-led collaborations and youth-adult partnerships (see Table 21). A significant difference in perceptions towards youth involvement was found only between those participants in an adult-led collaboration (6.74) and those in youth-led collaborations (8.00).

Table 21

A Comparison of Participants’ Perceptions toward Youth Involvement, Adult Involvement and Youth-Adult Interaction based on Relationship Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>Adult-Led Collaboration</th>
<th>Youth-Adult Partnership</th>
<th>Youth-Led Collaboration</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Involvement</td>
<td>6.74*</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>7.34</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>8.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(50)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(27)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Involvement</td>
<td>7.42</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>7.43</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>8.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(53)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(29)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth-Adult Interaction</td>
<td>6.77</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>7.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(49)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(29)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. These relationship categories were based on the coordinators'/adult leaders’ classification of their groups. Scale ranged from 1-10. * Mean values were statistically significant only between individuals in adult-led and youth-led collaborations. ** \( p < .01 \).

An analysis of variance was used to determine whether there were differences in the perceptions of adults in the various types of relationships (i.e., adult-led collaboration, youth-adult partnership, and youth-led collaboration). These data were useful in
determining if different types of relationships influence adult perceptions. Significant differences were found between the perceptions of adults in youth-adult partnerships and adult-led collaborations (see Table 22). Adults in youth-adult partnerships had more positive perceptions of youth involvement (7.85) in their groups than adults in adult-led collaborations (6.64). Also, adults in youth-adult partnerships (7.69) had more positive perceptions of youth-adult interaction than those adults in adult-led collaborations (6.63).

Table 22
A Comparison of Adult Participants’ Perceptions toward Youth Involvement, Adult Involvement and Youth-Adult Interaction based on Adults’ Relationship Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>Adult-Led Collaboration</th>
<th>Youth-Adult Partnership</th>
<th>Youth-Led Collaboration</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Involvement</td>
<td>6.64* (23)</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>7.85* (15)</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>8.00 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Involvement</td>
<td>7.53 (26)</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>8.06 (16)</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>8.14 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth-Adult Interaction</td>
<td>6.63* (21)</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>7.69* (16)</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>7.84 (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Scale ranged from 1-10. * Mean values were statistically significant only between individuals in adult-led collaborations and youth-adult partnerships. ** p < .01.

An analysis of variance was also used to determine any statistically significant differences of those youth participants in each of the three relationships. Those youth participants in youth-led collaborations were notably more positive towards the level of youth involvement, adult involvement, and youth-adult interaction among their groups.
Although youth perceptions of youth involvement in adult-led collaborations (6.82) and youth-led collaborations (8.00) were approaching significance, no statistical significance was found among any of the groups (see Table 23).

Table 23

A Comparison of Youth Participants’ Perceptions toward Youth Involvement, Adult Involvement and Youth-Adult Interaction based on Youth Relationship Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>Adult-Led Collaboration</th>
<th>Youth-Adult Partnership</th>
<th>Youth-Led Collaboration</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Involvement</td>
<td>6.82 (27)</td>
<td>6.71 (12)</td>
<td>8.00 (9)</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>3.17 .052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Involvement</td>
<td>7.31 (27)</td>
<td>6.65 (13)</td>
<td>8.00 (10)</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>1.56 .222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth-Adult Interaction</td>
<td>6.88 (28)</td>
<td>6.14 (13)</td>
<td>7.31 (9)</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>2.00 .146</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Scale ranged from 1-10. No mean values were statistically significant. p > .05.

Description of Groups Observed for In-depth Analyses

This section of the results provides detailed information on the youth involvement, adult involvement and youth adult interaction existing among the four groups (cases) selected for in-depth analyses. The findings presented are a result of the observations and interviews with youth and adult participants conducted by the researcher. The description of the groups provides information on the dynamics that
existed among the various types of relationships and the researcher’s observations of the affect on participants.

Just as the EYSC coordinators and adult leaders completed a Group Activity Rating Scale to select a type of relationship along the Continuum to describe a particular group, the researcher also classified each of the four groups that were selected for observation and to examine whether administrators viewed those youth-adult relationships the same (as the researcher). After the final visit to each group, the researcher completed a Group Activity Rating Scale and calculated a mean score for all nine items on the rating scale. This was conducted to determine if there was consistency between the mean of all nine items and the relationship categories (numbered and coordinated with the five-point scale that consisted of nine items) that the researcher had selected for the four groups. The number assignment was as follows: 1 = Adult-Centered Leadership; 2 = Adult-Led Collaboration; 3 = Youth-Adult Partnership; 4 = Youth-Led Collaboration; and 5 = Youth-Centered Leadership. All four of the researcher’s group categorizations corresponded with the mean score that was calculated from the nine items on the scale. Table 24 presents the researcher’s rating mean score and categorization of the four groups selected for in-depth analyses. The researcher’s categorization is compared to the coordinators’ and adult leaders’ classification.
Table 24

Comparison of Coordinators’/Adult Leaders’ and Researcher’s Classification of Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Rater</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>Rating/Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camden, NJ</td>
<td>Adult Leader</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2 = Adult-Led Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2 = Adult-Led Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent Co., DE</td>
<td>EYSC Coordinator</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4 = Youth-Led Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4 = Youth-Led Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
<td>Adult Leader</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3 = Youth-Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2 = Adult-Led Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mifflin Co., PA</td>
<td>Adult Leader</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3 = Youth-Adult Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2 = Adult-Led Collaboration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The Camden, NJ and Philadelphia, PA groups were not a part of the EYSC project; therefore, these groups were rated by the adult leaders and not EYSC coordinators. The Delaware and Lewistown, PA groups were rated by EYSC Coordinators.

Table 24 indicates that the researcher, upon observing the groups and interviewing participants, was found to be in agreement with the Camden group’s adult leader and the Delaware group’s EYSC coordinator. There was an observable camaraderie among the Camden youth and adults. Youth voice was valued and solicited by adults and adult support was relied heavily upon by the youth. Although youth participation was prevalent, adults held control of most major decisions, thus causing the researcher to classify this group as an adult-led collaboration.

The young people in the Delaware group were clearly in charge of their project. The adults had little involvement once the meeting began. The youth carried out a project for elementary students that they designed and implemented. They also set up the
meeting space by presenting the purpose and objectives of their project to the school administrative office. Because of the level of initiative that the youth presented in making their project successful and in witnessing the low level of involvement required by the adult volunteers, the researcher rated this group in agreement with the coordinator as a Youth-Led Collaboration.

The researcher was in disagreement with the ratings of the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania adult leader and the Mifflin County, Pennsylvania EYSC coordinator. Within the Philadelphia group, the youth were passive and adults were challenged to get them to speak up most of the time. With a mean of 2.8, the adult leader indicated that fairly equal decision-making and utilization of skills took place. However, because the youth did not seem to be ready for this responsibility and were involved at a relatively low level overall, the researcher rated the group lower than the adult leader. As the definition for youth-adult partnerships implies, there is potential for equality, but the balance between decision-making among this group had not been achieved. Although adults far outweighed the youth based on numbers, the adults did make attempts during the meetings to solicit youth voice. Those adults that worked directly with the youth who were on the youth council were also very supportive and eager to motivate youth, thus indicating high levels of adult involvement. Thus, the researcher classified the group as an adult-led collaboration.

The researcher also differed with the Mifflin County, Pennsylvania EYSC coordinator’s rating of the group. This group had a project that was generated entirely by two young people. They conceived of the project idea and worked closely with adults to get the process going. Given this information, the researcher perceived the group to be a
youth-led collaboration at one point in time. However, as the time progressed, the youth leadership was not as prevalent. The two young people involved were to recruit more youth, but found it difficult to compete with other activities at the local high school. Most of the youth they attempted to recruit were either committed to other activities or were not interested. On the other hand, the adult numbers continued to grow. By the time the researcher began making observations, there was only one youth involved, along with eight adults. It was very difficult to accept the EYSC coordinator’s rating, which reflected that one youth can be in equal partnership with a group of adults. Although the young person was very vocal and took an ample amount of leadership in the project, this relationship clearly mirrored an adult-led collaboration. Adult support and involvement were high and the youth was given ownership of the project. However, it was obvious to the researcher that adult power was preeminent over youth power.

Also, the researcher ran a spearman correlation on the items to determine if there was a correlation between the researcher’s rating/categorization of the four groups and the coordinator’s/adult leader’s ratings and categorization of the four groups. The coordinators’ and adult leaders’ mean score of the nine items from the Group Activity Rating Scale were compared to the mean scores of the researcher. Three of the four groups had correlations of .70 or higher, thus indicating high correlations and strong agreement between the Coordinator’s/adult leader’s categorizations of their groups and the mean scores of the researcher (see bolded correlations in Table 25).
Table 25

Correlations between Coordinators’/Adult Leaders’ and the Researcher’s Ratings of Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camden, NJ</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent Co., DE</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mifflin Co., PA</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden, NJ (R)</td>
<td>.76*</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent Co., DE (R)</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.82*</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mifflin Co., PA (R)</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.86*</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia, PA (R)</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N=5. R= researcher’s mean score rating. * = p < .05.

The researcher rated the level of youth involvement, adult involvement and youth-adult interaction among each of the groups in the case study analyses. Table 26 provides a matrix that indicates the groups’ classifications based on the researcher’s observations of youth involvement, adult involvement and youth-adult interaction.
Table 26

Level of Youth Involvement, Adult Involvement, and Youth-Adult Interaction among
Four Groups Selected for In-Depth Analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Youth Involvement</th>
<th>Adult Involvement</th>
<th>Youth-Adult Interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camden, NJ</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent Co., DE</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mifflin Co., PA</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher had hypothesized the following:

1. Adult-Centered Leadership consists of high levels of adult involvement, low youth involvement and low youth-adult interaction.
2. Adult-Led Collaborations consist of high levels of adult involvement, low youth involvement, and high youth-adult interaction.
3. Youth-Adult Partnerships consist of high levels of youth involvement, high levels of adult involvement, and high levels of youth-adult interaction.
4. Youth-Led Collaborations consist of high levels of youth involvement, low adult involvement, and high youth-adult interaction.
5. Youth-Centered Leadership consists of high levels of youth involvement, low levels of adult involvement, and low levels of youth-adult interaction.
However, the researcher observed groups that varied as far as the level of youth-adult interaction. Although high youth involvement defines a youth-driven relationship and high adult involvement defines adult-driven relationships, youth-adult interaction can exist in any type of relationship at various levels. For example, the groups in this study demonstrated high and low youth-adult interaction at times. In the Adult-Led Collaborations witnessed by the researcher, youth-adult interaction, where both parties were working closely together to complete tasks, was low until adults assigned youth duties. Once adults provided guidance, youth-adult interaction was more customary. Within the Youth-Led Collaboration, youth took a lot of initiative in completing their responsibilities, while adults worked together to make sure youth had everything they needed for their projects. In this case, interaction between the two was low, but when the project activities commenced, youth and adults had higher levels of interaction. Other factors attributing to varying levels of youth-adult interaction may include, but not be limited to: youth readiness for this level of responsibility, adults’ willingness to share power, and participants’ interest/commitment to the project. These qualities are naturally elevated among a genuine youth-adult partnership, where a consistently high level of youth-adult interaction is permitted to thrive.

Question 2: What is the experience like for youth and adults participating in various youth-adult relationships at the community level?

The purpose of the following section is to provide insight on the group dynamics that occurred during the researcher’s observations. These in-depth descriptions provide a more comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of various youth-adult
relationships. Furthermore, themes that emerged were based on the observations of youth involvement, adult involvement and youth-adult interaction. As noted earlier, four groups (Camden, NJ; Philadelphia, PA; Kent County, DE; Mifflin County, PA) were selected for four reasons: (1) the groups were in close proximity to Penn State University; (2) the groups appeared to be making significant progress with their community projects as indicated by EYSC coordinators and adult leaders; (3) these groups were the largest, making up 66% of the sample, and; (4) these were the most diverse groups within the overall sample. These groups are described in detail in the following case study section.

**Case Study I: Camden Youth-Adult Group - Camden, New Jersey**

The Camden Youth-Adult Group was established to provide a healthy, non-violent environment for young people to receive quality educational experiences resulting in spiritual, mental and social development. The aim of the Camden group is to empower local citizens, particularly youth, to address community issues such as decent housing, safe and clean neighborhoods, structured recreation and economic development as a means to improve the quality of life for Camden residents.

Camden is often discussed as the “tale of three cities,” namely referring to the downtown area, the waterfront, and the residential area. The researcher was able to observe the distinct differences of the three areas. The downtown area, like most cities, is experiencing levels of gentrification. The Camden group’s headquarters is located downtown next to Rutgers University-Camden. The waterfront area is under plans for renovation into condominiums, shopping, and restaurants. The third area of Camden city is the residential areas, which reflect extreme poverty. As noted by the youth leader, the
city is 90% minority (i.e., Black and Hispanic), with over one-third of the youth living below the poverty level. Because of extreme poverty there have been several community mobilization initiatives, such as the one set forth by the Camden group.

The group initially began as an initiative under the auspices of the Camden County Juvenile Resource Center, Incorporated. The group is comprised of several workgroups that explore ways of addressing the following community issues: family management problems, extreme economic deprivations, and poor academic achievement among youth. What began as a program where adults work to improve the lives of youth and their families has now grown into an entity that organizes youth to work with a core group of adults at the Juvenile Resource Center. The adult member of the team decided to give young people in the community an opportunity to assist in making Camden a better place to live, learn, and work. He felt that it was more productive to adopt a youth-adult partnership model, thus allowing the youth to help solve some of the perils that face their families and peers by giving them a role in the decision-making process. In early 2003, youth who were identified as having leadership potential and a concern for their community were recruited from local middle and high schools and other community organizations. Adults (i.e., teachers and youth service providers) were to nominate youth who would serve as viable members of the group. Currently, the group has a youth council consisting of 20-25 young people and 3-5 adults, with expectations of more youth and adult volunteers to join the group throughout the year.

The Camden group has big dreams of making a difference in their community in a major way. However, it will take time to reach the level of impact that they desire. The group assembled as a part of the New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission to give youth
the opportunity to make a difference by being a part of the issues that affect youth and their peers. Initially, youth’s roles were not clearly defined, but during the later part of 2003, their roles began to take shape. The adults are providing opportunities for youth to be key decision-makers in the community. For example, one major project observed by the researcher was “Christmas in April,” where the youth and adults visited seniors in a residential (low-income) home. The group delivered $2,000 worth of gifts to the men and women living at the facility. Thirty youth and five adults were involved. For the Christmas in April event, the youth came up with the idea of this service project to demonstrate a sense of community connectedness. One youth said that this was an opportunity to “put a smile on someone’s face.” Another youth said, “We considered giving toys to youth in the community, but youth may not have liked the toys that we gave them. We wanted to give gifts that would matter….so we decided to give the older folks something.”

The event went well; however, it was not without some challenges. At first, the young people were standing around as if they didn’t know where to get started. The adults guided the youth by letting them know what needed to get done. After the adults set the tone, the youth became more engaged. Yet, there were still times when the youth seemed stalled at what to do next. Even the president of the youth council seemed confused. This clearly frustrated one of the adults, who was offering suggestions while trying to make every attempt not to take over. He asked the youth president to say a few words on behalf of the group, but she was uncomfortable doing so. The adult was obviously disappointed in her actions and walked away. This seemed to shame the youth and she finally bundled up the courage to give some very articulate remarks.
The researcher identified this group as an adult-led collaboration because of the young people and their dependency on the adults. Although the president is very active in her community and is committed to the group’s mission, she often appeared hesitant in taking charge of the meetings even though it was observed on numerous occasions that she was perturbed by those that were not focused on the meeting agenda. During an interview she expressed what annoyed her:

“When I am holding the meeting as the leader and I constantly have to tell them to get settled and do something and they don’t give me the respect….because you are a youth. When the adults go out of the room, the youth get ‘rowdy’.”

The researcher attended four of the Camden group’s meetings. At each meeting, the adult leader had a major role in guiding the agenda along. There were even times when he interrupted the presiding officer, as if he was fearful that she was not going to address all of the important points. Although he wanted the youth to take more leadership, as he verbally emphasized to the researcher on several occasions, he could see that his assistance was very much needed.

