



Youth-led social change: Topics, engagement types, organizational types, strategies, and impacts



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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a framework for evaluating youth-led social change. The framework considers: seven topics (e.g., environment, human health and safety, and education); nine engagement types (e.g., volunteerism, research and innovation, and political engagement); six organizational types (e.g., advisory body, social enterprise, and individual); three strategies (socialization, influence, and power); and three scales of impacts (individual, community/inter-organizational, and national/international). Using this framework, empirical research provides evidence of how youth – defined as young people 15–24 years of age – have been agents of change in Canada over the 35 years from 1978 to 2012. A media content analysis of 264 articles, combined with frequency and chi-square tests, were completed to study the factors and the relationships among them. The results show a strong relationship between the impact and the strategy, topic, engagement type, and organizational type. The results also show a strong relationship between the strategy and the impact, engagement type and organizational type. The findings have implications for youth leaders and those who advocate for, work with, support, and educate them, and for those interested in evaluating social change efforts.

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1. Introduction

In modern futures studies, the perspectives and experiences of different generations are relevant (Gáspár & Laurén, 2013). Youth have been responsible for prompting a variety of social changes that include influencing debates of national importance (Seidman, 2012), leading important health sciences research (Coyne, 2010), and increasing access to post-secondary education (Seguin, 2012). However, despite their input, youth are increasingly disenfranchised from the decision-making process (Apathy is Boring, 2004; DreamNow, n.d.). When youth are engaged, particularly when empowerment and development opportunities are provided, there are multiple benefits for society (Maconachie, 2014; Powers & Tiffany, 2006). For example, knowledge is generated that is accessible to youth, and therefore to society in general (Powers & Tiffany, 2006); and as a result, youth emerge more skilled, better connected and ready to become active, productive members of society

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(Wilson, 2000). While there is a body of literature that considers the impacts of youth leadership/entrepreneurship on young people's development, there is a lack of literature that discusses and evaluates the impact of youth-led social change initiatives on society. What topics, engagement types, organization types, and strategies do young people most often employ? Which approaches are the most effective for achieving a higher scale of impact?

This paper synthesizes the extant literature to develop a framework for evaluating the impact of youth-led social change initiatives on Canadian society. Using this framework, the research identifies how youth – defined as young people 15–24 years of age – have been agents of change in Canada over a 35-year period. By understanding the relationships between topics, engagement types, organization types, strategies and impacts, the empirical research not only validates the utility of the theoretical framework, but also has practical lessons for youth leaders, youth advocates and evaluators. The findings suggest the most effective route youth may take toward achieving their social goals, based on what has been effective in the past, and confirm the impact youth have had.

1.1. *Understanding youth-led engagement*

Defined primarily by the age of young people, there is very little consensus regarding the precise age range of individuals that fall into the category of 'youth'. Suggested ages found scattered throughout the literature range from 10 to 29, and the main factors which appear to determine the age bracket are the context of the society and the domain under which the study occurs. This research study defines the demographic as young people aged 15–24 years, as has been done by others (UNESCO, 2012; Weinstock, Berman, & Cates Jr., 2004).

The concept of youth-led engagement – which can be understood as youth taking responsibility for creating benefits for society and the world – encompasses attitudes, behaviors, knowledge, and skills of individuals and organizations by engaging youth in a specifically directed course of actions, which may occur in any number of types or topics (Lenzi et al., 2012). The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement defines youth engagement as “the meaningful participation and sustained involvement of a young person in an activity, with a focus outside of him or herself” (Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, n.d., p. 1). Youth engagement often occurs when non-youth invite youth to participate in decisions that affect or will affect them directly (National Council for Voluntary Youth Services, 2008). They are involved in exploring solutions, and sometimes can even influence decision making or planning processes (Helferty & Clarke, 2009). This kind of engagement, where youth are invited to participate, is known as youth organizing (Ilkiw, 2010). Youth organizing and youth-led organizing are two separate concepts (Ilkiw, 2010). Youth organizing involves specific strategies that bring youth together for social justice purposes. Alternatively, youth-led organizing (or engagement) is set up by youth and is typically centered on grassroots activities (Ilkiw, 2010). This study is interested in youth-led engagement in Canada.

