13 Think Globally, Act Locally: A Global Perspective on Mobilizing Adults for Positive Youth Development

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Educators, social scientists, and human service workers have contributed importantly to theorizing youth development and to investigating and defining normal development and its vicissitudes. More recently, those with applied interests have designed and evaluated programs and engaged in more hands-on advocacy with and for youth. Despite this crucial work the editors of this volume, among others, argue that a large percentage of the adult population is not involved with youth, and they urge that we consider new strategies for mobilizing adults for positive youth development. A series of questions emerged for us as we considered this mandate from the perspective of our international fieldwork and years of collaborating with youth and adults in community-based psychosocial and development programs. Specifically, we have been challenged to consider: What do youth today really need? And, what do they want? Who is best positioned to identify, evaluate, prioritize, and address youth's needs and concerns?

It is perhaps a truism among social scientists today that the development and best interests of youth are likely to be defined differently in different social contexts. Based on years of experiences working with young people within and beyond the United States, we argue that this reality also raises a subtler, yet no less profound, set of issues concerning the social scientist's underlying assumptions about children and youth. Indeed, adult ideas regarding the child and childhood (Burman, 1994) and youth (White & Wyn, 2004) are replete with ideological, social, and political meanings, which in turn inform our decisions about the kinds of activities we think children and youth should both engage

in and be prohibited from. Such considerations are critical to any exploration of adult engagement in the lives of youth.

We begin our discussion with a brief overview of whom we have in mind when we talk about youth today and, more particularly, youth from a global perspective. We then briefly describe a wide range of programs and projects developed by and/or serving youth around the globe. Some of these projects are designed and funded by adults, whereas others are in the hands of the youth who initiated them, often with the guidance and financial assistance of adults. We will argue that despite these excellent resources youth are still challenged by a range of social, political, and economic problems, many of which continue to marginalize them from opportunities to participate actively in their schools, families, and communities. In hopes of better understanding why, and of improving our responses to these realities, we explore some of the assumptions underlying psychological theories of human development that inform many of these existing youth programs. We discuss problems attendant to the application of these theories to practice and, more specifically, to policy; for example, to international conventions that bear on the rights and responsibilities of adults vis-à-vis youth, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). We briefly discuss the opportunities these challenges afford us, as social scientists and educators, to rethink selected dominant theories about youth.

Drawing on this developing knowledge, we then look to youth worldwide to inform our thinking about how to mobilize other adults for positive youth development. We explore youth activism and organizing using two youth-driven and -directed activities and participatory action research, a dialectically grounded, action-based system of knowledge construction and social change, as resources that challenge conventional wisdom about how youth gather their own stories and "speak truth to power." We suggest a more critical analysis of youth empowerment as we urge a position of *solidarity with* youth rather than one of *empowerment of* youth. We conclude with several suggestions for future action and research with youth wherein and through which we, as adults, "think globally and act locally" with youth.

Thinking Globally about Youth

Who or What Are We Thinking About?

Youth are increasingly integral to the sustenance of future nations as their numbers increase worldwide. In the United States, there were approximately 51,148,000 young people 10–19 years old in 2001 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Worldwide, there are an estimated 1.2 billion young people ages 10–19, which is the largest generation of adolescents in history (UNICEF, 2002). According to the *Statistical Handbook on the World's Children* (Kaul, 2002), children represented 34% of the total population in North America in 2000, but the proportion of children to adults is much higher in some other continents: In 2000, children

aged from birth to age 19 represented 53% of the total population in Africa, 40% of the total population in Asia, and 40% of the total population in South America.

Our attempt to "define youth" within a global context contributes to our developing argument about the deeply contextualized understandings of youth required of all youth-based research and action. Most dictionaries or resource books refer you directly to *adolescence*. The word is Latin in origin, derived from the verb *adolescere,* which means "to grow into adulthood." The *Oxford English Dictionary* (Simpson & Weiner, 1989), for example, defines adolescence as "extending from 14 to 25 in males, and from 12 to 21 in females," where the differences for girls and boys are relative to the distribution of gender-based roles and chores. Some observers have commented on this later period of adolescence for boys as related to the time needed to show sufficient responsibility to provide for a wife and child (Rogoff, 2003). The *Gale Encyclopedia of Childhood and Adolescence* (Kagan & Gall, 1998) defines adolescence as the second decade of the life span, roughly from age 10 to 20. Similarly, the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1995) defines adolescence as the period between ages 11 and 18. They refine the construct, however, distinguishing between early adolescence (ages 11–12) and late adolescence (ages 17–18).

On a global level, *youth* is the term more generally used to describe an individual within this age cohort. The United Nations and its agencies (e.g., UNICEF, 2004) identify those between the ages of 14 or 15 and 24 as youth. Despite this, in such documents as *The Official Summary of the State of the World's Children* (UNICEF, 2004), individuals between the ages of 15 and 49 are considered adults. Hence, while the term youth, when considered on a global level, is elastic, most official documents about youth deploy the terms youth and adolescence to capture that transition between childhood and adulthood.

Both the length and timing of this transition are conceptualized differently among industrialized and majority world[1] countries. It is perhaps ironic that while childhood ends and adulthood begins at an earlier age in nonindustrialized nations, owing, at least in part, to the need for youth to contribute to the economic survival of their family, the United Nations extends this period beyond that usually associated with adolescence in Euro-American psychological theories in many of its policies and practices. As we will see in this chapter, the rights and responsibilities attributed to youth in the global community often reflect not only the age ranges presented here but the rights and responsibilities associated with the roles that youth occupy in these societies. Indeed, developmental transitions in roles across the life span are closely aligned with cultural communities' traditions and practices (Rogoff, 2003). Moreover, the very incorporation of the terminology of adolescence and youth into UN discourse may

[1] Rather than the terms *Third World* or *developing world*, each of which implicitly situates the Northern Hemisphere as normative or "superior," we use the term *majority world* to refer to countries outside the U.S. and European orbit. They have a majority of the world's population and occupy a majority of the earth's land surface or geographical space, excluding China.

reflect the impact of Euro-American ideology rather than a realistic assessment of children and youth[2] in context in the majority world.