Youth seemed to get along with the adults and the other youth in their group. However, at one event (i.e., Christmas in April) another youth group that had not been a part of the original Camden group came to assist with the event. The Camden group was hesitant to mingle with the other youth group. They seemed to be territorial over “their” project and were used to working with the youth involved in their group. The other group of youth stayed to themselves the entire time. At a later meeting, when the Camden group discussed participating in a team building activity (i.e., ropes/challenge course) with the other youth group, several youth noted that the other group of youth were not “reliable,” because most of the youth in that group had been “in trouble over and over again.”
Another youth spoke up saying that even these young people deserve a chance to at least participate. While the youth discussed issues on both sides of the argument, the adults allowed them to continue their dialogue. Eventually, the youth were able to come to a consensus of partaking in the activity without the other youth group. They realized that they needed to strengthen the bond among themselves before working with another group.

As indicated by the three youth interviews, levels of youth involvement and responsibility were clearly not at maximum levels. A common theme among them was that some of the youth “do not take the work seriously.” Although the goal is for youth to become self-sufficient, the president and other youth members of the youth-adult team relied heavily on the guidance and decisions of the adults. There were rare occasions when the other youth officers (excluding the president) were present and punctual for meetings. On one occasion the researcher accompanied the adult leader as he went to pick up youth so that they could attend a meeting. Even though the adult leader provided a ride to the meetings and called them to let them know that he was on his way, some of the youth were still not ready when he arrived. Of all the youth involved in this group, the older females seemed to be the most engaged. Although the males were helpful during the service project and some were vocal during meetings, the executive board consisted of all females. The male youth did not appear to have any leadership roles (although the adult leader informed the researcher that a male served as the treasurer), but several male youth were very active during activities and displayed an interest in the project goals. In reference to this observation, one adult that was interviewed stated, “There are some
youth) that don’t speak up, but those that do, really feel like they are a part of the decision-making process”.

While the researcher did not witness an equal level of power-sharing or decision making, he did observe high levels of camaraderie and strong youth-adult relationships, essential traits of an adult-led collaboration. There was also a high level of adult involvement, even though there were only a few adult participants (three staff members and two volunteers, all of who work directly with the youth). One young adult (age 24), who was interviewed, had been a youth participant in a similar Camden organization several years prior. He obviously felt connected with the group, but more specifically with the youth, given his age. During the interview, he often made statements that associated him more so with the youth:

“I have the mindset of a youth, so I can identify with them. But I can also be mature and get them motivated to do things…I can mediate between the youth and adults and the older adults. I ask myself why I do this, but there is the passion that I can help out. It’s not always about me.”

He spoke about not being totally happy with the level of responsibility that he was receiving as a volunteer. During the interview, he stated, “I wants to be utilized fully.”

The adult leader is stern, with high expectations of the group, but he makes it a point to relate to them at all times. Although he is highly educated (holding a Ph.D.), his attire of choice is comparable to the clothes of the youth and he prefers talking with them using their vernacular at times. The adult leader appeared to be the driving force of the meetings, but the researcher was able to observe his willingness to allow the youth to make their own decisions on key issues that affected them (e.g., determining upcoming service projects and extracurricular activities). The youth were obviously fond of him and
felt comfortable in his presence. They were not intimidated by his power as the “adult-in-charge,” but they still showed him respect by calling him “Doctor” or “Doc.” All of these characteristics are indicative of a collaboration. However, with the flexibility of the adults and the potential of the youth, there is much room to expand the relationship to areas along the youth-adult relationship continuum that are more aligned with the group’s goals (i.e., youth-adult partnership and youth-led collaboration).

The Camden group had a talented assemblage of young people. It was obvious that they needed some time to adjust to their role as community decision-makers. The researcher spent more time with them than any other group he observed, and developed a closer connection to them compared to the other groups. The youth began to expect to see him at each meeting and during events, they made sure he was an active participant. Many of the youth never seemed to realize that the adults on the team really did value their opinions and wanted them to take a stand on issues. When the researcher would have conversations with the youth, they were all expressive, well-mannered, and passionate about community affairs. Thus, it was often surprising at times to witness them having no opinion on certain topics raised for discussion. This was true even for the group’s youth president, who had great potential, but noticeably sought out adult guidance. Her willingness to serve as president and being active in a host of other community organizations indicate that, although she was often hesitant to make decisions (as she indicated in her interview), she was willing to learn from experience what it takes to be a leader in her community. The researcher predicts that as this group continues to expand its mission and recruit youth and adults who are committed to making a difference, the Adult-Led Collaboration status will soon move in the direction of a
Youth-Adult Partnership or at least a more youth-driven initiative. Table 27 lists some of the strengths and weaknesses of the group members’ involvement and interaction as observed by the researcher.

Table 27

Strengths and Weaknesses of Camden Youth-Adult Group’s Level of Involvement and Interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult-Led Collaboration</td>
<td>Committed adults (staff, parents); Adults take time to mentor youth</td>
<td>Some youth members don’t seem as committed as others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth decisions strongly encouraged by adults</td>
<td>Excessive adult guidance during meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High levels of potential among youth</td>
<td>Low youth (17-25) to adult (3) ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Former youth participants continue on as adult volunteers</td>
<td>Youth seem to doubt their abilities to make decisions at times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Camaraderie among youth/adults</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequent youth-adult interaction during meetings</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Case Study II: Philadelphia Youth-Adult Group – West Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The Philadelphia youth-adult team was established in 1999 as a youth development initiative (YDI) to define outcome objectives specifically measuring program attendance, academic performance, skill building and behavior change among young people. This initiative emerged as a coalition of 11 different agencies and groups who work together in close collaboration to improve the lives of all youth in the community. Together the YDI offers a plethora of programs for neighborhood youth,
including: athletics, the arts, gardening, academics, mentoring, vocational/career explorations and social development. This initiative serves over 200 young people aged 9-14 years old.

The Neighborhood Council is the representative body of the YDI, consisting of youth and adults serving as employees or volunteers of one of the collaborating agencies. The council meets once a month to discuss program schedules, identify gaps in service and to determine what joint programs are needed for youth. Within the past year, the group worked to increase the levels of youth-adult partnerships among all of the agencies that were involved in the Initiative. One of its primary goals is to strengthen the Neighborhood Council by utilizing the voice of young people in the community to serve as decision makers.

The YDI also has a youth council, which serves as the leadership council for young people in the West Philadelphia community. This group represents youth leadership from organizations that are a part of the Youth Development Initiative. They also meet once a month to discuss common interests that pertain to young people in the community. Members of the group also serve on the Neighborhood Council to make sure the YDI’s mission to serve young people is kept at the forefront. The youth council is the component of the YDI that helps to ensure that young people have a role in community decision-making. The YDI works to involve the local youth in determining the needs of young people and their families in the neighborhood. The youth have worked on a number of projects, such as neighborhood cleanup, anti-drug campaigns, and youth mapping.
The Philadelphia youth-adult team is in the very beginning stages of strengthening its partnering efforts. When the researcher presented the objectives of this study to the group’s steering committee, they noted that they were “just beginning their journey” and were committed wholeheartedly to incorporating youth participation. The Youth Development Initiative is the brainchild of one woman in the community who wanted to see to it that youth have a voice. She is well-connected and deeply rooted in the local neighborhoods. She founded similar organizations that serve over 1500 youth and families in West and North Philadelphia and the Harlem area of New York City.

The researcher observed the group during a total of four visits. All of the meetings resulted in adults being in full control, despite their efforts to engage the youth. There were two separate meetings observed during each of the researcher’s visits. The first meeting consisted of the officers of the youth council and adults that worked directly with this council. These meetings lasted for about an hour and then the youth and adults attended the Neighborhood Council meeting.

During each youth council meeting observed by the researcher, the youth seemed very shy and introverted. At the end of the first scheduled meeting, the researcher asked if this was because of his presence. The adults indicated that this was not the case and that the youth were always quiet. Due to the behavior of the youth, the researcher asked how these youth were chosen for participation on a council that appeared to require youth voice. The youth were nominated by teachers and other adults in the community. When interviewing three of the youth, they all indicated that they became involved because someone asked them. It was not apparent that they had a strong desire to make a difference, although this seemed to be the case among the adults that were interviewed.
When attending the much larger Neighborhood Council meeting, the youth were even more reserved. This was apparently an intimidating group for two to four youth (about the number of youth that would attend) who were sitting through roughly two hours of meeting time with anywhere from 20-30 outspoken adults. The climate obviously sent a message that the youth were being seen as tokens and of no real value. Although the adults frequently asked for ideas from the youth, it was hard for the researcher to see nothing more than tokenism at times. One youth, when interviewed, stated:

“I am not comfortable with the Neighborhood Council. It should be more youth. Adults make about 75% of the decisions. It should be half and half…more youth need to be involved.”

The researcher also made attempts to assess inadvertent perceptions that adults in the group had towards the youth. During a training, one exercise required youth and adults to organize themselves into groups. The groups were given two fictitious activities (e.g., going to an action movie that was R-rated and going out for pizza) and were asked to decide on the advantages and disadvantages of participating and/or not participating in the activities. One adult listed a disadvantage for an R-rated movie as being too “mature” for youth. Such a comment could very well have been interpreted by the youth as the adult seeing them as “immature.” The adult later noted that he was referring to the level of strong language and nudity in the movie. Another adult said that if they attended a PG-rated movie instead, it would be a younger crowd and would therefore be “loud.” This could be seen as a stereotype of youth. Another adult reported for his group, at times using slang that he assumingly felt the youth would consider cool or “hip.” During a youth council meeting, one youth expressed her feelings toward this behavior by saying,
“I think the adults are trying too hard to act and talk like youth. This is a way that stereotypes youth that is not always true.”

The level of youth involvement with the Philadelphia youth-adult team was at low levels. The young people often seemed disinterested in the trainings that were held to instruct youth and adults on how to best work together in communities. One reason may have been that they were intimidated by so many adults and so few youth/peers. The researcher has seen these types of trainings work more effectively when there is an equal amount of youth and adults or if the youth and adults are orientated to the youth-adult partnering concept separately before participating in a training together. There was also a significant age gap present. Most of the adults were older (roughly between the ages of 30-60), while the youth were young teens (ages 12-14). The president of the youth council, for instance, was 14 and a rising freshman. In interviewing her, it became apparent that she had never experienced anything that had given her a chance to openly share her opinions. She confirmed this during the interview by informing the researcher that this was her first time working as a partner with adults on a community project.

Youth were also asked if they had completed some tasks that were given the week prior; none of them had completed their assignments. After seeing this during the first meeting, the researcher immediately labeled this as a lack of youth taking on responsibility. However, after attending a second meeting, more information was presented that provided some insight on why youth may not be as eager to follow through or to express their opinions and thoughts. One reason may have been that youth did not believe their opinions would be taken seriously. As indicated, the adults were always asking youth about the things they would like to do. One adult even noted the following:
“In the past, the youth have made suggestions on activities…but some of these (activities) posed liability issues. Now it seems like they don’t really have an interest in making any suggestions.”

The researcher witnessed a situation where youth voice was minimized. Youth and adults were attempting to come up with potential activities for the months ahead. One adult suggested a game night, where young people from the community could come to a facility and play a number of popular games. The youth didn’t seem interested and rejected the idea. However, it was still added to the list of activities for later consideration.

High levels of adult involvement and support were evident among the group. Adult support was very much needed to help the youth make decisions and feel confident in their participation. The core group of adults, after working full-time jobs all day, would faithfully commit to three hours of making sure the youth had this opportunity. They were very patient with the young people and their often “silent” voice, but continued to encourage them. Some of the adults that were members of the Neighborhood Council did not work as closely with the youth as some others, but also seemed very dedicated to the programs in which they were involved. One adult said, “I try to make sure the youth feel respected. I feel that is very important. It goes back to my experiences as a youth. I was involved in situations where I didn’t feel important.” Another adult stated:

“I want to help children in some way. I had grandparents that were very much involved with me and taught me a better way of life. It’s not a monetary thing, but an uplifting experience that I get when I see a kid that wants to learn.”

Despite the support of community adults, one adult indicated that the support of the parents was not as strong. During the researcher’s first meeting, the youth council
president was summoned by her mother to come home immediately following the youth
council meeting, forcing her to forego the Neighborhood Council meeting. However,
during the last meeting attended, several parents were present with their children,
including the mother of the youth council president. All of the parents seemed attentive to
the benefits of the Youth Development Initiative and excited about the upcoming events.

The level of youth-adult interaction, based on the observations of the researcher,
was at a low level. A majority of the work seemed to be initiated by the adults with the
youth being followers of adult leadership. Most of the interaction consisted of adults
nurturing the youth, and very little partnering where equal decision-making, a strong
youth voice, and mutual learning occurred. One benefit, however, was to have these
young people involved in such an initiative at a young age (the youth on average were 13
years of age). As time progresses, their skills are likely to increase as well as their
confidence, perhaps making their full participation more evident. Table 28 lists the
strengths and weaknesses of involvement and interaction among the Philadelphia youth-
adult group.
Table 28

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Philadelphia Youth-Adult Group’s Levels of Involvement and Interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult-Led Collaboration</td>
<td>High levels of adult support</td>
<td>Low levels of youth enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth recognize importance of community obligation</td>
<td>Minimum youth voice and decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adults willing to guide youth</td>
<td>Youth do not seem to recognize what they can offer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training on youth-adult partnership demonstrated</td>
<td>Youth were not as engaged or interested in format of training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YDI’s commitment to developing youth leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adequate youth (4-5) to adult (6) ratio on youth council</td>
<td>Low youth (4-5) to adult (20-30) ratio on neighborhood council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case Study III: Delaware Youth-Adult Group – Kent County, Delaware

This group was not initially scheduled to participate in the in-depth analysis. The other group that was scheduled was unable to meet; therefore, the researcher selected the Delaware EYSC group as the alternate. By the time the visits were arranged, the group only had two meetings left before the program was to end for summer vacation.

Delaware’s youth-adult group participated in the EYSC youth-adult partnership training in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Upon leaving the training, the youth and adults returned home to form a team consisting of approximately 15-20 youth and 5 adults (including the county 4-H agent). The group decided on a local action plan that would provide after-school activities for elementary school youth. The youth decided to conduct the program at the local elementary schools that they attended, where they knew the administrators
and teachers personally. The youth conducted all of the program meetings, covering various topics that they felt comfortable teaching. For example, a few of the members had competed in 4-H contests (e.g., dairy judging, horticulture, speeches/demonstrations, and arts and crafts) and were very much capable of conducting sessions on these topics. The 4-H agent provided the supplies for the meetings, but had very little involvement in organizing the meetings and rarely presented anything to the audience. The youth members were in full control, working masterfully with the young audience. One youth responded by saying, “I like working with the kids. This is good practice for me to know if I really want to become a teacher after I go to college.”

The researcher was very impressed with the initiative taken by the youth to carry out the program, from beginning to end. During one visit, the youth were conducting a program on healthy activities (i.e., eating nutritious foods and exercising). They had a class prepared that concluded with a hands-on activity where the elementary students made nutritious snacks before going outside to play games. This was an indication that the youth had concerns about their peers in the community. They were also conducting a program that was helping to improve the health and wellness of children. One adult indicated the reason they chose this topic was because of the high rate of obesity among children. The program was also being used to expose the elementary students to 4-H that would hopefully aid recruiting efforts to get them involved as they become older. A youth reported the success of the program during the interview, “They (elementary students) are getting all the stuff we do in 4-H. We have had some of the kids to go to their communities and find clubs to join.” The youth took their tasks very seriously,
demonstrating a high level of youth involvement. At the second meeting attended by the researcher, the youth even had a lesson plan that was used to guide the plans for the class.

Adult support was very high, but the level of adult involvement was purposely kept to a minimum. The extension agent informed the researcher that he wanted to give the youth complete ownership of the project. He did make sure that all of the necessary items were available by bringing the materials for the activities to the meeting. During the meeting, most of his involvement, along with another adult volunteer, included taking pictures and helping to get things organized for the activities. One of the interviewed adults indicated that, by taking a step back, the adults are able to learn from the youth, “I love to see the kids interacting. I like to put them in an environment where they can learn and question things around them. The adults watch the kids and learn as much as they learn.”