1.2. *Topics, organization types, and engagement types*

There is no study that specifically discusses the topics youth address, although researchers have presented examples/case studies that demonstrate youth-led engagement in various topics. In summary, topics (with example literature) include: environment (Christensen, Krogman, & Parlee, 2010), human health and safety (Weinstock et al., 2004), human rights and democracy (Jahromi, Crocetti, & Buchanan, 2012), equity, empowerment and social justice (Wilson, 2000), education (Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994), science, business, technology and development (Bach, 2009), and culture and religion (Ary, Duncan, & Hops, 1999).

The types of organizations that youth use to engage in social change initiatives include a wide range of options. Youth create informal groups (Helferty, Clarke, & Kouri, 2009), non-profit organizations (Clarke & Dougherty, 2010), for-profit organizations, and social enterprises (Alvord, Brown, & Letts, 2004); and they work through advisory bodies, such as the youth wings of political parties or youth councils (Llewellyn, Cook, & Molina, 2010). In addition, many young people work as an individual instead of creating or joining a group (Helferty & Clarke, 2009).

Youth-led engagement leading to social change can occur in many different ways, and there may be multiple engagement types that address a single topic (Alvord et al., 2004; Ilkiw, 2010; Wilson, 2000). While there is no one list of engagement types, synthesizing the existing literature, the following categories can be created: philanthropy (Canada25, 2005), volunteerism (Wilson, 2000), political engagement (Jenkins, Andonlina, Keeter, & Zukin, 2003), public policy (Gauthier, 2003), economic activity (Alvord et al., 2004), arts (Wilson, 2000), and research and innovation (Sen, 2007).

1.3. *Strategies and impacts*

Gauthier (2003) offers a typology of a young person's degree of involvement that ranges from socialization to influence to power through partnerships. Helferty and Clarke (2009) adapted that typology into a means of considering types of social change tactics led by students. Clarke and Dougherty (2010) consider these same types of social change tactics as strategies that youth in Canada employ. The socialization category is, for the purpose of classifying events in this research, synonymous with awareness-raising, and may include such activities as educational campaigns, promoting the acknowledgment of issues through various means including artistic expression, and other such activities. Influence describes activities in which youth indirectly affect social change, while power classifies activities in which youth directly affect social change themselves (Clarke & Dougherty, 2010).

In terms of impacts, some research into the area of motivations behind youth engagement has been undertaken (Andolina, Jenkins, Zukin, & Keeter, 2003; Lenzi et al., 2012; O'Toole, Lister, Marsh, Jones, & McDonagh, 2003), but very little has been written in terms of impact of youth-led initiatives on society. Clarke and Dougherty (2010) organize the scale of impacts as individual (affecting one or persons or organizations on their own), community or inter-organizational (affecting change at the community/regional or sector scale), and national or international (institutionalizing change at the macro scale).

Clarke and Dougherty (2010) consider impacts in terms of the relationship with strategy. They offer a 3 × 3 matrix of strategies and impacts. In this way, impacts are not only viewable as a linear process or as simply an outcome. While Gauthier (2003) considers partnerships as linked to power, Clarke and Dougherty (2010) consider power as directly creating the change (for example, building a school or solar installation). Given that partnerships are one strategy being used by youth (Apathy is Boring, 2004), and they are different from power or influence, this paper adds partnerships to the strategies youth use. In addition, this study changed the title 'systemic' to 'national/international' since a geographic scale is easier to measure; this also increases consistency across categories as the first two titles relate to geographic scale whereas the title 'systemic' may be interpreted not only in the same way, but also in terms of depth of impact. Table 1 presents the new matrix.

1.4. New framework of youth-led social change

Table 2 offers a new framework that synthesizes the scattered information that is currently available from several contexts and fields of study, including: four strategies (Apathy is Boring, 2004; Canada25, 2005; Llewellyn et al., 2010; Clarke & Dougherty, 2010), five categories of topic (Alvord et al., 2004; Bach, 2009; Canada25, 2005; Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, n.d.; Ho & Chernushevich, 2009; Jahromi et al., 2012; Sen, 2007; Wilson, 2000), three scales of impact (Clarke & Dougherty, 2010), eight types of youth-led engagement (Alter, 2007; Canada25, 2005; Dees, 1998; Gauthier, 2003; Jahromi et al., 2012; Jenkins et al., 2003; Keeter, Jenkins, Zukin, & Andolina, 2003; Lenzi et al., 2012; Light, 2006; Manning, 2008; McLeod, 2000; O'Toole et al., 2003; Sen, 2007; Sherrod & Youniss, 2002; Wilson, 2000), and six types of youth organization (Clarke & Dougherty, 2010; Canada25, 2005; Llewellyn et al., 2010).