Youth Projects and Programs

As we suggested earlier, there are a wide variety of programs designed to serve, help, and empower youth, both within the United States and worldwide. A brief look at both the *Encyclopedia of Associations* (Hunt, 2002) and the *Encyclopedia of Associations: International Associations* (Atterbury, 2002), reference listings of nationally and internationally registered youth programs and services, yielded 732 separate organizations in the United States under the keyword "youth" and approximately 300 more organizations under related keywords such as "young adult," "young women," and "young people." Internationally, there were 253 separate organizations under the keyword "youth." Internet-based information is even more striking with regard to the number of programs and organizations that are youth focused. For example, in February 2004, the Freechild Project (http://www.freechild.org), a Web-based nonprofit organization designed to provide informational resources, support, educational programs, and global advocacy for youth, listed 1,091 individual organizations under the keyword "children and youth" in its user-generated database of significant youth-based organizations around the world. It is important to note that these numbers, although drawn from reputable sources, largely underestimate the number of actual youth programs and organizations that exist both in the United States and in the world, since a wide range of local and community-based programs that service and involve youth are not represented.

In addition, the proliferation of modern technologies, including the Internet, has enabled youth to communicate and connect in ways never before possible. One example that illustrates this point is UNICEF's Voices of Youth (VOY) program (http://www.unicef.org/voy/). Since 1995, VOY has focused on exploring the educational and community-building potential of the Internet and facilitating active and substantive discussions by young people of a variety of youth-generated issues, such as substance abuse, access to resources, child rights, and media portrayals of youth. Through Web-based activities (i.e., Web boards, chat rooms), VOY engages more than 20,000 young people from more than 180 countries in communication, debate, and educational exchanges.

[2] Our use of the terms *children* and *youth* in this chapter reflects some of this complexity. Some of the programs and projects described include youth of 11–12 years old, frequently thought of as pubescent or preadolescent in the United States and Western Europe, while others are led by youth of 25 years, often described as young adults in the West. Thus, our use of the terms children and youth, similar to the uses found in the diverse literature included in this chapter, is contextual and changing. Despite this elasticity, the analysis of the ideologies of children and youth presented herein apply broadly to adults' underlying assumptions about those between the ages of 11 and 25.

Challenges Facing Youth Today

Despite the many programs and networks that exist for and among youth at local, regional, national, and international levels, problems facing youth are persistent and far-reaching, especially when viewed through a global lens. Specifically, some 4 million adolescents attempt suicide each year, and of these at least 100,000 are successful (UNICEF, 2002). In 2000, an estimated 199,000 youth murders took place globally—equivalent to 565 children and young people aged 10–29 years dying on average each day as a result of interpersonal violence (World Health Organization, 2002). Globally, youth are bearing the brunt of the AIDS epidemic: Of the 4.2 million new HIV infections in 2003, half were among young people 15–24 years old (UNICEF, 2004). Examples from countries of the majority world are even more compelling with regard to HIV/AIDS: In sub-Saharan Africa alone, about 10 million youth and 2 million children under age 15 are living with HIV/AIDS (UNICEF, 2004). These social realities, while a cause for concern relative to each individual youth, also alert us to the enormous impact of youth's health, well-being, and social conditions on society as a whole.

If we, white professional psychologists, educators, and United Statesians,[3] seek to better the lives of children and youth and mobilize other adults toward those goals, we must first engage in reflective praxis that turns a careful and critical eye to the ideologies that inform our current thinking and our actions toward children and youth. A critical perspective informed by global youth also impels us to examine the scientific and cultural sources of these ideologies. In the following section, we discuss how a global perspective, wherein we think globally while acting within our local contexts, contributes to shifting our understanding of youth, youth organizing, and youth development, challenging dominant theories of adult–youth relations. We critically analyze the modern, Euro-American conception of the child and child development, and identify some of the sources of this Western knowledge about children and youth. We then examine the universalist claims of modern conceptions of childhood and youth that cast the child as object rather than agent. We argue that these perspectives, while purporting to serve children's and youth's best interests across all contexts, are inadequate for today's global world because they either ignore or obscure variabilities in the nature, contexts, and trajectories of children and youth worldwide.

Modern Conceptions of Childhood in a Postmodern and Global World

Although a discourse of childhood appears in the writings of such philosophers as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, it was not until the second

[3] The term is a translation of the Spanish term *estadounidense* (see Gugelberger, 1996, p. 4; also note 4, p. 119). It is used here rather than the more common "American" since this latter term includes reference to all citizens of the Americas, that is, of Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, and the United States of America.

half of the 19th century that "the child" became an object of serious scientific inquiry, most notably within psychology (e.g., Hall, 1883; Preyer, 1882; both as cited in Archard, 1993). Perhaps the most important feature of the way in which the modern age conceives of the child is in the child's meriting "separateness" from the adult (Archard, 1993). As suggested earlier, the youth or adolescent is seen as "in transition" between childhood and adulthood, or as an "adult in the making." In Europe and the United States, children and youth are seen as distinctly different from adults in their nature and behavior, and as meriting a marked division in the roles and responsibilities that are deemed appropriate for each. In modern Western culture, children neither work nor play alongside adults, and they have limited participation in the adult world of law and politics (Archard, 1993). Indeed, it appears that the categories of "childhood" (Burman, 1994) and "youth" (White & Wyn, 2004) exist primarily, if not exclusively, in relation to the category "adult."