At the second meeting, there was more adult involvement. The youth that was leading the lesson had been accompanied by his mother, a teacher. She took a “hands-on approach,” verbally assisting the youth whenever it seemed necessary. It was obvious that she had experience in teaching and the young person may have needed some guidance, but her level of involvement seemed to take over at times.

Youth-adult interaction was observed as being high during both of the meetings observed by the researcher. The youth seem to have control of their project, with the support of the adults. During the researcher’s observation of one meeting, the adults stood in the background, while three youth took turns carrying out the entire lesson. During another meeting, two youth conducted the 4-H meeting, followed by one of the youth teaching a lesson on radon. The youth teaching the lesson on radon was obviously
inexperienced at this, but managed to keep the lesson going. However, one adult (his mother) sensed his nervousness and would jump in to make suggestions or talk to the group frequently. Nevertheless, there seemed to be no tension between youth and adults. The 4-H agent informed the researcher that this group needed a little more direction than the other group that was previously observed.

There was much order in the room as the youth instructed the elementary students. The researcher, upon asking if the children were always so well-behaved, was informed that this was not always the case. A youth, as well as an adult, indicated that they told the elementary students that a person from Penn State was coming and they needed to be on their best behavior. One youth informed the researcher by saying, “This is a good week…it’s not always that they are nice and well-behaved.”

Nonetheless, the youth were very comfortable being in charge and the adults were comfortable taking a step back. Although the one parent felt compelled to help her son, the other adults were going around the room taking pictures, setting up for the activities and helping the elementary students with the activities. The youth instructors, their elementary participants, and the adults all seemed to be engaged in the projects.

Based on the researcher’s observations, this group was clearly a youth-led collaboration. There may even be some higher levels of partnering than what was displayed during the researcher’s visits. The activities were being funded by money received from the EYSC initiative. Adults obviously had to take care of the administrative responsibilities, while they freely gave youth the responsibility of creating, implementing, and assisting in the evaluation of the programs. However, as indicated by a youth and an adult that were interviewed, they knew the researcher was to arrive and
most likely had planned accordingly. It would have been more advantageous if the researcher was able to observe the group more that twice in order to establish the same level of comfort that was developed with the previously-mentioned groups. Being able to visit unannounced would have allowed the researcher to observe a more ecologically valid scenario and may have revealed other dynamics among the group. Table 29 presents the strengths and weaknesses of the group’s observed involvement and interaction.

Table 29
Strengths and Weaknesses of the Delaware Youth-Adult Group’s Levels of Involvement and Interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth-Led Collaboration</td>
<td>Youth taking full responsibility</td>
<td>Some youth appear to seek more guidance from adults than others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High levels of adult support</td>
<td>Some adults demonstrating a desire to take control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth utilizing community networks</td>
<td>Lower levels of youth-adult interaction during activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth have previous involvement in communities</td>
<td>Little interest in conducting activities outside of community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case Study IV: Pennsylvania Youth-Adult Group – Mifflin County, Pennsylvania

Mifflin County, Pennsylvania participated as part of the EYSC Initiative. Two youth and one adult attended the youth-adult partnership training in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania in the summer of 2003. Upon returning home, the youth decided to focus on cultural awareness as a community project, due to an influx of Hispanic immigrants into the area. There is also a growing population of Koreans in the area as well. One adult
provided insight on this situation, “I think there is resentment in the community because the unemployment is very high and a lot of other cultures are coming in and seen as taking the few jobs here, but these are jobs that no one else wants.”

Although one adult noted that most of the new residents are indeed honest residents, all of them have been stigmatized by many of the long-time inhabitants as undesirables (e.g., drug dealers). The youth in the group expressed an interest in promoting cultural awareness and to educate the community on how to celebrate the various cultures in the county. The group decided to host a cultural awareness day where people could be exposed to the foods, artwork, and clothing of other cultures. The group also helped organize the county Arts Festival to showcase arts and crafts from different cultures. One youth involved in this project expressed that “showing people that someone cares…to make people of different cultures aware that we want to help them….to feel more comfortable interacting with other cultures” was what motivated him to participate.

The researcher met the young person who was a part of this group during the youth-adult partnership training. He was very energetic and had a vibrant personality. Even before the end of the training, when the groups were to discuss what their action plans would be for their communities, this individual noted that he had a desire to learn more about Hispanic/Latino culture and wanted to do a project related to his interest. Noticing the bittersweet race relations in his home county, he worked with another young person to help promote cultural awareness as the local project. One adult also attended the training from the Mifflin group, and she was instrumental in getting more adults involved, while the youth was to recruit other young people from their high school. The adult was successful in getting adults already involved with Communities That Care to
participate in Mifflin EYSC Group. However, the two youth were never able to get more committed youth to join the group. One youth indicated his frustration with his recruitment efforts:

“I did as much as possible. I handed out brochures, talked to classes, got support from the Spanish teacher and still no youth! It’s hard getting youth involved because many say they don’t have time. Kids are deterred from interacting with non-English speakers because they don’t know how.”

Although the level of youth involvement was low due to only two youth (compared to seven adults) participating, the group’s approach to implementing an action plan was clearly youth-driven. Based on the researcher’s discussions with the group members, if it had not been for the work of the youth and their concern over the county’s race relations, the project would have never come into fruition. They conceived of the idea, rallied adult support and presented their ideas to local leaders and potential funders. Because of their initiative, the researcher initially viewed the group as a youth-led collaboration.

Adult support was high, being that so few youth were available to do a lot of the tasks. By the start of the researcher’s observations, the group had only one active youth involved who was not given too much responsibility because the adults did not want to overburden him. The other young person’s parents were going through a divorce and therefore, the project reasonably became less of a priority for him. The youth that remained, although he was the more motivated of the two youth, was also experiencing family problems and not able to be as flexible with his time as before. He reported to the group on one occasion that he had gotten into an argument with his father and (for some reason) he was not able to attend the county arts festival, an event he was instrumental in
planning. There were times when he was supposed to complete a task, but had not done so. The adults did not hesitate to fill in wherever they could.

The group also experienced administrative issues. The 4-H educator, who was the leader of the group, resigned from her position in the middle of the project, leaving the group without a chairperson. During the observations of one meeting, everyone stated that they did not have time to be the official chair, so two interim co-chairs (adults) were chosen. The youth was not considered as a co-chair. Before the meeting, he had spoken with one of the newly-chosen co-chairs stating that he would be moving away from his father and moving in with his mother, who lived on the West Coast. The researcher was unable to assess whether he would have been considered as a chair if he was not moving.

The group proved to be resilient, keeping the objectives of the project in focus by handling the administrative responsibilities and working to recruit more members. The adults were very supportive of the young person that was involved. Although he was the only youth present at the meetings, they made sure he had a say in the plans. On the other hand, they did not have to go out of their way to do so, for he was very outspoken and not afraid to make decisions for the group. In retrospect of his experiences with the group, the youth noted the following:

“I feel more confident and I now know what to say. I feel better carrying on a conversation with adults than youth! I can approach them easier now. I had very little interaction with adults before this project. The adults were impressed with what I was doing and that inspires me. The adults also made sure that emails were sent out on time to inform everyone of the meeting places and times. They also picked up materials for upcoming events.”

Youth-adult interaction was high from the researcher’s standpoint. Although only one youth was involved, he was much more engaged and outspoken compared to the
other youth observed on the other groups investigated in this study. He was very much aware of his obligation to his community and took the first step to address an issue that he saw as a problem. Most of the initial ideas of the group were generated by his ability to see what would be most effective in gathering support. One adult noted, “When he went before the CTC (Communities That Care) they were so impressed that they were more than willing to help us.” Another adult concluded during the interview, “I’ve learned that (the young person) has tremendous potential and I am glad we tapped into it.” With this level of youth responsibility and the support of caring adults, strong interactions made the group’s efforts more productive.

The EYSC coordinator categorized this group as a youth-adult partnership. The researcher, on the other hand, was in disagreement with this categorization because of the few youth that were involved. With only one youth member of a particular group, it is not viable to justify the group as a youth-adult partnership. Although the one youth who was involved was very vocal, he was overwhelmingly outnumbered by adults. In knowing this, the youth often gave in to their opinion and suggestions more than he probably would have if more youth were participating. With only one youth and seven adults, there is no possibility of equal levels of decision-making nor is there a balance of mutual teaching and learning. The group members often struggled with changing the name from a youth-adult partnership team to reflect something more accurate; they, too, did not believe they were a genuine youth-adult partnership. The researcher defined this group as an adult-led collaboration based on the number of adults involved and the level of decision making, utilization of skills, and mutual learning. Despite this classification, the
relationship encompassed a youth-driven approach that was highly recognizable. Table 30 lists the strengths and weaknesses of the group’s level of involvement and interaction.

**Table 30**

Strengths and Weaknesses of Pennsylvania Youth-Adult Group’s Levels of Involvement and Interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult-Centered Leadership</td>
<td>Project initiated by youth leadership</td>
<td>Few youth (two, then only one) participated; Difficulty in getting other youth to participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adults very supportive of the ideas of youth</td>
<td>Youth experienced family problems, thus limiting their level of involvement at times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adults and youth shared responsibilities</td>
<td>Youth eventually had to leave the group due to family situations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Experiences of Participants**

In order to assess the individual experiences of participants, semi-structured interviews were conducted to examine youth and adult perceptions toward their relationships. The interviews were conducted to better understand how youth and adults felt about working together in their communities. The responses of the participants were categorized into the same themes that were generated from the responses of the EYSC coordinators and adult leaders (i.e., when asked “What defines a Youth-Adult Partnership?”). Characteristics of youth-adult relationships from the literature were used
as themes, as well as those formed by the researcher. Those themes were: decision-making and youth voice, community obligation and mutual respect, mutual learning, adult support, responsibility and civility. These themes were also used as constructs to measure participants’ ratings of their experiences. The ratings of experiences were gathered from the *Youth Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale*. The interpretations of the interviews were based on direct responses to specific questions. Upon observing the groups and the interviewing of participants (i.e., nine youth and nine adults), the researcher categorized three of the groups as adult-led collaborations and one as a youth-led collaboration. This categorization was used in comparing the cases.

*Decision-Making and Youth Voice Themes.* In reference to levels of decision-making and youth voice, the participants were asked the following questions: Have you served in any roles where you were a key decision maker? How do you describe yourself as a decision-maker? Across all four groups, the youth consistently indicated that they held roles as key decision-makers at some point in their lives. Most indicated that they felt comfortable making decisions. This may be due in part to the fact that most youth had been involved in several organizations, serving in various capacities, such as: president of school clubs, director of the church youth choir, community advising committee, Do Something, 4-H teen volunteer, FFA treasurer, State Holstein Association member, neighborhood civic association member, current officers of neighborhood youth council, YMCA youth empowerment services, Communities That Care action team (voting member), Spanish club, and the yearbook staff. Seven youth had worked with adults on a community project prior to the current project, while this was the first time for two of the youth.
Adults also noted that they had been involved in numerous organizations prior to working on their current projects. All had previously worked with youth on community project, ranging in experience from two to 10 years. The adults had been involved in community youth programs either as a participant or volunteer ranging from 10 to 25 years. Previous experience could have served as a factor as to why these adults chose to partake in this type of community project.

All youth and adults engaged in these community projects seemed to have some experience in working together. Similar to the youth who were all involved in school activities and community organizations, the adult group members had worked with youth as partners in some capacity. They also had exposure to youth programs for several years. This indicated that the participants who were most likely to engage in community projects are those that had some prior experience in the area of community service.

When asked “How would you describe yourself as a decision-maker?” some of the youth and adult responses were:

**Camden Youth 1:** I like to get input from others, but I am very opinionated.

**Camden Youth 2:** I think too much, but when I make a decision, it is clear and planned out. I try to think ahead and when I do make a decision, it gets done.

**Camden Youth 3:** I like input from others. I will take criticism.

**Camden Adult 1:** I am a team player, but I am indecisive. I like to think things through

**Camden Adult 2:** I am there as a support person. I let the youth come up with their ideas.

**Philadelphia Youth 1:** I like making decisions because someone has to do it and I want to be the one to do it. A lot of youth are not able to.
Philadelphia Youth 2: I don’t know…I don’t like to make decisions. I like for others to make decisions for me.

Mifflin County Adult 1: It is hard for me to make a decision. I feel as though I will overstep my boundaries. If I believe in something I will speak my mind.

Kent County Adult 1: I am not the best leader in the world. I can make decisions, but I don’t feel comfortable with that. I want the kids to do for themselves.

There were varying levels of comfort when participants were asked what type of decision-maker they were. Most of the youth realized they had to utilize their voice if they were going to make a difference in their groups and their communities. Most were asked to participate in these groups because they were perceived as competent decision-makers. The adults in the groups seemed more hesitant to acknowledge their level of comfort with decision-making. Two adults of the interviewed adults (Camden Adult 1 and Delaware Adult 1) were under 25 years of age and had participated in similar types of groups as young people. However, at that time, the groups had not adopted a youth-adult partnering model. Therefore, this may have affected their confidence in their decision-making ability. On the other hand, both were very adamant about youth having a voice, which also reflects their understanding the importance of these youth having the opportunity that they did not have. Based on the responses of the participants, these statements were categorized under the themes “decision-making” and “youth voice.” Due to the fact that decision-making is vital to serving as a partner on a community project, the researcher deemed it important to have an understanding of the type of decision-makers best suited for certain youth-adult relationships.
Participants were asked the following question: What motivated you to want to get involved with this project? The responses are listed below:

**Philadelphia Youth:** I was in 6th grade and my student council representative introduced us to (the adult leader) when she came to our school. I started going to the meetings.

**Philadelphia Adult:** It is a more organic project. It comes from the people that are already working on their ideas. It is normally someone coming from the outside to tell the residents what to do. But here, they have their own project and it has the potential to be sustainable. The youth are young, but they are very sharp… I like that they really want to learn about their community.

**Kent County Adult:** I always wanted to be a teacher, but I never had an opportunity to go to college. I like dealing with kids…I always like to see them when they get it. The 4-H agent asked my daughter to run a program. They needed an adult leader and they drug me along. I like working with the kids…they are a pain, but they are fun to work with (laughter). I was not prepared for what the program was like, because I was not expecting them to get as intense with their project.

**Kent County Youth:** It makes me feel complete as a person to give back.

**Camden Youth:** I was asked if I wanted to join. What kept me involved was that the adults sit back and listened. They sat back and were open-minded. It felt odd at first, but I felt like, for once, the children were being heard!

*Community Obligation and Mutual Respect Theme.* Youth and adults gave various reasons for becoming more involved in their communities. A common response was that they were simply asked to participate. Others indicated that they felt a sense of
community connectedness and that they were making a difference. The youth in particular were motivated, because it gave them an opportunity to experience being young leaders with a voice in their community. Thus, community obligation was identified as a theme, based on these responses. The researcher noted during the interviews and observations that those participants who indicated a personal concern for their community seemed to have a higher level of interest in their project.

The following additional question was asked: How did you feel about working with youth/adults before and after participating in the partnership? Some of the participants’ responses of how they felt before participating in the project are listed below.

**Camden Youth 1:** Adults are much wiser and reliable sources.

**Camden Youth 2:** Nervous and anxious. I thought we were going to clash because adults and youth think differently.

**Philadelphia Youth 1:** I felt good. A lot of youth don’t get opportunities like this!

**Philadelphia Youth 2:** I didn’t think they would let us speak. I though they would leave us out.

**Kent County Youth:** I like it! When we talk to adults, they treat us like adults. The adults are very supportive.

**Camden Adult:** I always felt ok with working with youth. As a youth I was involved with adults this way.

**Kent County Adult:** I thought they (youth) were pretty smart. If you give them a chance they are amazing at how much they show you. It goes back to the way you were brought
up. My dad never made us feel like we were dumb kids. You have to bring it out of them and channel that energy.