2. Methods

2.1. Newspaper selection and data collection

The research used a media content review of four Canadian newspapers: The Globe and Mail (national), the Toronto Star (Toronto), the Province (Vancouver), and The Gazette (Montreal). The newspapers were selected for their coverage and readership, as follows: serves the largest populations in Canada (Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver); includes one regional

Table 1
Matrix showing the relationships between strategy and impact.

Strategy \ Impact	Scale of impact		
	Individual	Community or inter-organizational	National or international
Strategies for creating social change			
Socialization	Make individuals aware of, and care about, the social problem	Make organizations or localized communities aware of, and care about, the social problem	Make broad sector(s) or populations or national/international communities or decision makers aware of, and care about, the social problem
Influence	Influence other individuals to take action to address the social problem in their own individual lives	Influence communities/constituencies/organizations or decision maker on that scale to take action in addressing the social problem	Influence broad sector(s) or populations or national/international communities or decision makers on that scale to take action in addressing the social problem
Partnership	Directly impact the social problem through mutually beneficial cooperation with other individuals acting as individuals	Directly impact the social problem through mutually beneficial cooperation on an organizational or localized community scale	Directly impact the social problem through mutually beneficial cooperation on a national or international scale
Power	Directly impact the social problem through individual actions	Directly impact the social problem through actions on an organizational or localized community scale	Directly impact the social problem through actions on a national or international scale

Adapted from Clarke and Dougherty (2010).

Table 2
 Framework of youth-led social change.

Category	Definition
<i>Strategy</i>	
Socialization	Synonymous with awareness-raising, making someone care about or aware of the social issue, whether that is through educational or marketing campaigns or actions that generate public discussion or will about an issue that was not initially in public view
Influence	Indirectly influencing individuals, constituencies, organizations, communities, decision makers, broad populations or sectors to take action in addressing the social problem
Power	Directly impacting the social problem by being or becoming the decision maker/authority who can take direct action
Partnership	Directly impact the social problem through mutually beneficial cooperation with individuals, constituencies, organizations, communities, decision makers, broad populations or sectors. "Involving youth in ... actions that meet genuine needs, with the opportunity for planning/engagement in decision making affecting others ... based on an understanding of the interdependent, symbiotic nature [of engagement] ... that both youth and adults have something different yet equally valuable to share ..." (Apathy is Boring, 2004, p. 4)
<i>Primary topic</i>	
Human rights & democracy	Focuses on similar issues to the social justice category, but within a political or systemic sphere; examples may include proposing or fighting laws, topics regarding elections, or vocalizing concerns regarding government bodies
Equality, empowerment & social justice	Includes – but is not limited to – issues of intergenerational equity, economic disparity (especially poverty), accessibility and access to services. This topic does <i>not</i> include legal battles, elections or other items that would fall under the democracy topic; however, the categories may overlap in some cases
Environment	Topics that relate to the health, wellbeing or integrity of the biophysical, natural environment. May include landscapes, habitats, other natural areas, as well as the species that inhabit them. All fauna – wildlife or domestic – are included in this topic, with the exception of human beings
Human health & safety	The mental and physical wellness of human beings. Includes holistic health
Science, business, technology & development	Includes topics relevant to energy, infrastructure (any infrastructure related to essential services, including electricity, education – like schools, running water, heating and cooling, roads, railways and other aspects of development), sciences (including health sciences where they related to research and innovation), and other concepts relating to the built environment which do not fit elsewhere
Education	Engagement that focuses on providing education (workshops, classes, informal learning, etc.), or which focus on the concept of education itself – enhancing, reforming, or otherwise addressing shortcomings of its implementation
Culture & religion	Topics related to any combination of culture, faith, and religion
<i>Impact scale</i>	
Individual	Affecting one or more persons on their own; single-entity changes ensure
Community or inter-organization	Affecting localized community or organizational scale such that changes are a common and accepted practice within this group of entities
National or international	Social change has been institutionalized; macro scale. Also known as systemic impact
<i>Type of engagement</i>	
Philanthropy	The donation of money, either during or after a person's life, including fundraising. When youth are not able to be philanthropists themselves, there are many partnership opportunities available
Volunteerism	Volunteering, is "a planned form of helping others, which takes place over a period of time, in an organizational setting, and for which the volunteer expects no direct compensation" (Canada25, 2005, p. 10)
Political engagement	Can be understood as community-oriented or political, it is also known as social activism. This engagement is characterized by a variety of political acts or inactions
Public policy	May include national governments and development banks like the World Bank, which youth may approach as partners, or which youth may target for implementing changes, or being in direct power themselves
Economic activity	An organization which has a social mission and which makes money, balancing between economic/commercial and social motives
Arts	Engagement through artistic expression, including visual arts, music and dance
Research & innovation	Creating changes by implementing innovative solutions to existing problems, including the use of new and existing research to further society's knowledge or understanding of a particular subject
Other	Any other type of engagement
<i>Organization type</i>	
Individual	Not an organization; a single youth affecting change
(Informal) group	Youth who collaborate – often organizing into a single identity – so as to increase support and pool together resources so the group may accomplish common goals. This may be a temporary or long-term arrangement
For-profit company	A group of youth working together under a single identity for the purpose of achieving common goals and driven largely by markets and profits/financial returns. Formally registered as a company of some kind
Social enterprise	A group of youth working together under a single identity with a balanced motivation toward both economic success/sustainability and social welfare/improvement