Psychological Theories

Although theories of development from a variety of perspectives (e.g., sociological, economic, philosophical) have made significant contributions to our understanding of human behavior, psychological theories have distinguished themselves among the social sciences for their extensive attention to child and youth development. As such, Euro-American conceptions of the sharp distinction between childhood and adulthood have been heavily influenced by psychologists, for example, the cognitive-developmental theory of Jean Piaget, the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud, and the psychosocial theory of Erik Erikson, wherein childhood and adolescence are seen as distinct *stages* in human development that are fixed upon an ideal, adult "end state." Piaget (1977) is credited with the recognition that children's thinking is qualitatively different from that of adults. Specifically, he argued that the young child's flawed and deficient reasoning progresses teleologically in a universal, stagelike fashion, toward the logical, abstract thinking that is the hallmark of adulthood. Similarly, for Freud (1975), abnormal adult outcomes are the result of failures to surmount particular stage-specific crises, such as the Oedipus complex. Although Eriksonian theory is more culturally adaptive than either of the former theories, Erikson (1964) also posited that the major developmental task of the adolescent period is the successful resolution of an identity *crisis* that results in a *mature* identity, which is a crucial and necessary step toward becoming a productive adult. Thus, for each of these theorists, adulthood is not merely more of what childhood is less of; it is of a different and higher order (Archard, 1993).

Although there has been extensive critique of these theories (see, e.g., Gergen, 2000) and innovative retheorizing of self and subjectivity within psychology (see, e.g., Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, & Walkerdine, 1998), the work of Piaget and Freud continues to dominate textbooks and journals within the United States and beyond. These accounts of child development are most often structured in a chronological, age-driven format with respect to stage models,

and are based mainly on studies carried out by Euro-American developmental psychologists, working within the contexts and experiences of Western children (Woodhead, 1998). Cross-cultural perspectives on the trajectory of development most often appear as optional extras within applications sections of both introductory and advanced texts, in which cultural issues are treated as informing the content of development, rather than challenging the structures proposed by Piaget and Freud (Burman, 1994). Although the sociocultural view of development (in particular, the idea that cognition is mediated by cultural symbol systems) put forth by Vygotsky (1930/1971, 1978), and expanded upon at both the theoretical and empirical level by psychologists such as Cole (1996), Rogoff (1990, 2003), and Bruner (1990), has contributed to shifting the focus of some developmental psychologists, it has only recently achieved significance in the United States, and is still not central to mainstream theory, research, or practice. Indeed, mainstream developmental psychology has been ethnocentric in its desire to establish a universal science of the person (Greenfield & Cocking, 1994; Rogoff, 2003). Thus, the Euro-American understanding of childhood is as an extended period of dependency, wherein selected rights, tasks, and goals are deemed to be universally good for all children (Boyden, Ling, & Myers, 1998). Within this framework, children are granted certain autonomy and protection from selected risks.

Children's Rights

The Euro-American perspective on childhood has unceasing impact on the global community. One clear indicator of the globalizing of the ideas briefly summarized above is apparent in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which consolidates widely dispersed and frequently vague guarantees of children's rights into a single document. As such, it delineates the various rights to which children (defined as 18 years of age or younger) around the world are entitled, regardless of their status, race, or religion. These rights are purported to address the broad range of children's physical, mental, and social developmental needs, such as the right not to be discriminated against (Article 2), the right to life and development (Article 6), the right to express their views in all matters affecting them (Article 12), the right of protection from physical and mental violence (Article 19), and the right to education that develops the child's personality and talents to her or his greatest potential (Articles 28 and 29).

Despite this important international initiative, many have argued that the varied, lived realities of children worldwide cannot, by nature, be reflected in universal standards or ideals (e.g., Boyden et al., 1998; Swift, 1999; Tolfree, 1998). Others have suggested that the protections extended to children are fundamentally concessions by adults that come with a cost, namely, the negation of an active and responsible role for the child in her or his society (e.g., Liebel, 2001). From this perspective, the relationship between children and adults is inherently paternalistic, with children having minimal say in the decisions that affect them. Based in part on these critiques and on our fieldwork experiences, we

will suggest that even an instrument as significant as the 1989 Convention falls short of its aspirations, failing to support and facilitate children's agency and engagement in ways that are consonant with their own lived circumstances. Hence, the paternalistic view of children implicit within the Convention raises complex issues as well as contradictions for those adults seeking to work with children and youth. In lieu of recognizing that all children and youth have a voice, the Convention leaves adults questioning whether children should have a voice and, if so, how great a voice. Youth mobilizations, whereby children and youth take the lead in problematizing and acting upon their own realties, frequently disrupt this traditional adult–child/youth dynamic. This chapter critiques and resituates a paternalistic, adult–child dynamic, challenging ourselves and other adults to critically interrogate our responses to children and youth.