**Mifflin County Adult**: I had some positive and negative experiences. I have worked with these young people before so I was familiar with them. Working with youth and adults, there are a few people doing all the work. Some kids I have worked with are very responsible and others do not follow through or show up. It’s not just youth…you find that in all populations.

Past experiences seemed to play a major part in the youth’s and adults’ perceptions. The majority of the youth indicated that they felt as though the adults would enforce their power and take over. The adults on the other hand noted other reasons. Some of the adults stated that they had opportunities to serve when they were younger and felt as though these youth could also be effective. Others noted that they had faced challenges in getting youth to be committed, but realized that it is important to target those youth (and adults) that are responsible. Of the 18 interviewed participants, all indicated that they would work with youth/adults on future projects. The researcher identified these responses as relative to the theme, “mutual respect.” This information is vital, for youth and adult experiences, whether positive or negative, can have a major impact on their future participation in similar projects. In attempting to assess whether their feelings changed toward working together after partnering together, some of the responses were:

**Lewistown Youth**: I now have more confidence. The adults assured me that I worked very hard. I can now express myself to them and I have learned to be convincing in my words.
Kent County Adult 1: I think it is a good experience. If you put your mind to it, everybody can work together. You have to realize that there are other people in the group and you have to compromise and make sure you hear everybody’s say and try to get everybody involved and make everybody’s views seen throughout what you decide.

Kent County Adult 2: I would have no problem with it. It was a good experience. You just need youth and adults that are reliable.

Philadelphia Youth: It’s ok…they let us speak and we run our meetings. But sometimes I still feel scared to talk in front of them.

*Mutual Learning Theme.* The researcher categorized the responses to the following question under the theme, “mutual learning”: what have you learned as a result of your involvement in the project? Youth noted that they had learned to speak up and be heard and how to deal with different personalities and age groups. Several youth indicated that the project was a good experience in getting them better prepared for dealing with difficult situations in the real world. They also informed the researcher that they had learned a lot about the problems in their city and that there is a need to address local issues. The younger adults stated that they had learned patience in working with youth and how to channel their energies. Others admitted to being able to more easily recognize that a lot of young people in their communities are underestimated and, if given the chance, are capable of being very effective leaders. Adults also reported that they learned how much they do have in common with the youth and that, when working together, both groups can amass the power to solve problems in order to perpetuate their communities. Based on previous literature (Camino, 2000), this data is relevant in
identifying an important characteristic of genuine Youth-Adult Partnerships – sharing of knowledge and skills, thus implying mutual teaching and learning among participants.

*Adult Support Theme.* Participants volunteered information on when and how adult support was rendered in various situations. Therefore, the researcher grouped these comments under the theme, “adult support.” Adults that were interviewed seemed to understand the vital role they served in being role models for the youth in their groups. All of the adults indicated a passion to work with youth. The youth recognized the importance of having adults that cared and were supportive. The youth also reported on incidents where they felt that adults were not being considerate of youth (e.g., adults not wanting to really be there to help out; not letting youth make their own decisions; and not allowing youth to feel like a part of the team). Nonetheless, more often than not, adult support was a recurring theme that surfaced as critical element in all of the groups.

*Responsibility and Civility Theme.* Participants provided information on the importance of having responsibility and youth and adults being cordial to one another. Negative perceptions and participants not getting along can institute a major barrier in youth and adults establishing strong relationships. In this regard, the researcher used the themes, “responsibility” and “civility” to categorize the responses to the following question: What should be done to improve the relationships between youth and adults? The responses of the youth and adults included:

**Philadelphia Youth:** Adults and youth should talk more…that would help.

**Philadelphia Adult:** I always believe there needs to be a safe place where people can dialogue around their experiences. A lot of underlying issues are what disconnect day to day living. There is this anxiety of protecting youth from day-to-day experiences, but
from the youth’s perspective, the adults don’t care how they feel. If they don’t sit down and talk, it’s not going to be solved. I think a lot of discussion is needed in this area.

**Kent County Youth 1**: We have to have a meeting to bring youth and adults together to work out strategies to come to agreements by working together.

**Kent County Youth 2**: There should be situations where we get to know each other. Let them have an opportunity to get to know everyone, then you are more comfortable together. Get familiar with each other so that you are more comfortable working on projects. If not, you won’t get anything done and there will be too much fighting on what ideas need to be done. When you have background information on everyone, you are better able to communicate your ideas.

**Camden Adult**: One of the biggest issues is that adults are not spending enough time…If you spend time with youth, you will know what’s going on in their lives and youth will also know what is going on in the adults’ lives and the rest of the community.

Nearly all respondents indicated that communication among youth and adults was a major issue that must be addressed in order to improve relationships. Local youth and adults, as noted by the responses, are not speaking the same language and now is the time for communities to bring youth and adults together. The participants seemed confident that similar projects, like the ones they were involved with, are helpful in getting youth and adults together to learn more about one another. This can also allow all parties to be more informed about the needs and issues affecting the community.

Youth and adult interview participants were asked the following question: “What advice would you give to others who are considering forming a group of youth and adults to work on a project in their community?” The responses were all encouraging, indicating
the importance of “not giving up,” “finding the right people for the project,” “taking a
team approach,” and practicing mutual forms of respect (e.g., listening, encouraging
feedback/ideas, and being accountable/responsible).

In attempts to compare the groups that were investigated more in-depth through
the qualitative methods, the researcher classified three of the groups as Adult-Led
Collaborations and one as a Youth-Led Collaboration. There were no major differences
in the responses of the youth and adults. The youth in all four groups noted the
importance of youth being able to make a difference through their participation and
adults agreed that youth can make a difference if given the chance. One group (an Adult-
Led Collaboration) consisted of younger teens that were not as vocal as the other groups.
However, all the other youth participants, despite being in an Adult-Led Collaboration or
a Youth-Led Collaboration, were very expressive in their feelings toward youth being
seen as full participants at the community level.

*What are the Critical Elements of Various types of Youth-Adult Relationships?*

The participants completed the *Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale* to
measure perceptions of their levels of youth involvement, adult involvement and youth-
adult interaction. The scale also utilized the 10-point scale to allow the students to rate
the quality of their relationships based on the following themes: adult support, civility,
community obligation, decision-making, mutual learning, mutual respect, youth
responsibility, and youth voice. Relationship quality was rated on a 10-point scale
ranging from: 1-2 (very poor); 3-4 (poor); 5-6 (fair); 7-8 (good); to 9-10 (excellent). The
39-item rating scale included bipolar statements to assess the participants’ ratings of their
experiences. Parallel forms were developed for youth and adult participants. Each theme was computed as a separate index, based on items of the *Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale*. The researcher calculated a mean score for each group’s overall rating of each theme identified as a critical element of youth-adult relationships.

All four of the groups’ participants rated their relationship experiences relatively high (primarily as “good”). The group that was classified as a Youth-Led Collaboration (Kent County, Delaware) by the coordinator was rated as having excellent civility among the group, meaning that youth and adults get along well together. This may be the case because a consistent, positive relationship had formed. The youth were long-time 4-Hers and have worked with the adults for several years. Participants of the Mifflin County, Pennsylvania group indicated that “excellent” levels of civility and community obligation existed. In this group, the youth envisioned an idea that was highly supported by the adults. The youth had also worked with the 4-H educator and some of the other adults that were involved for some time.

However, the two groups that were classified by the adult leaders as Adult-Led Collaborations (i.e., Camden, New Jersey and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) indicated that on two of the themes there were only “fair” ratings. For the Camden group, the level of youth responsibility was rated as fair possibly due in part by the number of youth agreeing that their peers often did not take the work of the group seriously. This was noted during the interviews of three youth participants. The Philadelphia group participants also rated decision-making as “fair.” The items used for this index were directed more so to youth and their role in decision-making. With the respondents of this group being predominately adults, this rating was clearly indicative of youth being rated
low on their decision-making skills. The researcher also concurred that the level of youth
decision-making was low.

The researcher also rated the relationships of these groups based on the
observations and interviewing of the participants. Table 31 presents the researcher’s
ratings as compared to the participants in each group.

Table 31
Researcher’s Ratings of Groups based on Observations and Interviews as Compared to
Group Participants’ Ratings

<table>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>Rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Support</td>
<td>Good (6.77)</td>
<td>Excellent (9.00)</td>
<td>Good (8.20)</td>
<td>Good (7.40)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Civility</td>
<td>Good (7.45)</td>
<td>Excellent (9.60)</td>
<td>Excellent (8.80)</td>
<td>Excellent (10.00)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Obligation</td>
<td>Good (7.55)</td>
<td>Fair (6.80)</td>
<td>Good (8.20)</td>
<td>Fair (6.40)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>Good (6.69)</td>
<td>Fair (5.70)</td>
<td>Good (7.17)</td>
<td>Fair (6.44)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mutual Learning</td>
<td>Good (6.83)</td>
<td>Poor (4.00)</td>
<td>Good (8.25)</td>
<td>Fair (5.20)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mutual Respect</td>
<td>Good (6.77)</td>
<td>Good (6.50)</td>
<td>Good (8.00)</td>
<td>Excellent (9.10)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth Responsibility</td>
<td>Fair (6.15)</td>
<td>Poor (3.70)</td>
<td>Good (8.35)</td>
<td>Excellent (10.00)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Voice</td>
<td>Good (7.12)</td>
<td>Excellent (9.00)</td>
<td>Good (8.44)</td>
<td>Good (9.60)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Partic. = Group Participants’ ratings; Res. = Researcher’s rating; Mean score of rating in ( ). The scale ranges were as follows: 1-2 (very poor); 3-4 (poor); 5-6 (fair); 7-8 (good); 9-10 (excellent).
The researcher rated the groups similar to the coordinators and adult leaders on most of the themes (between “good” and “excellent”). However, there were some discrepancies between the researcher’s ratings on the theme “mutual learning.” The researcher rated all four groups lower than the coordinators and adult leaders on this theme. For the Camden and Philadelphia groups, most of the learning as well as teaching were a result of the efforts of the adults, with little to no reciprocation from the youth. Among the Kent County group, most of the learning was evident among the elementary students that were participating in the project. The adults allowed the youth a high level of autonomy and little interaction occurred where mutual learning could be observed. Also, the researcher spent the least amount of time with this group, which also may have played a part in not being able to document adequate amounts of mutual learning. The Mifflin County group only had one youth involved, thus limiting the opportunity for a balance in mutual learning. When interviewed, the adults noted that they learned how energetic the young person was, but the researcher did not observe high levels of the youth engaging the adults in learning processes.

As for youth responsibility, the researcher rated the Camden group “poor” (as compared to the participants’ rating of “fair”) based on youth reliance on adult leadership. There were also times when the president was the only youth council executive board members present during meetings. The Philadelphia group was also rated fair by the researcher due to low levels of youth leadership.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Much discourse on the importance of youth-adult relationships has surfaced over recent years. Positive youth-adult interaction is an important protective factor in a young person’s life (Perkins & Borden, 2003). The current investigation provides pertinent information that contributes to understanding various types of youth-adult relationships that exist within community-based programs. Within the field of youth development, there has been a keen interest in discovering ways to fully engage youth in their communities. However limited empirical evidence exists that explains if and how youth benefit from serving as engaged partners with adults in groups designed to address community issues. Most of the existing data are results of qualitative procedures used to explore the youth-adult partnering phenomenon (Camino, 2000; Larson, Walker, and Pearce, in press). This study employed a quantitative strategy to assess the perceptions of youth and adults and also utilized qualitative approaches to better understand the dynamics of the interaction that youth and adults experience in different types of relationships. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and experiences of youth and adults engaged in youth-adult relationships involving community projects (e.g., civic, service, service learning, and fundraising) and to identify characteristics that are unique to various youth-adult relationships.

A mixed-method, concurrent triangulation design was used to assess perceptions and better understand the experiences of youth and adults working together at the community level by converging both qualitative and quantitative data. This strategy
allowed the researcher to obtain statistical results from a purposive sample, and then follow up with observations and interviews of selected participants to explore individual experiences (Creswell, 2003). By using concurrent procedures, the researcher was able to collect and analyze both forms of data simultaneously. This approach helped to neutralize biases that are inevitable in single method studies, by triangulating data sources in order to explain and validate the results of youth-adult relationship experiences. In addition, using concurrent procedures enabled the researcher to collect both types of data despite the limited amount of time available for conducting the study.

Because a mixed methods approach was utilized, the researcher was able to take a more comprehensive approach to exploring youth-adult relationship phenomena, thereby leading to a more precise definition of each relationship. For example, the perceptions of the participants were assessed to determine how they felt about their experiences through the use of survey instruments. The nature of the groups wanting to become successful in developing a youth-adult partnership increases the likelihood of social desirability response bias when completing the survey. Indeed, the participants all indicated being at least fairly positive towards their experiences. However, observations and interviews (i.e., qualitative procedures) provide a more accurate depiction of what transpired among those groups that were selected for in-depth analyses. This qualitative approach enabled the researcher to address different questions that were not apparent from the aggregated survey data. For instance, the participants were asked specific questions that would allow them to describe their experiences in detail (i.e., experiences prior to the group and their intentions of working with similar groups in the future). Thus, the mixed methods design
of this study was a strength that offset the inherent weaknesses that may arise when one method and one phase is used to gather data.

**Discussion**

Although the results of this study are unique to the participating groups examined, these findings have several implications for those involved in various youth-adult relationships. In this discussion section, each finding will be presented under the specific question it addresses. Implications are presented immediately following the presentation of that finding.

What are the perceptions of youth and adults toward their involvement and interaction with one another when working together on community projects?

Youth and adult participants indicated their perceptions of the experiences they encountered in working as community partners. The majority of the sample consisted of females; that is only 11 males out of 42 adult volunteers. Females had more positive perceptions in regards to the level of youth involvement, adult involvement and youth-adult interaction. In order to provide young males with role models, youth-service providers may need to try creative recruiting strategies to attract male youth to initiatives that involve youth and adults working together. This would include providing programs that appeal to adolescent males (e.g., experiential learning opportunities that employ hands-on participation and sports-related activities). For instance, working with youth to establish a charity basketball event to support the local homeless shelter could serve as a
possible project of interest for males. In order to be effective, these strategies must enable adults to capitalize on their own personal strengths to fully engage and retain the interest of youth. Regardless of gender, volunteers need to be presented with tasks that best utilize their skills and abilities, which may in turn, increase their commitment towards working with youth as partners to make their communities better places to live.

Although adults provided more positive ratings than youth on the constructs (i.e., youth involvement, adult involvement and youth-adult interaction), no significant differences were found between youth and adult perceptions of these constructs. One potential explanation of adults having a more positive perspective is that adults were often the leaders in these community-based projects and possessed a strong desire to institute a partnership among youth and adults. In essence, the adults in this study had more of a vested interest in the project resulting in positive outcomes than the youth.

Youth-service providers and community collaborative efforts may need to implement youth-centered strategies that ensure youth ownership of programs and projects from program development to evaluation stages. A sense of ownership may foster youth’s optimism towards working in partnerships, while also increasing the probability of success in these efforts. One possible strategy is to engage youth at the inception of an endeavor so they can help plan the effort. For example, soliciting youth suggestions/skills on developing activities for an after-school program, or youth serving on a planning committee as full participants for an upcoming youth-related event may serve as worthwhile endeavors.

In addition to potentially increasing youth ownership, this kind of strategy may address young people’s need for a sense of \textit{mattering}, as explained by Eccles and
Gootman (2002). They stated that young people need to recognize their importance and ability to make a difference; that is, they need to matter. Moreover, youth may gain a more positive perception towards their experiences and increase their feeling of self worth when they are certain that their efforts are really making a difference by helping others. This provides youth with a sense of “required helpfulness”; that the act of being a contributor enables them to become more empowered and confident in their abilities (see Perkins & Borden, 2003). For example, youth in the Adult-Led Collaborations, when asked about their engagement in community service activities, indicated that they “felt good” about being able to help others and make a difference. However, efforts where youth reflect on their actions and feelings should be made to harness their energy from feeling good to becoming more involved and attentive to their civic duty.