Table 2 (Continued)

Category	Definition
Non-profit organization	A group of youth working together under a single identity for the purpose of achieving social goals and driven primarily by a drive to fulfill a mutually accepted mission. Registered as a non-profit organization or a charity
Advisory body	A group of youth working together under a single identity to provide feedback and recommendations to another (often non-youth) organization

paper from each of these cities and one national scale paper; and highest Anglophone-readership newspapers (excluding tabloids) in Canada. Reaching the greatest potential readership is an indication of impact (Chiotti, 2009). Also, these four newspapers are comprehensive enough to include a variety of topics and events of different scales. Whether the youth are discussed in a positive or negative view is irrelevant to this research since both outcomes imply youth have had an impact (Ary et al., 1999).

The ProQuest Database was used; three databases were searched: Canadian Newsstand Major Dailies (1985–current), ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Globe and Mail (1844–2009), and ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Toronto Star (1894–2011). Full-text searches broken down into three date ranges – 1977–1996, 1997–2001, and 2007–2012 – were performed by excluding duplicate results (from multiple databases) and including only newspapers as the data source. The three publication titles were selected, and the following key words were used: “youth” OR “student” OR “young” OR “teen” in ‘Document Title’; “youth*” OR “student*” OR “young” OR “teen*” in ‘Anywhere’; and “lead*” OR “hero” in ‘Anywhere’. Excluded key words (“NOT”) include: “crime*” OR “sentence*” OR “court” OR “murder*” OR “dies” OR “dead” OR “victim*” in ‘Anywhere’.

2.2. Data reduction

The initial search produced 8432 articles. This list was reduced to a sample of 979 titles based on title relevance. Second, a similar process was used to skim article abstracts and content for relevance – using four qualifiers as tests; 361 articles remained. Finally, the third phase of reduction required the thorough reading of remaining articles, again using the qualifiers – and referring to other document review (e.g., organizational publications) when needed for collecting comparable data or missing information – as tests for relevance. A final sample of 264 articles – 3.1% of the original documents identified through the search query – was left to code.

One researcher categorized all activities to ensure consistency throughout the results. Similarly, the use of a single set of criteria – as it applies to each activity – for all responses minimized opinion as much as possible. Four qualifiers were used throughout data collection and reduction to ensure the research question, objectives and scope were addressed. First, the event – synonymous with initiative, project, program, gathering, or other related activity – must be directly related to social justice or other engagement types and topics. Sporting events, religious gatherings, and articles about crime and delinquency, for example, were excluded. Second, the event must have occurred at some point between 1978 and 2012. Third, the event must be led by youth aged 15–24. Finally, the event, organization, or individuals must be based in Canada.

These articles were given article and event ID codes, summarized by event, and inserted into two MS Excel master spreadsheets for analysis. Using the Youth-led Social Change Framework categories, the articles were coded. A total of 221 events were coded, from the 264 articles, including multiple stories/articles covering the same events. Numeric values were assigned to each category, not as a result of frequency of terms, but as a categorical value to signify which factors were attributed to each event.