We will argue that an examination of youth activism from a global perspective offers one lens through which to explore how youth mobilizing transforms traditional understandings of youth and adult–youth relations. In the following section, we select a complex and controversial issue, youth labor, and present one example of a global youth movement in which youth define and analyze their own lived circumstances, and work together to generate solutions aimed toward bettering their own lives. Through this discussion we seek to illustrate how youth have exhibited agency in a critical area of their lives and how that agency can resituate our adult understanding of them and what they need and desire. We then discuss a specific resource for adults who seek to collaborate in more egalitarian, less hierarchical relations with youth as they articulate their priorities and their struggles to improve their own lives and the lives of their families and communities, participatory action research (PAR). PAR was developed to engage participants historically marginalized from access to power and decision making, regardless of age, in understanding and transforming their own social realities (Rahman, 1991). We present several PAR projects to elucidate the methodology and its potential as a concrete resource for adults seeking to facilitate authentic change both with and among youth.

Youth as Legitimate Organizers

The Working Children's Movement

Movements and organizations of working children began at the end of the 1970s in Latin America, and in the 1990s in Africa and Asia, where an estimated 40 million children are part of the workforce (Bachman, 2000). Although the political and ideological debate that surrounds the issue of child labor is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to note its highly controversial status among both progressive and conservative groups in both industrialized and majority world countries. Some argue for laws that exclude children (generally those up to the age of 15) from the labor market, while others seek to achieve a similar end through international, bilateral, or consumer boycotts and sanctions against

products made with child labor. In contrast, various nongovernmental organizations recommend that children's economic contributions to society should not be condemned and that we should listen to children and support their efforts for better working conditions (White, 1996). Despite these differences there is widespread agreement that certain child labor conditions (e.g., children in bondage, kidnapped, enslaved in forced labor, prostitution) are abusive, and all concur that children involved in such situations need to be removed (White, 1996). Within this diversity of views, the main objective of the working children's movement is to band together to advocate for livable wages and proper working conditions, and to resist exclusion from the labor market, a state incongruent with daily realities for many children in the world (White, 1996).

In global terms, UNICEF estimates that at least 190 million children aged 10–14 are working, 75% of them the equivalent of six days a week (UNICEF, 1997). Although unions of child workers have routinely been shut out of the international debate over child labor—indeed, the International Labor Organization (ILO) has specifically excluded any child labor unions from its current campaign to eradicate the worst forms of child labor—working children's organizations have begun to be more visible in some international contexts, for example, at the 1997 Amsterdam Child Labor Conference. Additionally, individual movements are gaining momentum, power, and strength through global unification, as exemplified in the recent World Meeting of Working Children, a 14-day gathering of delegates of African, Asian, and Latin American movements held in Germany in April 2004. Yet this involvement is highly controversial; some charge that these children, particularly those involved in the most hazardous and exploitative forms of work, are not representative of child workers, or that they have been manipulated by adults (Swift, 1999).

The right to work and to organize as workers is fully supported by Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which asserts: "Everyone has the right to work. Everyone has the right to equal pay for equal work. Everyone has the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his interests." Moreover, Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) specifies the right to be heard, and Article 15, the freedom of association. However, the CRC has also been cited by those opposed to child and youth workers. Article 28, for example, assumes a universally positive role for education, advocating that primary education should be compulsory. Article 32 states further that parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from exploitation, and from any work that is likely to "interfere with the child's education" (Boyden et al., 1998). The CRC, ostensibly grounded in a deep concern for all children and youth, has thus become a tool through which adults on both sides of the important issue of children's and youth's work exert *power over* children and youth. We argue here that the deeply contextualized and constrained environments in which majority world children live, work, and organize compel us to rethink child and youth labor. Moreover, the claim that children's and youths' rights as codified in UN documents are universal is thus exposed as situationally embedded and of only relative guidance in thinking through the complex issues surrounding child and youth labor.

The working children's movement is an excellent example of youth demanding and creating a space in which they have framed and defined a critical issue that affects their lives. Further, these movements are founded on the belief that every individual, regardless of age, is of value and has a contribution to make, thereby challenging conventional power relationships between adults and children (Swift, 1999). The working children's movements have thus become a means by which both children and supportive adults can explore and perhaps redefine their respective roles as citizens (Swift, 1999) and, as significantly, traditional hierarchical relationships between adults and youth.

One example of a particularly well organized child and youth labor movement is Bhima Sangha, an independent union of working children aged 6–18 years old in Bangalore and six districts of the state of Karnataka, India (Swift, 1999). The name was chosen by the children, *Bhima* being a character in a sacred Hindu text that has the strength of 10,000 elephants, and *sangha* signifying union. The association was conceptualized by and for working children, who realized that they were not recognized as workers by the state, local trade unions, or legislation. The union was formally launched in 1990, with the support of The Concerned for Working Children (CWC), a nongovernmental organization that assists local governments, communities, and working children themselves, in the implementation of viable, comprehensive, and appropriate solutions that reflect the lived conditions and experience of working children. With a membership of 13,000 working children that is still growing, Bhima Sangha is active in southern India, and children themselves play central roles. While the scope of their activism has included such activities as informing youth workers of their rights, documenting children's hazardous working conditions, and inspiring parents, the media, and policy makers to advocate for human rights issues, perhaps their greatest accomplishment has been in the area of local policy making and planning. Along with CWC, Bhima Sangha has negotiated the setting up of village task forces that enable children to participate in local politics. Additionally, Bhima Sangha has been instrumental in the formation of *makkala panchayats* (children's councils), which parallel the village *panchayats* and offer children a unique forum to discuss issues that directly concern them, such as the construction of a footbridge that would assist children in traveling to school. Representatives of the makkala panchayat bring their concerns to the task force after in-depth discussions. With an electorate that consists of all working children (aged 6–18), the makkala panchayat helps find solutions for all children (not just those who are working) at the local level, by creating a space for the voices of youth, particularly young girls, to raise issues that concern them, and to participate in critical decision-making processes.