Furthermore, youth development programs must continue to capitalize on the enthusiasm of those adults who are willing to work as partners with youth in their communities. These adults should be targeted as potential role models, for they bring experience, higher levels of autonomy and feelings of personal closeness in working with youth (see Dubois & Neville, 1997). Community-based collaborative programs need to have an intentional structure that facilitates positive youth-adult interaction (Jekielek, et al., 2002). Training for adults before and during their work together with youth partners would be helpful, especially for those adults who are less skilled. Those adults, along with young people who have previous experience, could also benefit from learning new techniques that strengthen relationships. For example, Jekielek and colleagues (2002) reported that the more training mentors received, the more successful the relationships were between youth and adults. Community-based collaborative efforts and youth-
serving organizations need to ensure that youth participating in their efforts and programs have access to a number of caring adults that can serve as mentors, as well as community allies.

In this investigation, no significant differences were found between the perceptions of the ethnic groups. However, Whites/European Americans participants had slightly higher mean scores on all three constructs in comparison to African Americans and other ethnic groups. All of the African American participants were in the two urban communities. The less positive perceptions of these participants may be a result of certain cultural aspects that exist among these communities. For example, among African American participants, there may be strong beliefs that youth being vocal is oftentimes illustrative of aggression and disrespect towards adults, hence deterring higher levels of youth involvement and youth-adult interaction.

Groups from rural areas consisted primarily of participants who were significantly more positive toward youth involvement than those participants from urban areas. This may be due, in part, because the groups located in rural areas were participating in the EYSC initiative which specifically targeted youth who were considered to be ready for this type of project. Another possible explanation is that the rural sample involved youth who were fairly active in 4-H for several years prior to the EYSC initiative, and the youth knew the adults involved in their groups. Thus, it is unclear whether rural youth not involved in 4-H would report similar positive perceptions. In addition, at least 40% of the youth from rural areas were equipped with a two-day training before engaging in their projects and had previously worked with some, if not all, of the adults in their groups. Urban youth received a minimum amount of hands-on training and only a few of these
youth knew the adults in their groups. Youth involvement among the urban groups may have also been perceived to be at a low level by youth and adults because the youth had less experience with the youth-adult partnering model.

Youth-serving organizations and community collaborative efforts need to ensure that youth and adults, particularly in urban areas, form social ties and develop a similar sense of community connectedness that may exist in smaller localities. Oftentimes, larger urban communities lack the condition where all neighbors know one another. Bringing people together so that they may become engaged in the community can potentially allow residents to develop a feeling of belonging, an established network base, and trustworthiness among neighbors thus generating social capital (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). Youth and adults working together may decrease negative perceptions among groups by allowing people to get to know one another (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998). Intergenerational closure (Coleman, 1988; Swisher & Whitlock, 2004) is also cultivated which serves to build a higher degree of relationship networks across ages while simultaneously maximizing the potential for community mobilization.

These findings are supported by the Intergroup Contact Theory literature, where scholars found that the diversity among different groups can build social ties that strengthen communities (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Pettigrew, 1998). All of the participants reported at least fairly positive experiences in working with one another. All of the adult participants had worked with youth at some point in time and were accepting of youth working with them. However, nearly all of the youth that were interviewed noted that they have had experiences where adults “took over;” yet despite those negative encounters, there were other adults that were very supportive. All eighteen of the
interviewed participants (youth and adults) stated that they would indeed be willing to participate in a similar endeavor in the future. Thus, Intergroup Contact theory may provide a sound theoretical base for understanding how efforts and programs can play a role in improving youth-adults relationships in communities. Youth who typically serve as the outgroup can potentially change the perceptions of adults (members of the ingroup) who can become aware of the capabilities of young people. Indeed, several of the interviewed adults expressed their amazement of young people in their groups and what they can do if given the opportunity. In their interviews, youth also indicated that they were excited to interact with caring adults in their groups that were willing to listen to them.

The participants provided information that indicated nearly half of the youth and adults had worked in a similar partnering effort and were willing to do so again. This clearly implies that community efforts that involve youth and adults as partners can provide an atmosphere for individuals to develop positive perceptions towards those that are different, not just by ethnic and cultural backgrounds but across generations. This finding provides strong evidence in support of Intergroup Contact Theory. However, more studies of youth and adults working together over longer periods of time are necessary to confirm whether partnering efforts actually have long-term impact on the individuals and community.

Three types of relationships were found (i.e., Adult-Led Collaboration, Youth-Adult Partnership, and Youth-Led Collaborations) in this current investigation; however, the in-depth qualitative analysis involved two types (i.e., Adult-Led Collaboration and Youth-Led Collaboration) because of time constraints and travel budget limitations. The
sites utilized for the qualitative part of the study involved those programs in close proximity to The Pennsylvania State University. While the researcher only found three out of the five types of youth-adult relationships, which is not evidence that the three types of youth-adult relationships are the only ones that exist within communities. Although Adult-Centered and Youth-Centered Leadership relationships were not analyzed in either the quantitative or the qualitative analyses, there is evidence that they are prevalent types of relationships. Adult-Centered Leadership is the traditional relationship where adults make all decisions and youth are involved as passive participants. This type of relationships is most prevalent in traditional 4-H clubs, YMCA, Scouts, after-school programs, and other community-based youth programs. Youth-Centered Leadership relationships exist where young people get together in unstructured settings. One can see examples of this at the local park and other community places where youth like to hang out.

Larson and colleagues (in press) identified youth-adult relationships as either youth-driven or adult-driven. However, this study expands these concepts by acknowledging the fact that youth-driven and adult-driven programs can have varied levels of youth and adult involvement, which serve as separate axes altogether. For example, both Adult-Centered and Adult-Led Relationships are considered to be adult-driven. However, Adult-Led Collaborations are more nurturing in the development of youth leadership, as opposed to only relying on adult efforts in hopes of encouraging youth participation as opposed to engagement in decision-making and voice. Moreover, initiating an adult-driven approach without providing the adequate adult support that
young people need serves as a potential impasse to achieving the goals of community youth development.

In regards to the type of relationships, a statistically significant difference was found in perceptions toward youth involvement between participants in Adult-Led Collaborations and those in Youth-Led Collaborations, with youth involvement being higher in the latter. Perhaps the participants in Youth-Led Collaborations were more positive toward youth involvement because of the enthusiasm and level of responsibility that was afforded to the young people in that relationship. For example, youth in the Kent County group were clearly in charge of their project and were committed to making sound decisions based on logical thinking. Another motivation for the youth to display competent decision-making could be their need to debunk a common adult perception; that youth are inept when it came to taking charge of a task. The adults purposely kept their involvement to a minimum in order to maximize youth participation. Given this situation, the youth provided positive ratings of the youth-adult interaction perhaps because they had a major role in the project, while the adults were positive in part due to youth taking on this responsibility and fully utilizing their leadership skills. Adults in Youth-Adult Partnerships (as these groups were so categorized by the adult coordinators) had more positive perceptions of youth involvement and youth-adult interaction than adults in Adult-Led Collaborations. One potential reason for this finding may be that the adults who were in these groups believe that they had achieved a genuine partnership; therefore, they believed that youth involvement was high and their interactions with young people were positive and intense. However, as indicated by their lower rating, the youth in the category of Youth-Adult Partnership did not perceive the group to be a
“partnership” with high levels of youth involvement and youth-adult interaction. Perhaps these youth felt as though their opinions were not valued as much as the adults perceived them to be. Moreover, these youth may not have perceived that they had a voice in major decision-making roles. Clearly, more in-depth research is needed to further illuminate this finding.

Although all youth-adult relationships have some positive aspects and are important in the lives of young people, those participants in youth-led collaborations were more positive towards their experiences. Therefore, community-based collaborative efforts and youth-service providers may want to incorporate youth-driven approaches (e.g., youth managing a 4-H after-school technology program, chairing a fundraising campaign or spear-heading a can food drive) within programs that enable youth to put into practice those skills (e.g., decision-making and communication) that are essential in these types of endeavors. By providing training and incorporating youth-driven approaches, youth may have a more affirmative belief that they are not just consumers of services, but full partners contributing to their own development and that of the community. Moreover, adults may have a clearer indication that their support aided in empowering youth with the expertise to impact their community.

What is the experience like for youth and adults participating in various youth-adult relationships at the community level?

Through the literature review and the findings from this study, several common themes were illuminated. The common themes found in the literature were the same as those generated among participants that reported their experiences and the importance of
positive youth-adult relationships in their communities. All participants emphasized the importance of connecting with one another, their personal benefits to working together, and experiencing a positive youth-adult relationship. Youth and adults perceiving their relationship as meaningful is essential in developing strong mentoring programs, an Adult-led Collaboration (Dubois & Neville, 1997), and as a protective factor among resilient youth (Bernard, 2004; Benson, 1990; Werner & Smith, 1992). Indeed, researchers in the area of resiliency have found that youth programs must access the resource systems (e.g., caring adults and families) of communities in order to be most effective (see Masten, 2001; Perkins & Borden, 2003; Rutter, 1979; Werner & Smith, 1982, 1992).

In reference to noting the importance of relying on community assets, one weakness noted by adults and youth was that youth voice and decision-making were not always utilized to full capacity. Being that adult support was reported and observed to be high among all groups, adult practitioners and volunteers may wish to direct their support towards encouraging youth to engage in dialogue, develop critical thinking skills, and feel comfortable making decisions. For example, providing trainings for youth on how to become better communicators and more strategic in formulating their ideas may be a helpful strategy. Several youth organizations across the country have emerged to promote youth advocacy and leadership (e.g., Youth as Public Speakers and Do Something, Inc.) through training seminars or conferences that expand over several days. Community-based collaborative efforts and youth-serving organizations may wish to involve youth in these professional development initiatives or employ similar training components as a part of their mission.
Moreover, specific techniques may prove advantageous if and when community-based collaborative efforts and youth-serving organizations host youth-adult partnership trainings. Trainings may work best if youth and adults are allowed to participate in separate trainings before bringing both parties together. In this study, the researcher observed that when youth were in training with adults, they were very reluctant to fully participate. In one group, young people often seemed intimidated by the articulate comments of adults and appeared to act as though their responses would not be taken seriously. On the other hand, some adults were also hesitant to share feelings because they did not want to offend the youth. Separate trainings would allow both parties to express themselves more openly among their peers. Once a comfort level is established with peers of the same or similar ages, participants may be more at ease when coming together for a joint training.

Youth in Adult-Led Collaborations appeared to need more time in getting to the point of actually seeing themselves as leaders, while adults needed to develop and utilize strategies that encouraged youth to take more ownership in the projects. Within the three Adult-Led Collaborations that were observed, the youth were dependent on adult support, relying heavily upon their advice and guidance. The adults on the other hand were disturbed by not being able to successfully perpetuate youth voice and leadership. These adults saw part of their duties as empowering youth to take on more leadership roles. Thus, a majority of the youth may need to ease into this type of relationship, because it means increased youth responsibility, personal leadership potential, and their seeing the value, as well as utilizing their voice and decision-making power. Being that many young people may have their first encounter with a partnering effort at the Adult-Led
Collaborative level, adults must practice more active facilitation and patience in getting the youth to arrive at a point where they feel comfortable serving as a full-fledged community partner.

In the Youth-Led Collaboration, young people who demonstrate assertiveness, leadership and a fervency to take on responsibilities were found to be best suited for this type of relationship or other youth-driven initiatives (e.g., Youth-Centered Leadership). This finding was consistent with findings from the study conducted by Larson and colleagues (in press). They found that youth-driven models thrived when teens had ownership over program activities and that they felt more empowered and motivated to work toward long-term goals. Those youth involved in this study that were a part of the Youth-Led Collaboration demonstrated a drive to serve in meaningful roles as well as an eagerness to take on responsibilities. Related literature provides support to the notion that youth who possess certain leadership traits are best suited for partnering efforts (see Fiscus, 2003; Larson et al., in press; Youth Development Institute, 2002). According to the community youth development framework, all youth need these types of opportunities to some degree in order to foster their own development.

Adults who were willing to utilize certain strategies, such as taking on a more supportive role, thus relinquishing some power to youth, assisting youth leadership when needed, and encouraging youth to lead projects when necessary, were most effective in cultivating an effectual Youth-Led Collaboration. For instance, the adults in the Kent County Youth-Led Collaboration welcomed the power of youth and were pleased with their commitment to the project. The adults’ strategy of not interfering with the youth-led meetings enabled the young people an opportunity to take more ownership of the project.
Adults not willing to share power pose a major obstacle in fostering the full capacity of youth leadership (Camino, 2000, Fiscus, 2003; Zeldin, Camino, Calvert, & Ivey, 2002). Although adults need to share power, youth still need adult support in developing the skills and competencies that are essential for serving as contributors. In order to fully embrace the community youth development framework, adults must agree to encourage youth by valuing their role as decision-makers and breaking down barriers that youth encounter while simultaneously supporting youth. In this role, adults are more like facilitators while youth serve as the leaders.

Both youth and adults who have some previous experience in serving in a youth-adult partnering project may be more effective for both Youth-Led and Adult-Led Collaborations. Those youth and adult participants who indicated that they had been involved in previous partnerships appeared more comfortable and were used to the varied experiences that accompany working with different age groups. Those who were encountering their first youth-adult community project seemed more uneasy. The youth, in particular, appeared intimidated by adults to some degree. Similar findings were presented by Camino (2000) who reported that partnerships were more successful only when youth and adults developed the skills to help one another. Hence, community-based collaborative members and youth-service providers recruiting adults to act as “buddies” with inexperienced youth and adult volunteers may prove beneficial in strengthening youth-adult partnering endeavors. Young people with this expertise would also be helpful in serving as peer mentors with less experienced youth (i.e., those youth in Adult-Centered Leadership and Adult-Led Collaborations) who are working with adults for the first time.
What characteristics constitute various youth-adult relationship experiences?

Several themes surfaced through the literature review and the interviews as critical elements of various youth-adult relationships. Those critical elements were identified as: adult support, civility, community obligation, decision-making, mutual learning, mutual respect, youth responsibility, youth voice. The elements of Adult-Led Collaborations tended to possess: high levels of adult involvement and adult support (in the form of soliciting youth decision-making and valuing of youth and their ideas); high levels of civility and mutual respect among participants; moderate to low levels of community obligation among some youth and adults; low levels of decision-making among youth; little, if any, mutual learning between youth and adults; low to fair amount of youth responsibility on certain tasks, but few tasks are initiated by youth; and youth voice solicited and considered by adults. The critical elements of Youth-Led Collaborations were: high levels of adult support; adult support valued by youth; high levels of civility and mutual respect among participants; at least a moderate level of community obligation on behalf of youth and adults; high levels of youth decision-making; little, if any, mutual learning among youth and adults; high levels of youth responsibility and youth involvement; and youth voice utilized by youth and solicited/highly-valued by adults.

Given the themes that describe various types of youth-adult relationships found in this study, there appears to be critical elements that are necessary if young people are to work effectively with adults to promote community change. Certain critical element differed between the two categories from the case study analyses (i.e., Adult-Led Collaboration and Youth-Led Collaboration), the critical elements that varied were levels
of: adult support valued by youth, youth decision-making, youth responsibility, youth voice utilized by youth participants, and youth voice valued by adults. In the Adult-Led Collaborations, the youth were learning most of their skills from the guidance of the adults; while in the Youth-Led Collaboration, adults had few interactions with youth that denoted learning or skill building. On the other hand, several of these elements (e.g., adult support, civility, mutual respect and youth voice) emerged as characteristics of the positive interactions that must exist between youth and adults, regardless of the type of relationships. Moreover, these characteristics can serve as a guideline for practitioners to assess the strength of meaningful youth-adult relations within programs. If these elements (i.e., adult support, civility/mutual respect, youth voice) are non-existent among various relationships, then positive youth development and community youth development become unattainable goals.