There were some categories found in the literature which were not relevant in the data collected, and so were not included in the final framework (presented in Table 2). As well, some categories were merged together in this framework because, when applied in practice, they were found to be so similar to each other that it would be redundant to maintain separate theoretical categories.

2.3. Data analysis

The data were then analyzed separately by frequencies and cross tabulations. First, frequencies were used to describe the main characteristics of the data. The various categories in this analysis are not mutually exclusive. Second, chi-square tests were performed to assess whether the relationships between strategy, impact, and other variables are statistically significant, given $p \leq 0.05$. To complete the test, values in the data collection table had to be mutually exclusive, hence the need for coding a second time.

Cross tabulations and chi-square tests were completed using IBM SPSS Statistics 20. In the first stage, the original data were recoded into a new dataset in SPSS so that only the highest level of strategy or scale of impact, and the most relevant type of each of the nominal categories were included – making the data mutually exclusive. Where there were fewer than five occurrences for a single category, these categories were merged into the ‘other’ category. Using chi-square cross tabulations and tests; relationships with strategies were tested first, followed by relationships with impact scales.

3. Results

3.1. Frequency

Table 3 details the results regarding frequency and percentage for each of the categories in the Youth-Led Social Change Framework.

A content analysis of English Canada's highest circulating papers revealed that youth did manage to achieve some news salience, especially through political engagement – nearly half (42%) of all events that were identified in the media review were of the political engagement type. Of these, 30% of events showed that youth participated through advisory bodies, with 24% representing non-profit organizations and advocacy groups, and another 23% in other informal groups.

Certain patterns emerged in terms of which strategies were most frequently used by youth, per the media review, and what impacts occurred. Youth in Canada appeared to make use of all four strategies, with particular favor for power (24%), and especially influence (51%). The research shows that 84.2% of events employ a single strategy, while 14.5% of events use two strategies, and 1.6% of events make use of three strategies. No recorded event used all four strategies as their main method(s) of achieving success.

The scale of impact was recorded based on the description of the event in each article: 11.3% represented individual impacts, 43.6% represented community/inter-organizational impacts, and 45.1% represented national/international impacts. Multiple impact types were sometimes attributed to single events. More specifically, 21.4% of events resulted in a single type of impact, while 9% had impacts on two scales; no recorded event impacted society on all three scales.

3.2. Relationship between impacts and strategies

The data were filtered according to scale of impact, and analyzed for the most frequent strategy and organizational type. Events that impacted individuals generally used influence as their primary strategy (44.4%), and more than half (55.6%) of these events were led by individuals. Of those events that resulted in community/inter-organizational impacts, about half

Table 3
Frequency counts for youth-led social change categories (non-mutually exclusive).

Category	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Strategy</i>		
Socialization	46	17.8
Influence	133	51.4
Power	63	24.3
Partnership	17	6.6
<i>Topic</i>		
Human rights & democracy	67	20.6
Equality, empowerment & social justice	101	31.0
Environment	26	8.0
Human health & safety	43	13.2
Science, business, technology & infrastructure	32	9.8
Education	35	10.7
Culture & religion	22	6.7
<i>Impact</i>		
Individual	29	11.3
Community or inter-organization	112	43.6
National or international	116	45.1
<i>Type of engagement</i>		
Philanthropy	11	3.7
Volunteerism	43	14.5
Political engagement	123	41.6
Public policy	8	2.7
Economic activity	27	9.1
Arts	15	5.1
Research & innovation	23	7.8
Other	46	15.6
<i>Org. type</i>		
Individual	73	28.4
(Informal) group	60	23.3
For-profit company	14	5.4
Social enterprise	2	0.1
Non-profit organization	60	23.3
Advisory body	48	18.7

(52.8%) used influence as their primary strategy. Individuals led the majority (34.9%) of these efforts, followed closely by informal groups (31.1%). Events that had national/international impacts were similar to other events in that the vast majority (74.1%) used influence as their main strategy. However, these events were primarily led by advisory bodies like political party youth wings (38%).

The data were also organized, or grouped, according to strategy. Fig. 1 illustrates the scales of impact that occurred after using each type of strategy. In summary, influence was most commonly associated with national/international impacts, while the other three categories typically resulted in community or inter-organizational impacts.