Through Bhima Sangha a significant group of Indian working children and youth have organized on their own behalf and on the behalf of the wider community of children and youth in six districts of one Indian state. We know of no research that has evaluated the impact of their organization on the young participants. Although critically important to assess the movement's effects and its value to those involved, this example of a children and youth movement offers more immediate challenges to an adult readership. Specifically, Bhima

Sangha exemplifies how youth workers can voice their concerns and organize on their own behalf. Adult consultation and support have facilitated their participation in wider social movements and has created conditions through which their voices have been more widely heard. This praxis defies conventional adult wisdom about children, youth, and work. Moreover, it widens our lens as U.S. adults for thinking about how best to "protect" children and raise important considerations about the value of children's and youth's work in the family's and the community's survival in the majority world. Thus, the existence and success of Bhima Sangha challenge Euro-American social scientists and educators as well as community and labor activists to reflect upon and critically interrogate our current thinking about and work with children and youth.

Participatory Action Research and Youth

Participatory action research (PAR) offers an additional resource, that is, a set of strategies and reflexive practices, to think critically about ourselves as adults, about youth, and about the work we do with them. As argued above, youth are frequently marginalized from power and decision making (see, e.g., Prilleltensky, Nelson, & Peirson, 2001; Serrano-Garcia & Bond, 1994). Thus the legitimate, insider knowledge of their own experience is ignored by those who seek to "study" or "serve" them. Participatory action research is an optimal resource for adults who wish rather to collaborate with and accompany youth as they mobilize on their own behalf.

While providing a simple definition of PAR is difficult, we agree with those who argue that PAR is a resource through which individuals self-consciously empower themselves to take effective, collective action toward improving conditions in their own lives (Park, 1993; Reason & Bradbury, 2001). An explicit aim of PAR is to liberate the human spirit, especially the spirit of the marginalized and oppressed, in order to bring about a more just and equitable society. Although PAR is often described as a qualitative research method or approach, it is also conceptualized as a paradigmatic worldview or a "philosophy of life" (Rahman & Fals-Borda, 1991, p. 29). What distinguishes PAR methodologically and philosophically from more traditional approaches to research is a resistance to conventional positivist views of science, knowledge, and practice. PARers reject claims that objective reality can be known through experimental methods and posit distinctive and alternative conceptions of knowledge and its relation to power, of the role of the researcher, and of the relationship between research and practice. Consistent with the central tenets of qualitative inquiry, PAR assumes that all knowledge and observation are value and content laden, subject to social verification (Rahman, 1991). Hence, knowledge is neither universal nor objective; it is situated, local, and socially constructed. Further, PAR assumes that knowledge is inextricably linked with power and challenges traditional knowledge mechanisms, such as socialization, education, and the media, that have defined and legitimized both what counts as useful knowledge and whose

interest (the educated, white middle class) this knowledge serves (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001; Rahman, 1991).

In PAR, the traditional, asymmetrical subject–object relationship between the researcher and participant (with the researcher at the top) that characterizes traditional positivist forms of inquiry is transformed into one of subject–subject, in which both parties collaborate in authentic participation (Fals-Borda, 1991). Put another way, PAR is a means of recognizing the research capabilities of marginalized and disenfranchised people and assisting them in acquiring tools with which they can transform their lives for themselves (Park, 1993).

Participatory action research aims to set in motion the process of consciousness-raising, or *conscientization*, by which participants collectively and critically analyze their understandings and practices, in order to confront and overcome injustice, ignorance, and oppression. The researcher thus plays a supportive and facilitative role. The university-based researcher, often an outsider, joins community participants and in social solidarity they come together within local communities to change the structural features of the social milieu in order to realize a fuller life and a more just society. The fruits of PAR are real and material changes in what people do, what they value, how they interact with others, and how they interpret their world (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Park, 1993).

Several examples of participatory action research projects that involve adults and youth in collaborative, change-based projects serve to illustrate these points. As important, they form the basis for critically analyzing dominant discourse of youth development that currently informs much social scientific and educational research and their applications. Although the projects we have chosen to highlight focus on the development and promotion of youth, they differ in the degree to which they are youth or adult initiated and implemented. Those that offer greater decision making to youth are sites in which traditional adult–child power dynamics can be contested and where, in the words of one 16-year-old boy, youth can become contributing members of society, rather than mere onlookers: "I mean the system is not helping any . . . we're [thought of] as dumb and stupid and the system, they don't even let us vote until we're eighteen . . . we don't have no kind of interest in politics, but then we get eighteen, we all of a sudden got to vote and we don't know [what] we're voting about" (Children's Express, 1993, p. 29). We begin with several examples from youth communities of color in the United States and then discuss several participatory projects beyond U.S. borders.

U.S.-Based Participatory Action Research

The Youth Action Research Institute (YARI) of the Institute for Community Research (a nonprofit independent research and training agency based in Hartford, Connecticut) is a center-based, adult-driven, youth participatory program. YARI seeks to facilitate youth-led action research for development, risk prevention, and social change with preadolescents and adolescents (upper

elementary through high school) of diverse ethnic backgrounds, as well as sexual minority youth. Youth gain focused and extensive training in participatory methods through the Summer Youth Research Institute (SYRI). Each year 40 urban youth are formally recruited (i.e., they are hired as paid employees) to participate in a 7-week summer program in which they collectively choose a research issue that is meaningful to them (within the realm of drug, violence, or at-risk sexual behavior), learn and apply social science research methods (i.e., ethnographic observation, interviews), and analyze their results. During the subsequent school year, participants have the opportunity to construct action strategies through which they disseminate prevention messages that are linked to their work in the summer.