Some of the elements appear to be unique to specific relationships. For example, mutual learning was not widespread in either type of relationship that was observed and analyzed. Evidently, a situation where youth and adults equally serve as teachers and participatory learners exists when both have the opportunity to utilize their skills and disseminate knowledge to one another. Theoretically, this would appear to most likely to occur in a Youth-Adult Partnership where youth and adults are contributors and receivers in an educative process. Camino’s (2000) study supported this notion in reporting that mutual learning is unique to Youth-Adult Partnerships, clearly distinguishing this type of relationship from those that are more youth or adult-centered, as well as collaborations such as mentoring relationships.
The categories of Adult-Centered Leadership and Youth-Centered Leadership were not examined in this study. Nonetheless, the researcher expects that, in Adult-Centered Leadership, adults have total decision-making power in youth programs with youth being involved only as passive participants (e.g., school/classroom setting; traditional 4-H after-school program). Youth-Centered Leadership in communities would consist of young people organizing themselves, often in unstructured settings and with no adult involvement (e.g., youth meeting at a local park to play basketball after school, gang membership). Based on the findings of this study, Youth-Adult Partnerships would include a team mentality of equal decision-making and shared responsibility (e.g., youth and adults accepting full responsibility of their duties and having an equal voice). The EYSC coordinators, adult leaders and participants were adamant about these characteristics (i.e., decision-making and shared responsibility), along with mutual respect, being a part of the relationship.

Within this study, it was evident that there was no balance of decision-making among the Adult-Led or Youth-Led Collaborations. In the Adult-Led Collaborations, the adults were the decision-makers and carried the most responsibility, while the youth were the primary decision-makers on project activities among the Youth-Led Collaboration. When there is equal decision-making and utilization of skills as the researcher perceives to exist among a genuine partnership, mutual teaching and learning are prevalent. Both youth and adults engage in the transferring and receiving of knowledge.

In a Youth-Adult Partnership, the researcher perceives a shared interest and level of commitment between youth and adults that is necessary to demonstrate a sincere obligation to the community. Lastly, communication among youth and adults is essential,
where youth have the confidence to speak their minds and adults also communicate their feelings and expectations clearly to the youth. In accordance with Intergroup Contact Theory, this is a point where balance is achieved. Youth-adult partnering can potentially dispel stereotypes while at the same time incorporate the skills and competencies of all residents to impact communities. Community-based collaborative efforts and youth-service providers may want to consider these critical elements of the various relationships when designing community-based mobilization efforts and youth programs that aim to maximize youth development. For example, community-based collaborative members and youth-service providers should strive to utilize critical elements to assess the effectiveness of programs that encourage youth and adults to work together.

Research on the utilization of these elements may help determine which relationship types are most effective and appropriate for certain community projects. For instance, how much more effective is a Youth-Adult Partnership when mutual learning is prevalent among youth and adult experiences? Although some characteristics are more specific to one particular relationship, these critical elements can be implemented within community youth programs and other collaborative efforts to ascertain whether young people are receiving the most valuable experience through participatory learning and positive relationships with adults.

The reference to mutual learning among youth and adults is tantamount to the theoretical framework of experiential learning. Youth and adults working as partners can serve as a median for individuals to engage in activities that boosts confidence and offer flexibility in the learning process (Smith, 1991). Furthermore, the skills and knowledge of each member are valued, providing an opportunity to learn from one another. Youth-
adult interaction aids learning by allowing participants to take meaning from their experiences which strengthens personal development (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984; Mezirow, 1994). Experiential learning theorists, as well as Intergroup Contact scholars have found that, as individuals work together to achieve common goals, positive experiences abound when all participants are able to witness the benefits of having an array of diverse community stakeholders at the decision-making table (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Merriam & Cafferella, 1999; Pettigrew, 1998). However, positive experiences must take place, for if not, this can negate a willingness for youth and adults to work together as partners (see Dewey, 1938). Several of the youth stated that they had learned important social and leadership skills from adults. However, more studies are required to explore what tangible skills youth and adults actually learn from these types of relationships within their communities.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

Three major assumptions guided this current investigation. First, it was assumed that participants had formed perceptions about youth, adults, youth-adult relationships and youth-adult partnerships. Although the emphasis of this study explored relationships between youth and adults in communities, with youth-adult partnerships as one type of relationship, youth-adult partnering was the phenomenon of particular interest. Second, because youth and adults participated on a voluntary basis, their responses were assumed to reflect their true perceptions and feelings. Third, adult leaders that served as a contact
for the researcher were assumed to have adequate skills in effectively recruiting and organizing other participants.

Participants in rural Northeastern (U.S) communities, who were a part of the EYSC Initiative, were purposefully selected as a sample of convenience. These rural groups were predominately limited to 4-H youth who most likely had previous experience in working on community-related projects. Urban participants in the greater Philadelphia area were also purposefully selected and included in this sample. Therefore, one limitation of this study is that the generalizability of the results does not extend beyond these participants and groups. Based on the sample size of this study, the researcher was also limited on the use of appropriate inferential statistics (e.g., ANOVA and T-tests).

In addition, the small number of groups analyzed and the observations conducted were other major limitations to the generalizable findings. Although points of saturation were reached within the qualitative analyses, the researcher may have been able to investigate more thoroughly the dynamics of the group interactions if he was able to visit the groups more frequently. Also, observing more than four groups may have yielded new insights to pertinent data.

Being that several of the groups’ projects and activities were coming to an end, the researcher was limited to a specific timeframe in order to collect the data. The shortness of the timeframe posed a constraint on examining change in these groups over time through such methods as pre-post test measures of perceptions. The study was also limited to examining specific types of community groups. Thus, there was a restriction on
comprehensively examining various types of organizations (e.g., schools and faith-based institutions) as an influential context impacting youth-adult relationships.

**Directions for Future Research**

Based on these initial findings, researchers may want to conduct similar studies using a larger sample that includes a broader range of organizations engaged in building youth-adult relationships. Further investigations should examine whether the findings from similar research are valid and applicable to various types of youth-adult relationships (inclusive of all five types of relationships) existing within different contexts (e.g., schools, faith-based institutions, and after-school programs). Empirical evidence is needed to help scholars and practitioners better understand whether and how these types of youth-adult relationships have positive influences on youth and adults. Research is also needed to provide direction as to what strategies strengthen the various relationships to promote positive youth development.

Longitudinal studies should also be employed to determine if perceptions of youth and adults change over time when working together as partners. More efforts should focus on what factors affect these perceptions and what participants actually learn from the process of participating in on-going community partnering effort. Longitudinal research would also enable researchers to look at the long term outcomes of such experiences for youth and adults. For example, investigations are necessary to explore which types of youth-adult relationships are most suitable for nurturing youth leadership and which types are potential disadvantages to youth becoming civically engaged as
adults. Empirically-based data is necessary to understand the dynamics of youth-adult relationships and the participants’ experiences they encounter. Most groups in communities will be exposed to various types of relationship experiences (i.e., anywhere from adult-centered to youth-centered) as the group continues to work together. Group members must know how to function in a capacity that fosters skill development and leadership potential among youth and effective mentoring among adults in order to achieve meaningful relationships that are effective in perpetuating the community.

Innovative and integrated qualitative and quantitative procedures are needed to more thoroughly investigate the complexities and dynamics of various types of youth-adult relationships. Currently, the youth development research has evidence of positive impact of positive youth development programs that possess certain features (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Some of those critical elements (i.e., adult support and youth decision-making) are presented in this study. However, little is known about why those features are important and which ones, whether in isolation or combination, are most critical. The “black box” about what goes on among community-based collaborative efforts, in youth development programming or between the various types of youth-adult relationships may best be understood through integrated qualitative-quantitative research designs. This form of applied research has direct implications that will help afford community-based collaborative efforts and youth-service providers with the applied knowledge necessary to incorporate elements best suitable for specific objectives.

Most of the studies related to the Intergroup Contact Theory have focused on cultural and racial groups. However, the theoretical lens of the ingroup-outgroup phenomenon may be equally relevant to examining positive youth-adult interaction
within communities and programs. Further research should consider testing the components of Intergroup Contact Theory to examine factors that influence the power dynamics associated with the segregation between youth and adults. For example, investigations on factors that influence youth and adult stereotypes in various settings and whether negative perceptions change over time when working together in specific categories that have varying levels of required interaction.

Summary

This study describes an alternative framework to traditional concepts of youth-adult interaction by presenting insight on the potential benefits of youth-adult partnering through the *Youth-Adult Relationship Continuum* model (Jones & Perkins, 2004). Scholars and practitioners need to work together in order to research and provide meaningful opportunities embedded in a community youth development framework, thus inculcating the positive on-going relationships with adults that youth need for their positive development. Young people are indeed an asset to the communities in which they live. Establishing high levels of youth-adult interaction is the first step to nurturing youth leadership. The *Youth-Adult Relationship Continuum* model presented in this study offers a venue for youth-service providers to develop a program or collaborative effort that serves as a naturally-occurring atmosphere where youth can identify and bond with numerous role models. Nonetheless, more theoretical, empirical investigations are needed in order to direct practitioners’ work toward programs that encourage youth and adult partners to change their communities and the people therein. This study provides valuable
insight on the empowerment revealed by youth and adults serving together to improve their communities:

“This project is interesting and affirmed that the community can provide for itself.”
(Adult participant)

“I feel as though I have made a difference as a leader….but you can’t have a leader with no followers….leaders come from being followers.” (Youth participant)
REFERENCES


Appendix A

INSTRUMENTATION
Youth-Adult Group Activity Rating Scale

This scale is to allow you to identify a youth-adult team/group in your state/area that is currently working on a community project. You are to assess the group’s participation by rating the activity of youth and adults to the best of your knowledge.

Please indicate the group’s name. If there is no name for the group, you may identify them by location, such as the "Howard County, PA youth-adult team” or the “4-H youth-adult team of Gettysburg, PA”. Group Name ____________ State/Area _____________

Group Contact Person (include name, phone number and email address):

_______________________________________________________________________

In rating the participating group, place an “X” near the statement that you believe is most accurate (For example, an “X” marked on either end would describe the duties of one party, youth or adults, while an “X” in the middle would indicate a balance of youth/adult duties).

| Adults have major responsibilities. | Youth have major responsibilities. |
| Adults lead all programs, while youth only participate. | Youth lead all programs with little help from adults. |
| Adults plan/organize project activities. | Youth plan/organize project activities. |
| Adults make all decisions relating to the project. | Youth make all decisions relating to the project. |
| Adults set benchmarks for project success. | Youth set benchmark for project success. |
| Adults help youth in developing new skills. | Youth help adults in developing new skills. |
| Adults take control of meetings. | Youth take control of meetings. |
| Adults dominate meetings. | Youth dominate meetings. |
| Adults ask for youth advice on project activities. | Youth ask for adult advice on project activities. |
Based on the youth-adult relationship categories below, how would you classify the group (Place an “X” in the box underneath the one (1) category of your choice)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult-Centered Leadership</th>
<th>Adult-Led Collaboration</th>
<th>Youth-Adult Partnership</th>
<th>Youth-Led Collaboration</th>
<th>Youth-Centered Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Adults lead all activities, while youth only participate)</td>
<td>(Some youth decision-making, but at low levels)</td>
<td>(Equal levels of youth/adult decision-making, utilizing of skills &amp; learning from one another)</td>
<td>(Youth leading with limited adult supervision)</td>
<td>(Youth activity with very little/no adult involvement)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please answer the following questions.

1. What criteria did you use to select a group/team to participate in the youth-adult partnership training (held during the summer of 2003)?

2. Were groups/teams already formed prior to your discovery of the training or did you pick individuals to attend the training?

3. How would you define a “youth-adult partnership”? 

4. What do you believe an effective youth-adult partnership should look like (In other words, what must exist in order for a partnership to be successful in accomplishing its goal)?

THANK YOU!!!
Please complete the following survey. You DO NOT have to include your name. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential.

**Project Location (City/Town) ___________________ State_______ County____________**

1. You are (Check one):
   - □ A Youth Participant
   - □ An Adult Participant

2. How do you describe yourself?
   - □ Asian
   - □ Black/African-American
   - □ Hispanic/Latino
   - □ Native American
   - □ White/Eur. American
   - □ Other____________________

3. What is your Gender (Check one)?
   - □ Female
   - □ Male

4. What is your age group (Check one)?
   - □ 13-14
   - □ 15-16
   - □ 17-18
   - □ 19-25
   - □ 26 and over

5. Please select one that best describes the area in which you live.
   - □ Rural/Farm
   - □ Suburban
   - □ Urban/City
   - □ Other____________________

6. Is this your first time participating in a project that involves youth and adults working together (Check one)?
   - □ Yes
   - □ No (If not, what other project(s) have you worked on that involved youth and adults?)______________________________

   ________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________
Involvement and Interaction Rating Scale

When completing this part of the survey, think of your current community project and the youth and adults in your group/team. The purpose of this survey is to allow you to rate the levels of youth involvement with other youth, adult involvement with other adults and youth working together with adults. Your responses will help determine what it takes to build quality relationships between youth and adults. Place an “X” on the line (within the middle boxes) that you feel is the most accurate statement. For example, if you feel the statement on the right or left best describes your situation, you would place an “X” in the box closest to that statement. If you believe that both statements are accurate or somewhat accurate, then you would place an “X” at or near the middle. See the example below.

**EXAMPLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth &amp; adults have lots of fun.</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Youth &amp; adults do not have lots of fun.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Youth Involvement Indicators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth take lots of initiative in working on projects.</th>
<th>Youth take little initiative in working on projects.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth are sitting around with nothing to do.</td>
<td>Youth are busy with several tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth arrive to meetings/events on time.</td>
<td>Youth show up late for meetings/events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth are given little or no responsibilities for specific tasks or assignments.</td>
<td>Youth are given major responsibilities for specific tasks or assignments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth rely on themselves to make key decisions.</td>
<td>Youth make few decisions for themselves, often relying on the decisions of adults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth have full access to information that is needed to make decisions.</td>
<td>Youth have very little access to information that is needed to make decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth never have the opportunity to discuss their concerns about group decisions.</td>
<td>Youth always have the opportunity to discuss their concerns about group decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth frequently share ideas that matter to them.</td>
<td>Youth rarely share ideas about things that matter to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth do not have an equal vote in the decision-making process.</td>
<td>Youth do not have an equal vote in the decision-making process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth help one another in developing new skills.</td>
<td>Youth help one another in developing new skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth are not fully committed to their duties.</td>
<td>Youth are not fully committed to their duties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth are very excited about their involvement with this project.</td>
<td>Youth are very excited about their involvement with this project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth are not concerned with community change.</td>
<td>Youth are not concerned with community change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Adult Involvement Indicators**

| Adults display a willingness to accept and nurture youth leadership. | Adults display a willingness to accept and nurture youth leadership. | Adults display a sense of wanting to control youth. |
| Adults tend to be followers of youth leadership. | Adults tend to be followers of youth leadership. | Adults display a tendency to want to guide youth. |
| Adults always listen to the suggestions of youth. | Adults always listen to the suggestions of youth. | Adults never listen to the suggestions of youth. |
| Adults never totally take over everything when working on project activities. | Adults never totally take over everything when working on project activities. | Adults always take over everything when working on project activities. |
| Adults learn new skills from one another. | Adults learn new skills from one another. | Adults do not learn new skills from one another. |
| Adults never take the ideas of youth seriously. | Adults never take the ideas of youth seriously. | Adults always take the ideas of youth seriously. |
| Adults encourage youth to come up with their own ideas. | Adults encourage youth to come up with their own ideas. | Adults command youth to follow the directions of adults. |
| Adults have no interest in being involved w/project. | Adults have no interest in being involved w/project. | Adults are very excited about being involved with the project. |
| Adults are very concerned with community change. | Adults are very concerned with community change. | Adults are not very concerned with community change. |
### Youth-Adult Interaction Indicators

| Youth and adults get along well together. | There is arguing/tension among youth and adults. |
| Youth appear uneasy and intimidated by adults. | Youth seem comfortable working with adults. |
| Adults seem comfortable working with youth. | Adults appear uneasy and afraid of youth. |
| Adults do not consult with youth on project activities at all. | Adults actively and consistently consult with youth on project activities. |
| Adults provide direction and mentoring for youth. | Adults provide little or no direction and mentoring for youth. |
| Youth always go along with the decisions of adults. | Youth never go along with adults and always make their own decisions. |
| Youth and adults often agree on most decisions. | Youth and adults rarely agree with one another. |
| Youth rely on the experiences of adults when making decisions. | Youth make decisions based on their own experiences. |
| Youth and adults work separately on project tasks. | Youth and adults work together as partners on project tasks. |
| Youth and adults indicate mutual learning from one another. | Youth and adults learn little from one another. |
| Youth and adults rarely help one another develop new skills. | Youth and adults frequently help one another develop new skills. |
| Adults are very considerate of youth opinions. | Adults are not at all considerate of youth opinions. |
| Youth are not at all considerate of adult opinions. | Youth are very considerate of adult opinions. |
| Youth/adults always engage in respectful conversations. | Youth and adults never engage in respectful conversations. |
Youth do not trust adults to handle power responsibly. | Youth trust adults to handle power responsibly.  
---|---
Adults trust youth to handle power responsibly. | Adults do not trust youth to handle power responsibly.  
---|---
There is a low youth to adult ratio (less than 1 adult for every 5 youth). | There is a high youth to adult ratio (at least 1 adult for every 5 youth).  
---|---

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!!
Interview Protocol

Debriefing Statement

The purpose of this study is to gather information on community involvement in regards to youth and adults working together on a project. This study is being conducted as part of the national evaluation of Engaging Youth Serving Communities initiative. In order to help the evaluation team explore how youth and adults are working together, I would like to talk with you about your experiences partnering with adults/youth on your community project. The interview should take no longer than an hour to complete. The data will be kept strictly confidential. Thank you for taking the time to participate. The results may help to identify information that may be beneficial to your community.