3.3. Chi-square tests: youth strategy

Each of the four strategy types was compared against all factors of each of the other categories as follows: strategy and scale of impact; strategy and topic of engagement; strategy and engagement type; and strategy and organization type. Frequency data are mutually exclusive. Based on these data, socialization and partnership are clearly associated with community and/or inter-organizational scales, while power is almost evenly split between community/inter-organizational and national/international impacts. All four strategies are most often associated with the topic of equality, empowerment and social justice; and socialization is most associated with other (uncategorized) types of engagement, while the remaining three strategies are associated with political engagement. Perhaps most different from the non-mutually exclusive data are organization types that differ across each strategy type: socialization is clearly associated with individuals; influence is most frequently led by informal groups, but is also closely associated with individuals, non-profit organizations and advisory bodies; partnerships are typically led by non-profit organizations; and power is most often led by both for-profit companies and advisory bodies, followed almost equally by individuals. Table 4 shows the significance after the factors were condensed.

3.4. Chi-square tests: youth impact

The three scales of impact were compared against all factors of each of the other categories, as follows: impact and strategy; impact and topic of engagement; impact and engagement type; and impact and organization type. Frequency data are mutually exclusive. Events which had impacts on national/international and community/inter-organizational scales were clearly associated with influence being youth's primary strategy. Individual-scale impacts were also associated most with the use of influence, followed almost equally by using power.

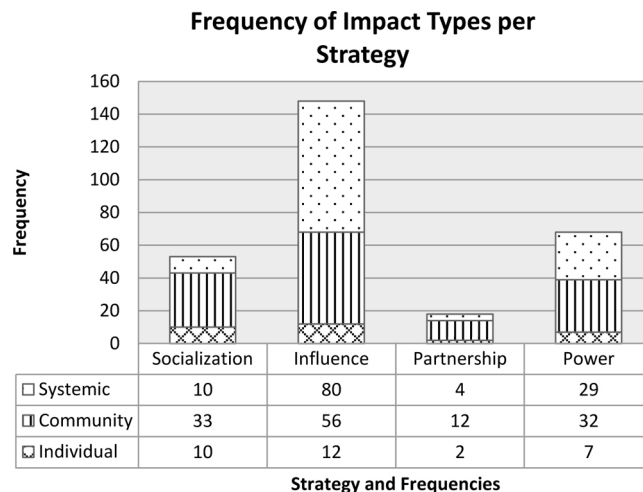


Fig. 1. Impacts experienced per strategy.

Table 4

Chi-square values for all chi-square tests (condensed categories, by strategy).

Strategy and...	Value	df	p-Value (2-tailed)	Notes
Impact scale	22.291	6	.001*	2 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.09
Topic of engagement	11.529	6	.073	2 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.01
Engagement type	53.299	9	.000*	3 cells (18.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.95
Organization type	18.541	6	.005*	2 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.23

* Significant because $p \leq 0.05$.

Based on mutually exclusive frequencies, some associations are: individual-scale impacts were most often associated with topics of human health, while events at the community/inter-organizational scale of impact typically addressed equality and social justice issues; national/international impacts focused almost equally on topics of equality and social justice and on human rights and democracy; both individual impacts and community/inter-organizational impacts were most frequently affected through volunteerism, while national/international impacts were most commonly affected by political engagement; individuals were the most common organization leading events with individual and/or community/inter-organizational impacts, with informal groups also leading an almost equal number of community/inter-organizational-scale events; and national/international impacts were clearly most frequently led by advisory bodies. Table 5 shows the significance after the factors were condensed.

4. Discussion and conclusion

As a reminder, this paper examines the following questions: (1) what topics, engagement types, organization types, and strategies do young people most often employ? (2) Which approaches are the most effective for achieving a higher scale of impact? These questions are answered in the results section as it relates to this study. They are further discussed here, along with the theoretical contributions and implications for practitioners.

It is important to acknowledge that although the research provides valuable insight into strategies and impacts Canadian youth have pursued over the 35-year period, such insights and the ensuing recommendations may have limited generalizability to youth in the present or future context, as well as to other cultural and socioeconomic contexts.

4.1. Approaches most effective for achieving a higher scale of impact

The relationship between strategy and impact are highly significant ($p = 0.001$). This result demonstrates that any youth entity can potentially succeed in creating social change as long as key strategies are implemented. For example, events that had impacts on national/international and/or community/inter-organizational scales were clearly associated with influence being youth's primary strategy. Individual-scale impacts were also associated most with the use of influence, followed almost equally by the use of a power strategy.