In one project, for example, youth chose to examine the explicit and implicit media messages about sexual behavior that are targeted at teens. Through critical observation of media imagery (commercials) and focus group discussions, youth identified the media's influence on youth attitudes, emotions, and behavior. To disseminate their results, they created a montage of videos, commercials, and television shows for use in educating other youth in their communities. Ultimately, youth are involved in the generation of new knowledge about both themselves and their communities (M. Berg, personal communication, April 7, 2004; http://www.incommunityresearch.org/research/yari.htm).

In an ambitious project with younger adolescents, Alice McIntyre (2000) collaborated in participatory action research with 12- and 13-year-old middle school youth of color to investigate how they negotiated their daily lives within an urban community. The research focus was identified and concretized through ongoing dialogue, discussion, and creative activities (i.e., skits, collage). The meanings these youth made of the multiple forms of violence in their lives (interpersonal, educational, structural, environmental) emerged as the central research focus of the project. Unlike programs whereby university people enter communities to either study local residents as "objects of inquiry" or to "rescue" community members who have been labeled as "at-risk," this project attempted to create a space where youth could tell their own insider stories, engage in the coconstruction of knowledge regarding both self and community, and generate youth-initiated action and intervention projects that would address identified concerns.

To this end, youth participants engaged in a community photography project in which they took more than 600 photographs of their communities. Although multiple images and perspectives, many of them positive, were shared by the participants as they described and analyzed their photographs, the abundant trash and disrepair evident in their neighborhoods were particularly disturbing to them. As a result, the group developed and implemented a long-term, ongoing community cleanup project, which they named One STEP (Save the Earth Program), the goal of which was both to raise community awareness regarding local environmental issues and to engage school, community, and city officials in "cleaning up" the community (One STEP Group, McIntyre, & McKeirnan, 2000). Youth presented their project and their vision for a cleaner environment

to both university and local city council audiences. Although basic systems of power and privilege that affect youth in urban communities were not dismantled through this effort, McIntyre argues that it facilitated a sense of agency in the urban youth of color who participated. McIntyre's social solidarity not only with the youth but also with their teachers, families, and their community created the conditions for them to exercise leadership and make change.

Another example of PAR within and beyond schools is the Opportunity Gap Project (Fine et al., 2004). Youth collaborated with PAR researchers to investigate the processes of institutional racism in racially integrated suburban high schools in New York and New Jersey, as manifested in areas such as differential opportunity and access for students of color and a collective resistance to examine particular school experiences (e.g., "color blindness"). Youth themselves are the central voices in the project; in fact, upon joining the project, youth insisted the title be changed from "the achievement gap" to its current title, in order to reflect the magnitude and range of discrimination that they faced in schools. More than 50 students of diverse ethnic and class backgrounds were brought together to form a "Youth Research Community" and participated in an initial research "methods training" camp. Research questions initially presented by the adult researchers were discussed and reframed by youth, and youth learned about research methods, including survey design and focus groups. Together with adult researchers, youth crafted a survey including questions focusing on distributive justice in both the schools and the nation. The survey was disseminated to 9th and 12th graders in 13 urban and suburban school districts, yielding rich qualitative and quantitative data. Now several years into the project, youth are presenting analyses of these data back to their own schools. Although the impact these youth might have on actual school policy is not yet known, participatory methodology has enabled them to join a growing movement of youth who are asking the United States to make good on the promises of *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Beyond U.S. Borders

Youth-led participatory education and development projects outside of the United States offer a unique lens through which to understand the critical contributions youth make to the livelihood and sustenance of the families and communities in which they live and work. Peace Child International (with headquarters in the United Kingdom) is one of the world's largest youth-led organizations. Its role is to assist youth (ages 12–25) worldwide in community development, change, and empowerment strategies. Together with the United Nations, Peace Child has produced a number of publications on the environment, sustainable development, and human rights (all of which have been written and illustrated by young people) for young people who wish to engage in collaborative projects regarding community development (http://www.peacechild.org).

These projects are largely realized through Peace Child's Be the Change program. Be the Change is a youth-empowerment program that gives young

people the chance to make changes in their community. Launched in 1999, Be the Change is a Web-based international development program for youth-generated projects. The program facilitates low-cost, youth-led community projects by assisting youth (ages 12–25) worldwide in identifying needs within their communities, proposing well-formulated plans of action, finding adult mentors, raising funds to complete projects, and evaluating and reporting project results. Be the Change projects have ranged from health awareness/prevention of HIV/AIDS to the rebuilding of devastated environments. The Dalit Empowerment Project in India is one such example. The project focused on the organization of young people in the village of Gudahatti, which is composed mainly of aboriginal Dalits (lowest caste, oppressed people) of India who have been systematically stripped of their land and dignity by members of the upper castes. The goal of this youth-led project was to address problems facing the village (i.e., health and education) and restore pride within the community. Specific youth-driven, adult-assisted project activities included the construction of a more sanitary drainage system and the construction of a new primary school. With additional funding, the youth plan to implement a recycling and composting project, aimed at improving health and hygiene within the community.