1. Tell me a little about your background.
   o Is this your first time working as a partner with youth/adults on a community project?
   o How long have you been working in partnership with youth/adults?
   o How long have you participated in community youth programs? Can you name some (or all) of those programs in which you have participated?

2. Have you served in any other roles where you were a key decision-maker?
   o How would you describe yourself as a decision-maker?
   o Give examples of your past experiences as a decision-maker.
   o Were youth and adults involved in the project/program?
   o What was your role?
   o What was the role of others?

3. What motivated you to want to participate in this community project?
   o What are your personal benefits to participating in this project?
   o How will your participation benefit others?

4. What were your experiences in participating on this project involving youth and adults?
   o Describe your most rewarding experiences and say why they were so rewarding?
   o Describe your most frustrating experiences and say why they were so frustrating?
   o What have you learned as a result of your involvement in the project? Describe the situation in which you felt as though you learned something/nothing.
   o What were the best strategies that you witnessed when the group had to make decisions?
   o When was it difficult for the group to make decisions/agree on issues?
   o How did you feel about working with youth/adults before participating in the partnership?
   o How do you feel about working with youth/adults after participating in the partnership?

5. What should be done to improve relationships between youth and adults involved in community programs or projects?
   o Based on your experiences in this project, what changes have you made in the way you relate to adults and/or youth on community projects?
   o What advice would you give to others who are considering forming a group of youth and adults to work on a project in their community?
   o Are you willing to work with youth/adults on future community projects? Why/Why not?
   o Any other experiences or advice you would like to share?
### Observational Protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Group/Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brief Description of group/project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting location/setting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Adult Support
Do adults display willingness to nurture youth leadership? Do adults follow or guide (offering suggestions) youth? Do adults consult with youth? Are adults providing direction (giving specific instruction for youth to follow)?

#### Civility
Are youth & adults getting along? Do youth/adults appear uneasy around adults/youth? Do youth/adults seem comfortable working together?

#### Community Obligation
Do youth seem committed to their duties? Are youth/adults excited about the project? Do youth/adults seem concerned with community issues/change?

#### Decision-Making
Are youth relying on themselves to make decisions? Do youth seem to have access to info to make decisions? Are youth going along with the decisions of the adults? How often do youth and adults agree (never, sometimes, frequently, always)?

#### Mutual Learning
Are youth/adults helping one another develop new skills? Is there an indication of mutual learning? Explain (This indication is most likely to come from interview). Do youth & adults often help one another develop skills?

#### Mutual Respect
Are adults taking over when working together? Are youth/adults considerate of adults/youth? Do both parties engage in respectful conversations? Do both parties seem to trust the other to handle power responsibly?

#### Youth Responsibility
Do youth take initiative in working on projects? Are they busy with major responsibilities? Punctual for meetings?

#### Youth Voice
Are youth given the opportunity to discuss their concerns? Share their ideas? Do youth have equal vote in the decision-making process? Do adults take youth ideas seriously? Considerate of youth opinions? Are adults encouraging youth to develop their own ideas?
Appendix B

CONSENT FORMS
EYSC Coordinator/Adult Leader Consent Form

January 28, 2004

<<First_Name>> <<Last_Name>>
<<Address_Line_1>>
<<Address_Line_2>>
<<City>>, <<State>> <<Zip_Code>>

Dear EYSC Coordinator/Adult Leader:

As you may know, I am conducting an in-depth evaluation study of Youth in Governance, focusing on the Engaging Youth Serving Communities (EYSC) initiative. This in-depth study entitled, “An Assessment of Community-Based Youth-Adult Relationships”, is about youth, adults, and their experiences when working on community projects. The benefits of this study include participants measuring the quality of their own activities and to provide feedback on issues affecting youth and adults engaged in community efforts.

I am asking for your voluntary participation in this study. Recently, you were contacted by a member of the evaluation team to report on any EYSC youth-adult teams/groups in your state that are currently making progress towards their community project. In this letter, I am requesting your assistance again by asking you to complete a short assessment to rate the identified group(s).

A group activity rating scale is enclosed. Please complete the rating scale and return to me by Friday, February 13, 2004. This will help me to accurately classify the youth-adult teams/groups into one of five common youth-adult relationship categories. It will take about 10 minutes for you to complete the rating scale. Please know that you may decline to answer any specific question(s). In addition to the rating scale, a postage-paid envelope has been provided for you to return the completed rating scale back to me. Your mailing back the completed rating scale indicates that you are 18 years of age or older and that you are giving your consent to participate in the study. If you do not wish to participate in the study, then simply do not return the rating scale. However, please know that we will be doing a reminder call approximately 14 days after the letter has been sent out to you.

The evaluation team will not use your name or other identifying information in any report or document. We will use an ID number to record your responses. The list connecting your name to the ID number will be kept in a locked file in my office. The information obtained from the rating scale will only be available to the evaluation team. The data will be securely stored until December 31, 2007 at which time it will be destroyed. There are no risks to you in sharing this information with us.
In addition, if you choose to withdraw from the study, you have the right to tell us not to use any information that you have given us. You also have the right to receive a copy of the evaluation report if you so choose. If you have any questions, or need any additional information, please feel free to contact me at the number or address above. You can also reach me by email at: dfp102@psu.edu. You may also call or write The Pennsylvania State University’s Office of Research Protections if you have any questions about your rights. The Office’s phone number is 814-865-1775 and the address is: 212 Kern Graduate Building, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, 16802.

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins, Ph. D.
Associate Professor
Family and Youth Resiliency and Policy
Dear Parent or Guardian:

Hello, my name is Dr. Daniel Perkins and I am a professor at Penn State University. Currently, I am conducting an in-depth evaluation study of Youth in Governance, focusing on the Engaging Youth Serving Communities (EYSC) initiative. The Youth in Governance study is part of a national evaluation project of the EYSC initiative. This in-depth study entitled, “An Assessment of Community-Based Youth-Adult Relationships”, is about youth, adults, and their experiences when working on community projects. The benefits of this study include participants measuring the quality of their own activities and to provide feedback on issues affecting youth and adults engaged in community efforts.

I am asking for your permission to allow your child to participate in this study because he/she is currently working as a member of a community group or team. If you agree to allow your child to participate, he/she will complete two surveys. One survey will ask her/him to rate the youth and adult involvement, and youth-adult interaction within their community group. It will take approximately 15 minutes to complete this survey.

The second survey is a follow-up survey and he/she will not be asked to complete it until the community project is close to completion. This follow-up survey asks her/him what it is like to work with adults and other youth in the community. This survey will also take about 10-15 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary. If your child participates, he/she does not have to answer any questions that he/she does not wish to answer.

The evaluation team will not use your child’s name or other identifying information in any report or document. We will use an ID number to record her/his responses. The list connecting your child’s name to this ID number will be kept in a locked file in my office. The information obtained from the surveys will only be available to the evaluation team. The data will be securely stored until December 31, 2007 at which time it will be destroyed. There are no risks to your child in sharing this information with us.

In addition, you and your child have the right to withdraw from the study. You and your child have the right to tell us not to use any information that has been given to us. Parental consent is required for your child’s participation in this study. If you DO NOT wish to consent to allow your child to participate, sign your name, indicate the date on the enclosed form and return to Dr. Perkins in the enclosed postage-paid envelope. A second copy of the signature sheet is for your records.

ORP USE ONLY:
The Pennsylvania State University
Office for Research Protections
Approval Date: 1/16/04 – J. Mathieu
Expiration Date: 1/15/05 – J. Mathieu
Social Science Institutional Review Board
If you have any questions, or need any additional information, please feel free to contact me at the number or address above or by email at: dfp102@psu.edu. You may also call or write The Pennsylvania State University’s Office of Research Protections if you have any questions about your rights. The Office’s phone number is 814-865-1775 and the address is: 212 Kern Graduate Building, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, 16802.

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Family and Youth Resiliency and Policy
Youth-Adult Partnerships
Parent Informed Consent Form
(To be returned to Dr. Perkins only if you DO NOT want your child to participate)

This is to certify that I, _______________________, hereby DO NOT consent to my child, _______________________, voluntarily participating in this evaluation study as an authorized part of the education and research program of The Pennsylvania State University under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Perkins.

Signature(s):

____________________       __________
Parent                                     Date

Youth-Adult Partnerships
Parent Informed Consent Form
(To be kept by the Parent)

This is to certify that I, _______________________, hereby DO NOT consent to my child, _______________________, voluntarily participating in this evaluation study as an authorized part of the education and research program of The Pennsylvania State University under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Perkins.

Signature(s):

____________________       __________
Parent                                     Date
Youth Informed Consent Form

Dear Youth Participant:

Hello, my name is Dr. Daniel Perkins and I am a professor at Penn State University. Currently, I am conducting an in-depth evaluation study of Youth in Governance (or “Youth as Decision-makers”), focusing on the Engaging Youth Serving Communities (EYSC) initiative. This study entitled, “An Assessment of Community-Based Youth-Adult Relationships”, is about youth, adults, and their experiences when working on community projects. The benefits of this study include participants measuring the quality of their own activities and to provide feedback on issues affecting youth and adults engaged in community efforts.

I am asking you to participate in this study, because you are currently working on a community group or team that involves youth and adults. If you agree to participate, you will be completing two surveys. One survey asks you to rate youth involvement, adult involvement, and the youth-adult interaction within your community group. It will take 15 minutes to complete this survey.

The second survey is a follow-up survey and you will not be asked to complete it until the community project is close to completion. This follow-up survey will ask you what it is like to work with adults and other youth in the community. This survey will also take about 10-15 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary---it’s your choice. If you chose to participate, you do not have to answer any question that you do not wish to answer.

The evaluation team will not use your name or other identifying information in any report or document. We will use an ID number to record your responses. The list connecting your name to the ID number will be kept in a locked file in my office. The information obtained from the surveys will only be available to the evaluation team. The data will be securely stored until December 31, 2007 at which time it will be destroyed. There are no risks to you.

In addition, if you choose to withdraw from the study, you have the right to tell us not to use any information that you have given us. You also have the right to receive a copy of the evaluation report if you so choose. If you have any questions, or need any additional information, please feel free to contact me at the number or address above or by email at: dfp102@psu.edu. You may also call or write The Pennsylvania State University’s Office of Research Protections if you have any questions about your rights. The Office’s phone number is 814-865-1775 and the address is: 212 Kern Graduate Building, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, 16802.

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Family and Youth Resiliency and Policy
Youth-Adult Partnerships
Youth Informed Consent Form
(To be kept by the Young Person)

This is to certify that I, _______________________, hereby consent to my voluntary participation in this evaluation study as an authorized part of the education and research program of The Pennsylvania State University under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Perkins.

I understand the information given to me. This evaluation study and my part in it have been fully explained to me by this letter. I have received answers to any questions that I had about the research/evaluation procedure. I understand and agree to the conditions of this study as described. I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

I understand that I may decline to answer specific questions or items in the surveys.

I understand that any data or answers will be confidential.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and terminate my participation in the evaluation study.

Signature(s):

____________________       __________
Young person                                    Date

Youth-Adult Partnerships
Youth Informed Consent Form
(To be returned to Dr. Perkins)

This is to certify that I, _______________________, hereby consent to my voluntary participation in this evaluation study as an authorized part of the education and research program of The Pennsylvania State University under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Perkins.

I understand the information given to me. This evaluation study and my part in it have been fully explained to me by this letter. I have received answers to any questions that I had about the research/evaluation procedure. I understand and agree to the conditions of this study as described. I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

I understand that I may decline to answer specific questions or items in the surveys.

I understand that any data or answers will be confidential.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and terminate my participation in the evaluation study.

Signature(s):

____________________       __________
Young person                                    Date
Dear Adult Participant:

Hello, my name is Dr. Daniel Perkins and I am a professor at Penn State University. Currently, I am conducting an in-depth evaluation study of Youth in Governance, focusing on the Engaging Youth Serving Communities (EYSC) initiative. The Youth in Governance study is part of a national evaluation project of the EYSC initiative. This in-depth study entitled, “An Assessment of Community-Based Youth-Adult Relationships”, is about youth, adults, and their experiences when working on community projects. The benefits of this study include participants measuring the quality of their own activities and to provide feedback on issues affecting youth and adults engaged in community efforts.

I am asking you to participate in this study, because you are currently working on a community group or team that involves youth and adults. You must also be 18 years of age or older to participate as an adult. If you agree to participate, you will be completing two surveys. One survey asks you to rate youth involvement, adult involvement, and the youth-adult interaction within your community group. It will take you approximately 15 minutes to complete.

The second survey is a follow-up survey and you will not be asked to complete it until the community project is close to completion. This follow-up survey will ask you what it is like to work with youth and other adults in the community. This survey will also take about 10-15 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary---it’s your choice. If you chose to participate, you do not have to answer any question that you do not wish to answer.

The evaluation team will not use your name or other identifying information in any report or document. We will use an ID number to record your responses. The list connecting your name to the ID number will be kept in a locked file in my office. The information obtained from the surveys will only be available to the evaluation team. The data will be securely stored until December 31, 2007 at which time it will be destroyed.
In addition, if you choose to withdraw from the study, you have the right to tell us not to use any information that you have given us. You also have the right to receive a copy of the evaluation report if you so choose. If you have any questions, or need any additional information, please feel free to contact me at the number or address above or by email at: dfp102@psu.edu. You may also call or write The Pennsylvania State University’s Office of Research Protections if you have any questions about your rights. The Office’s phone number is 814-865-1775 and the address is: 212 Kern Graduate Building, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, 16802.

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Family and Youth Resiliency and Policy
Youth-Adult Partnerships
Adult Informed Consent Form
(To be kept by the adult participant)

This is to certify that I, ________________________, hereby consent to my voluntary participation in this evaluation study as an authorized part of the education and research program of The Pennsylvania State University under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Perkins.

I understand the information given to me. This evaluation study and my part in it have been fully explained to me by this letter. I have received answers to any questions that I had about the research/evaluation procedure. I understand and agree to the conditions of this study as described. I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

I understand that I may decline to answer specific questions or items in the surveys.

I understand that any data or answers will be confidential.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and terminate my participation in the evaluation study.

Signature(s):

____________________       __________
Adult participant                   Date

Youth-Adult Partnerships
Adult Informed Consent Form
(To be kept by the adult participant)

This is to certify that I, ________________________, hereby consent to my voluntary participation in this evaluation study as an authorized part of the education and research program of The Pennsylvania State University under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Perkins.

I understand the information given to me. This evaluation study and my part in it have been fully explained to me by this letter. I have received answers to any questions that I had about the research/evaluation procedure. I understand and agree to the conditions of this study as described. I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

I understand that I may decline to answer specific questions or items in the surveys.

I understand that any data or answers will be confidential.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and terminate my participation in the evaluation study.

Signature(s):

____________________       __________
Adult participant                   Date
Parental Consent for Youth Interview

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Hello, and thank you once again for allowing your child’s participation in this research study, “An Assessment of Community-Based Youth-Adult Relationships”. As you may remember, this is an in-depth study of the Youth in Governance focus of the EYSC initiative. Thus, the study is trying to understand the experiences of youth when working on community projects with adults. The benefits of this study will include helping us to better understand what is necessary to strengthen programs that involve youth as decision-makers. Earlier this year, you agreed to your child completing two surveys related to the study.

Your child’s community group has been chosen to participate in one-on-one interviews. The interviews are to help gain first-hand knowledge about her/his personal experiences in working with peers and adults on the community project. If you consent to your child’s participation in the interview, he/she will be interviewed by a member of our evaluation team. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes and will be conducted either as a face-to-face interview or as a telephone interview. Participation is voluntary. If your child participates, he/she does not have to answer any questions that he/she does not wish to answer. There are no risks to your child in sharing this information with us.

The evaluation team will not use your child’s name or other identifying information in any report or document. We will use an ID number to record her/his responses. The list connecting your child’s name to this ID number will be kept in a locked file in my office. The information obtained from the interviews will only be available to the evaluation team. A tape recorder may be used to be certain that we capture your child’s exact responses. The tapes will also be located in a locked file in my office. Only the evaluation team will have access to these tapes. The data will be kept until December 31, 2007 at which time it will be destroyed. There are no risks to your child in sharing this information with us.

In addition, you and your child have the right to withdraw from the study. You and your child have the right to tell us not to use any information that has been given to us. Parental consent is required for your child’s participation in this study. If you DO NOT wish to consent to your child’s participation, sign your name, indicate the date on the enclosed form and return to Dr. Perkins in the enclosed postage-paid envelope. A second copy of the signature sheet is for your records.

If you have any questions, or need any additional information, please feel free to contact me at the number or address above or by email at: dfp102@psu.edu. You may also call or write The Pennsylvania State University’s Office of Research Protections if you have any questions about your rights. The Office’s phone number is 814-865-1775 and the address is: 212 Kern Graduate Building, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, 16802.

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Youth-Adult Partnerships
Parent Informed Consent Form #2
(To be returned to Dr. Perkins on if you DO NOT want your child to participate)

This is to certify that I, _______________________, hereby DO NOT consent to my child, _______________________, voluntarily participating in the interview associated with this evaluation study as an authorized part of the education and research program of The Pennsylvania State University under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Perkins.

Signature(s):

____________________       __________
Parent                                     Date

Youth-Adult Partnerships
Parent Informed Consent Form #2
(To be kept by the parent)

This is to certify that I, _______________________, hereby DO NOT consent to my child, _______________________, voluntarily participating in the interview associated with this evaluation study as an authorized part of the education and research program of The Pennsylvania State University under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Perkins.

Signature(s):

____________________       __________
Parent                                     Date
Youth Interview Informed Consent Form

Dear Youth Participant:

Hello, and thank you once again for participating in this research study, “An Assessment of Community-Based Youth-Adult Relationships”, which involves the Engaging Youth Serving Communities (EYSC) initiative. As you may remember, the purpose of the study is to understand the experiences of youth when working on community projects with adults. The benefits of this study will include helping us to better understand what is necessary to strengthen programs that involve youth and adults as decision-makers. You agreed to complete two surveys related to your participation in a community project.

Your community group has been chosen to participate in one-on-one interviews. The interviews are to help gain first-hand knowledge about personal experiences of youth and adults in working together on the community project. If you consent to participating in the interview, a member of our evaluation team will interview you. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes and will be conducted either face-to-face or by telephone. Participation is voluntary. If you participate, you do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. There are no risks to you in sharing this information with us.

The evaluation team will not use your name or other identifying information in any report or document. We will use an ID number to record your responses. The list connecting your name to the ID number will be kept in a locked file in my office. A tape recorder may be used to be certain that we capture your exact responses. The information obtained from the interviews and tapes will only be available to the evaluation team. The tapes will also be located in a locked file in my office. The data will be kept until December 31, 2007 at which time it will be destroyed. There are no risks to you in sharing this information with us.

In addition, if you choose to withdraw from the study, you have the right to tell us not to use any information that you have given us. You also have the right to receive a copy of the evaluation report if you so choose. If you have any questions, or need any additional information, please feel free to contact me at the number or address above or by email at: dfp102@psu.edu. You may also call or write The Pennsylvania State University’s Office of Research Protections if you have any questions about your rights. The Office’s phone number is 814-865-1775 and the address is: 212 Kern Graduate Building, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, 16802.

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Youth-Adult Partnerships
Youth Informed Consent Form
(To be returned to Dr. Perkins)

This is to certify that I, _______________________, hereby consent to my voluntary participation in the interview associated with this evaluation study as an authorized part of the education and research program of The Pennsylvania State University under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Perkins.

I understand the information given to me. This evaluation study and my part in it have been fully explained to me by this letter. I have received answers to any questions that I had about the research/evaluation procedure. I understand and agree to the conditions of this study as described. I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

I understand that I may decline to answer specific questions during the interview.

I understand that any data or answers will be confidential.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and terminate my participation in the evaluation study.

Signature(s):

____________________       __________
Youth participant                   Date

Youth-Adult Partnerships
Youth Informed Consent Form
(To be kept by the Youth)

This is to certify that I, _______________________, hereby consent to my voluntary participation in the interview associated with this evaluation study as an authorized part of the education and research program of The Pennsylvania State University under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Perkins.

I understand the information given to me. This evaluation study and my part in it have been fully explained to me by this letter. I have received answers to any questions that I had about the research/evaluation procedure. I understand and agree to the conditions of this study as described. I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

I understand that I may decline to answer specific questions during the interview.

I understand that any data or answers will be confidential.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and terminate my participation in the evaluation study.

Signature(s):

____________________       __________
Youth participant                   Date
Adult Interview Informed Consent Form

Dear Adult Participant:

Hello, and thank you once again for participating in this research study, “An Assessment of Community-Based Youth-Adult Relationships”, which involves the Engaging Youth Serving Communities (EYSC) initiative. As you may remember, the purpose of the study is to understand the experiences of youth when working on community projects with adults. The benefits of this study will include helping us to better understand what is necessary to strengthen programs that involve youth and adults as decision-makers. You agreed to complete two surveys related to your participation in a community project.

Your community’s team/group has been chosen to participate in one-on-one interviews. The interviews are to help gain first-hand knowledge about personal experiences of youth and adults in working together on the community project. If you consent to participating in the interview, a member of our evaluation team will interview you. You must also be 18 years of age or older to participate as an adult. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes and will be conducted either face-to-face or by telephone. Participation is voluntary. If you participate, you do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. There are no risks to you.

The evaluation team will not use your name or other identifying information in any report or document. We will use an ID number to record your responses. The list connecting your name to the ID number will be kept in a locked file in my office. A tape recorder may be used to be certain that we capture your exact responses. The information obtained from the interviews and the tapes will only be available to the evaluation team. The tapes will also be in a locked file in my office. The data will be kept until December 31, 2007 at which time it will be destroyed. There are no risks in sharing this information with us.

In addition, if you choose to withdraw from the study, you have the right to tell us not to use any information that you have given us. You also have the right to receive a copy of the evaluation report if you so choose. If you have any questions, or need any additional information, please feel free to contact me at the number or address above or by email at: dfp102@psu.edu. You may also call or write The Pennsylvania State University’s Office of Research Protections if you have any questions about your rights. The Office’s phone number is 814-865-1775 and the address is: 212 Kern Graduate Building, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, 16802.

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Family and Youth Resiliency and Policy
Youth-Adult Partnerships
Adult Informed Consent Form
(To be returned to Dr. Perkins)

This is to certify that I, _______________________, hereby consent to my voluntary participation in the interview associated with this evaluation study as an authorized part of the education and research program of The Pennsylvania State University under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Perkins.

I understand the information given to me. This evaluation study and my part in it have been fully explained to me by this letter. I have received answers to any questions that I had about the research/evaluation procedure. I understand and agree to the conditions of this study as described.

I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

I understand that I may decline to answer specific questions during the interview.

I understand that any data or answers will be confidential.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and terminate my participation in the evaluation study.

Signature(s):
____________________       __________
Adult participant                   Date

Youth-Adult Partnerships
Adult Informed Consent Form
(To be kept by the adult participant)

This is to certify that I, _______________________, hereby consent to my voluntary participation in the interview associated with this evaluation study as an authorized part of the education and research program of The Pennsylvania State University under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Perkins.

I understand the information given to me. This evaluation study and my part in it have been fully explained to me by this letter. I have received answers to any questions that I had about the research/evaluation procedure. I understand and agree to the conditions of this study as described.

I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

I understand that I may decline to answer specific questions during the interview.

I understand that any data or answers will be confidential.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and terminate my participation in the evaluation study.

Signature(s):
____________________       __________
Adult participant                   Date
Appendix C

CORRESPONDENCE
First Mailed Letter to Coordinators/Adult Leaders

<<Date>>

<<First_Name>> <<Last_Name>>
<<Address_Line_1>>
<<Address_Line_2>>
<<City>>, <<State>> <<Zip_Code>>

Dear EYSC Coordinator/Adult Group Leader:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study of youth-adult relationships. As per our phone conversation, I have enclosed the parental consent forms to be given to the youth participants to take home to their parents. After about three weeks you will receive another letter and the actual rating scales to be completed by adults and youth in the group.

I have listed instructions for you to follow in terms of the distribution of the parental consent forms:

1. Give each young person in your group a copy of the parent consent form.
2. Ask the youth to take a parent consent form home to their parents or guardian.
3. The adult and youth consent forms, along with the rating surveys, will be mailed to you around ______________.
4. We will provide you with a list of youth whose parents have declined consent for their child’s participation in the mailed packet. If a child’s name is on the list that indicates their parents DO NOT want their child to participate. Therefore, you should NOT give that particular child a rating scale to complete.

Thank you so much for your cooperation. Your time and commitment to the development of our youth is of most importance and deeply appreciated. If you have any remaining concerns, please contact Dr. Perkins at (814) 865-6988 or by email at dfp102@psu.edu.

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor  
Family and Youth Resiliency

Kenneth R. Jones  
Ph.D. Candidate and Graduate Assistant
Dear Parent or Guardian:

Hello, my name is Dr. Daniel Perkins and I am a professor at Penn State University. I am writing you this letter to inform you that I am currently conducting an in-depth evaluation study of Youth in Governance, focusing on the Engaging Youth Serving Communities (EYSC) initiative. The Youth in Governance study entitled, “Assessments of Community-Based Youth-Adult Relationships”, is part of a national evaluation project of the EYSC initiative. This in-depth study is about youth, adults, and their experiences when working on community projects.

I am asking for your permission to allow your child to participate in this study, because he/she is currently working as a member of a community group or team. The group is involved in projects such as cleaning local parks, serving on a board of directors or organizing a neighborhood event. There is very little research available on what youth and adults gain from working together as community partners. Your child’s participation will provide information on what it takes for youth and adults to successfully accomplish common goals when working together. Another benefit of this study is that it gives young people, like your child, an opportunity to share their views on how they feel about their communities. Participation is voluntary. If your child participates, he/she does not have to answer any questions that he/she does not wish to answer.

The evaluation team will not use your child’s name or other identifying information in any report or document. We will use an ID number to record her/his responses. The data will be securely stored until December 31, 2007 at which time it will be destroyed. There are no risks to your child in sharing this information with us.

In addition, you and your child have the right to withdraw from the study. You and your child have the right to tell us not to use any information that has been given to us. Parental consent is required for your child’s participation in this study. If you DO NOT wish to consent to allow your child to participate, sign your name, indicate the date on the enclosed form and return to Dr. Perkins in the enclosed postage-paid envelope. A second copy is provided for your records.

If you have any questions, or need any additional information, please feel free to contact me at the number or address above. You can also reach me by email at: dfp102@psu.edu. You may also call or write The Pennsylvania State University’s Office of Research Protections if you have any questions about your rights. The Office's phone number is 814-865-1775 and the address is: 212 Kern Graduate Building, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, 16802.

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Family and Youth Resiliency and Policy
Cover letter for 2nd Mailing to Adult Group Leader

Dear Adult Group Leader:

As promised, we are sending you more materials related to the evaluation study. We have enclosed the youth consent forms, the adult consent forms, and the rating scales/surveys for the participants involved in the study on youth-adult relationships. We have listed instructions below for you to follow in terms of the distribution of the consent forms and the rating scales.

1. At your next meeting, give each youth and adult in your group a copy of the appropriate consent form and the rating scale.
2. Allow the participants 15 minutes to read and sign the consent form and complete the rating scale. If they choose not to participate, ask them to work on another task related to the group project during that time period.
3. Have everyone place their consent form and rating scale in the envelope that you bring to the meeting. (Even if they have decided not to participate, have them place the materials in the envelope). The envelope is postage-paid, addressed to Dr. Daniel Perkins.
4. After everyone has placed their materials in the envelope, seal it in front of them. Please place it in the mail immediately following the meeting.

Thanks again for your cooperation. If you have any concerns, please contact Dr. Perkins at (814) 865-6988 or by email at dfp102@psu.edu. You may also contact Ken Jones at (814) 863-7877 or by email at krj109@psu.edu.

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins               Kenneth R. Jones
Associate Professor            Ph.D. Candidate and Graduate Assistant
Family and Youth Resiliency
Cover letter to Parents for Youth Interview

<<Date>>

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Hello, and thank you once again for allowing your child’s participation in this research study entitled, “Assessments of Community-Based Youth-Adult Relationships”. As you may remember, this is an in-depth study of the Youth in Governance focus of the Engaging Youth Serving Communities initiative. Thus, the benefit of the study is to understand the experiences of youth when working on community projects with adults. Earlier this year, you agreed to your child completing two surveys related to their participation in a community project.

Because of their progress, your child’s community group has been chosen to participate in one-on-one interviews. The interviews are to help gain first-hand knowledge about her/his personal experiences in working with peers and adults on the community project. If you consent to your child’s participation in the interview, he/she will be interviewed by a member of our evaluation team. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes and will be conducted either as a face-to-face interview or as a telephone interview. Participation is voluntary. If your child participates, he/she does not have to answer any questions that he/she does not wish to answer. There are no risks to your child in sharing this information with us.

The evaluation team will not use your child’s name or other identifying information in any report or document. A tape recorder may be used to be certain that we capture your child’s exact responses. The information will be locked away in my office and available only to the evaluation team. The data will be kept until December 31, 2007 at which time it will be destroyed.

In addition, you and your child have the right to withdraw from the study. You and your child have the right to tell us not to use any information that has been given to us. Parental consent is required for your child’s participation in this study. If you DO NOT wish to consent to your child’s participation, sign your name, indicate the date on the enclosed form and return to Dr. Perkins in the enclosed postage-paid envelope. A second copy is provided for your records.

If you have any questions, or need any additional information, please feel free to contact me at the number or address above. I can also be reached by email at: dfp102@psu.edu. You may also call or write The Pennsylvania State University’s Office of Research Protections if you have any questions about your rights. The Office’s phone number is 814-865-1775 and the address is: 212 Kern Graduate Building, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, 16802.

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Family and Youth Resiliency and Policy
Appendix D

TIMELINE FOR THE STUDY
## 2003-2004 Timeline for the Study

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<th>Task</th>
<th>Dec</th>
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<td>Schedule site visits</td>
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</table>
Kenneth R. Jones

Education

December 2004  Ph.D., The Pennsylvania State University
                Major: Agricultural and Extension Education

August 1997    M.S., The Pennsylvania State University
                Major: Agricultural Education

May 1995      B.S., North Carolina A&T State University
                Major: Agricultural Education

Professional Experience

August 2001 – December 2004  Graduate Research Assistant

August 1998 – August 2001  County Extension Agent for Agriculture

August 1997 – August 1998  County Extension Agent for 4-H/Youth Development

Publications


Presentations


Professional Affiliations

National Association of Extension 4-H Agents
American Association of Adult and Continuing Education