All of these projects were designed by youth, accompanied by adults, to identify and redress the wide range of social, economic, cultural, and political inequalities that they face on a daily basis. All used creative resources—including storytelling, dramatization, and, more recently, technologies such as the Internet and video—as means through which youth narrate their own stories, educate themselves and their peers, and reimagine their worlds. Some, like projects based in YARI, focus on problems (e.g., alcoholism, HIV/AIDS) identified by adults who coordinate research institutes or service centers out of which youth organize. Others, such as One STEP or the Opportunity Gap project, were initiated by PAR adult "outsider" researchers, who sought to engage youth "insiders" (Bartunek & Louis, 1996) in solidarity and who risked entering into collaborative relationships, putting traditional adult–youth power dynamics into creative motion. In contrast, Bhima Sangha and Be the Change programs, efforts that emerged and function beyond U.S. borders, are more clearly youth-initiatied and intimately connected to their material well-being and economic development (White & Wyn, 2004). These efforts challenge adults in the United States to acknowledge youth's complex social situatedness and to listen carefully to their words and deeds in order to resituate our understandings of youth and our work with them. Taking the global perspective articulated through these programs beyond our borders, we, as U.S.-based adults, are challenged to act locally, that is, to risk entering into social solidarity with and among youth. This response remobilizes our adult gaze, shifting the ways in which we see and hear the children and youth among us. These shifts demand that we retheorize child and youth development and rethink the claims of universality of dominant developmental theories and of conventions on children's and youth's human rights. As significantly, they challenge us to reconfigure our relations with children and youth.

Situating Youth Empowerment in Systems of Power and Processes of Liberation

Prilleltensky et al. (2001), among others, have argued that children and youth, as marginalized populations with little political power, come last in the allocation of resources. The current underfunding of the much heralded No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 is only the most recent example confirming Prilleltensky et al.'s contention. We have argued here that our tendency as social scientific researchers, educators, and human service workers to excel at examining and treating the individual, family, or small group focuses our gaze on victims of this underfunding—poor children and youth, and children and youth of color—rather than on children and youth as actors with the potential to resist and/or transform the social inequalities that confront them. A perspective that focuses primarily on individual well-being contributes to the design of positive youth development programs and projects created to, minimally, help youth and, maximally, empower them. Such projects are primarily, if not exclusively, designed to intervene at the level of the individual or small group. Considerably less emphasis is placed on the social and contextual aspects of youth and their developing communities. Moreover, they tend to psychologize children's and youth's problems, ignoring the social and political contexts that constrain or impede their development (Prilleltensky et al., 2001).

Although some youth have clearly benefited from this perspective, the social indicators of youth worldwide presented at the beginning of this chapter suggest that these social interventions fail youth miserably. The focus on youth activism—through social movements and PAR—discussed in this chapter offers a possible alternative for adults who seek to mobilize themselves for positive youth development. Specifically, the adults who accompanied youth activists and collaborated in the PAR projects described above engaged with them as co-collaborators, daring to risk mobilizing their power as adults in new ways, and "hearing into speech" (Morton, 1985) youth's powerful narratives. Despite this, some of them embraced conclusions similar to more individually oriented youth programs, that is, that youth participants were empowered. While celebrating the multiple contributions the youth and adults described herein have made, we conclude this chapter by interrogating this tendency to psychologize youth activism within a discourse of empowerment and argue rather for a discourse of social solidarity and youth-adult activism. While drawing inspiration from these examples of youth organizing and the PAR youth-adult collaborations, we resituate ourselves as United Statesian psychologists within the critical framework suggested by majority world youth organizing projects described above (Bhima Sangha and the Dalit). Thus positioned, we challenge social scientists, educators, and human service workers to rethink the discourse of empowerment in order to stand more fully in solidarity with the youth of the world and, in solidarity, mobilize adults to join youth in their push for more just and positive youth development.

Specifically, within psychology, empowerment is frequently defined as a process of gaining influence over events and outcomes of importance to an

individual or group (Fawcett et al., 1994). Others define it as a process of gaining mastery over one's life (Rappaport, 1984), of learning to see a closer correspondence between one's goals and a sense of how to achieve them, that is, where efforts and life outcomes are in greater congruence (Mechanic, 1991). Community psychologists Serrano-Garcia and Bond (1994), drawing on Zimmerman (2000), among others, argue that empowerment exists on multiple levels, that is, the individual, the organizational, and the community. Yet, despite the importance of these levels and the insistence that groups or communities can be empowered, Serrano-Garcia and Bond (1994) suggest that most research on empowerment, and most empowerment activities, have focused on the individual.

Youth engaged in PAR in the projects described understand their social situatedness within multiple and interconnected social systems and institutional and cultural infrastructures (McIntyre, 2000) that are permeated by social inequalities. As researchers, educators, and parents who accompany them, we are challenged to create conditions or spaces within which youth encounter, reflect upon, and engage their own power. The deeper challenge confronting us as adults is, thus, to facilitate processes whereby youth activism toward social change might be realized by youth themselves. Fine, Weis, Centrie, and Roberts (2000) describe this important function of PAR through a discussion of "meaningful spaces." Meaningful spaces are both geographically centralized over time and historically constituted or created. They are places in which people of all ages come together to critique what is, to shelter themselves from what has been, and to image and redesign what might be (Fine et al., 2000). Meaningful spaces, then, have both a recuperative and a transformative power. While the creation of these spaces is not in and of itself a substitute for the legitimate redistribution of material goods or power, these spaces are necessary bridges to possibilities not seen, and to collective action not yet taken. When viewed in the context of adults mobilizing for youth, these meaningful spaces are critically necessary but not sufficient conditions for positive youth development.

McIntyre (2000) argues that PAR also contributes to clarifying what we see as the second challenge facing adults seeking to mobilize toward positive youth development. Specifically, PAR contributes significantly to responding to the question of what we do *after* we have identified and named some of the systemic obstacles that interfere with youth becoming legitimate members of society. Adults are thus challenged to respond to youth's activism through engaging with them in efforts to redistribute material goods and power toward building a more just and equitable society.

From Empowerment to Social Solidarity: How Do We Shift Our Work with and for Youth?

Most programs and policies concerning youth rest on the premise that youth are not knowledgeable, capable, or agential enough in their own right (White & Wyn, 2004). Such a perspective values young people primarily as future adults, that is, for "what they will become" (White & Wyn, 2004, p. 81). This provides a

rationale for adults controlling and monitoring the lives and activities of youth, in the interest of protecting their future (White & Wyn, 2004). Thus, youth can be legitimately excluded from truly participating in the programming decisions that might affect them the most.

As we have suggested in this chapter, before we, as adults, can begin to engage in practices that seek solidarity with youth, we must critically examine and challenge our paternalistic and paradoxical conceptions about children and youth and the nature of youth involvement. On the one hand, adults claim that today's youth are unmotivated and uninvolved with social issues that concern them. Yet when youth do mobilize politically (e.g., an antiracist demonstration at a high school or college), their efforts are often discounted as idealistic, insubordinate, or merely reflective of an adult-run organization that possibly is manipulating them.

One key issue underlying adults' hesitancy in reconciling themselves to youth organizing and advocacy is trust. That is, do youth really possess legitimate knowledge that is trustworthy? Or, can we trust youth enough to let them make more of their own decisions? This requires that we suspend our own beliefs about what is in the best interests of youth and believe that youth themselves have something important to share. To do this, in addition to engaging in the reflective praxis we have described earlier, adults must commit to spending time with youth. We have to "hang out" with them in nonthreatening ways in a variety of settings. We must listen to and seek to understand their culturally specific ways of knowing, speaking, and acting, as exemplified in the projects described previously by McIntyre (2000) and Fine et al. (2004). Only then will we adults hear what they have to say and support the multiple and diverse ways in which they respond to challenges in their lives.

We must also consider trust from the perspectives of youth themselves. Youth frequently view adults as "outsiders" who are either unwilling to or incapable of fully understanding their points of view. These realities are further compounded by race, ethnicity, and class. The imposition of teachers, human service workers, and psychologists, the majority of whom are white and middle class, on the lives of poor youth or youth of color may be felt strongly and resisted. Forging relationships and collaborative efforts between adults and youth marginalized from power is difficult for all involved. As adults, by virtue of holding more societal status, controlling more resources, and having more *power over*, we must assume primary responsibility for addressing these inequalities and the challenges inherent in any effort to forge relationships characterized by social solidarity.

Researchers using participatory approaches have reflected on the complex processes and dilemmas inherent in gaining the trust of participants, with regard to power, ethnicity, class, and gender (see LeCompte, 1995; Lykes, 1997; Reinharz, 1997). Although no simple solutions exist, trust is often forged with patience, sensitivity, reflexivity, and a commitment to long-term relationships. Essentially, establishing trust through relationships with individuals (in this case, youth) involves sustained effort over time. To do so, we must avoid the "hello–goodbye" approach (LeCompte, 1995, p. 96) to research, practice, and

program development in which there is minimal contact, collaboration, and long-term commitment between participant and researcher.

Once the processes of reflection, trust, and commitment have been initiated, those adults who seek to engage in solidarity with youth through youth development programs will be better positioned to work alongside them in more legitimate ways. In so doing, programs must strive to provide maximal, rather than minimal, youth involvement and engagement, where youth have both authentic and important roles (White & Wyn, 2004). Based on our discussion of youth activism and youth-based participatory projects, we present a selection of strategies through which traditional, adult-driven youth programs might move toward ones that reflect social solidarity, where adults might work *with* rather than *for* youth:

1. Analyzing, modifying, and/or rewriting the goals or mission statement of the organization or project based on the insights and perspectives of youth involved;
2. Asking youth to evaluate the current scope and content of activities and projects within the organization, and allowing them to both redesign and execute activities with adult assistance;
3. Involving youth in training, seminars, and mentorship that might equip them with skills to become teachers and instructors within the program;
4. Engaging youth in program recruitment and dissemination of information regarding the program;
5. Having youth assume responsibility for publicity of the organization at local venues about which they have ample knowledge, such as local hangouts, shopping malls, schools, parks, or youth community centers;
6. Working alongside youth as spokespersons and advocates for the organization and its goals, through public forums and the media and ensuring that youth have significant roles in public debates;
7. Creating a governing board within the organization in which youth, not adults, assume the primary roles;
8. Working alongside youth in developing program evaluation tools, where youth assume responsibility for the implementation and reporting of the evaluation; and,
9. Using our "status" as adults to advocate for the needs of youth with regard to the program (funding, space, materials/supplies).

Although these suggestions are by no means exhaustive, they represent critical places whereby individual programs, projects, or organizations might facilitate change. As such, they represent some of the many ways that youth development programs can become more participatory and collaborative, where youth and adults might work together in social solidarity.

Through resituating youth and the discourse of youth empowerment—both theoretically and in practice—we invite adults to accompany youth through social solidarity. These experiences of accompaniment deeply inform not only our understandings of youth and youth development but also our understandings of what it means to be an adult within a grossly inequitable world at a time when

youth are actively organizing and mobilizing on their own behalf. A global lens challenges us to interrogate claims of universality in both our social scientific theories of development and in the applications of these theories in UN conventions, policies, and practices. Youth organizing complexifies adult theorizing about youth, challenging us to rethink basic assumptions and their applications. We are invited to engage in solidarity with youth-organized collectivities and communities. As significantly, mobilizing adults toward positive youth development within a global context means mobilizing adults in solidarity with youth's activism, an activism that seeks to transform material conditions toward building a more just and equitable world.

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