Certain trends are useful in highlighting with respect to the impacts that result from each strategy. When influence or partnerships are used, national/international impacts are unlikely as community-scale impacts dominate. In addition, impacts at the national/international scale were most commonly affected by political engagement. Interestingly, some of the most frequently reported contributions about youth were about how they were able to influence political processes to address issues of equality, empowerment, and social justice. This may mean a set of preconditions need to exist for youth-led engagement to have maximum effect on an issue or activity; or it could mean there are certain aspects of society which may be more receptive to, and which may benefit more from, youth-led engagement more than others. The most effective way to achieve success within this engagement type and topic area was as collective participants inside the system (e.g., advisory body), rather than putting pressure on the system from outside it. Finally, the use of power as a strategy may result in community-scale impacts almost as often as it results in impacts at a national/international scale. As is the case in the original matrix (Clarke & Dougherty, 2010), the categories are not mutually exclusive. Each successively higher scale of impact depends, to some extent, on the lower scales, and organizations may also apply more than one strategy type to any initiative.

Although the revised matrix, Table 1, proved instrumental in aiding the collection and analysis of data, the two axes (or dimensions) of this framework was somewhat limiting in the categorization and interpretation of youth activities. In particular, the original use of the term 'systemic' for the third level of impact was challenging to apply – hence why this study has revised this framework to use the title 'national/international' for this category. What may be needed in future adaptations of this framework is another dimension that allows for the consideration of depth of impact, perhaps on an incremental as opposed to categorical scale. Mapping or plotting of activities on such a model may prove to be a helpful visual in future research on this topic. Systemic impact is relevant for all the geographic scales (individual, community and national/international), so including this 'depth of impact' as an extra category could be considered.

Another finding of this study is that while some organization types may be more appropriate for addressing certain issues, or for youth to become involved in specific engagement types, the age of the organization does not seem to make a difference. This result may have potentially positive implications for youth involved in start-up, or relatively young, organizations, since

Table 5
Chi-square values for all chi-square tests (condensed categories, by impact).

Impact and...	Value	df	p-Value (2-tailed)	Notes
Strategy	22.291	6	.001*	2 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.09
Topic of engagement	37.971	2	.000*	0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.88
Engagement type	98.197	4	.000*	1 cell (11.1%) has expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.26
Organization type	62.083	4	.000*	1 cell (11.1%) has expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.71

* Significant because $p \leq 0.05$.

it means change-making is accessible to anyone, regardless of whether the organization is established for 30 years or for 3 months, given the appropriate strategies are applied.

Another interesting observation of this research is that youth across Canada were found striving for, and achieving, higher scales of impact, using higher scales of strategy than the literature generally acknowledges.

4.2. Theoretical contributions

The first theoretical contribution of this paper is the use of the [Clarke and Dougherty matrix \(2010\)](#) and the confirmation of the validity of this matrix. Secondly, as a part of this research, the addition of partnerships within the category of strategies was made to the [Clarke and Dougherty matrix \(2010\)](#). Shared power through partnerships is a valid way for youth to be involved and affect change in society. This has been observed in the literature review ([Apathy is Boring, 2004](#); [Gauthier, 2003](#)) in addition to the empirical findings. The addition of a new strategy is intended to improve understanding of how partnership relates to impact as well as to formally acknowledge partnerships as a real and potentially successful alternative to socialization, influence, and power. The results of the media analysis support the organization of impacts, as seen in the matrix by [Clarke and Dougherty \(2010\)](#). The hierarchy of impacts in this matrix encompassed all events observed in the data.

In addition to the matrix, a framework was developed which included: (1) engagement types (philanthropy, volunteerism, political engagement, public policy, economic activity, arts, research and innovation, and other); (2) organizational types (individual, informal group, for-profit company, social enterprise, non-profit organization, advisory body); and (3) topics (human rights and democracy, equality, empowerment and social justice, science, business, technology and development, human health and safety, environment, education, and culture and religion). The utility of this framework was also confirmed during the course of the research.

4.3. Implications for young leaders

The results of this research are relevant for young leaders who wish to have impact on Canadian society, and possibly for those hoping to have further reaching impacts as well. In order to improve their effectiveness, the following findings are relevant:

1. To increase the scale of impact, consider focusing the strategy around the use of 'influence': events which had impacts on national/international and/or community/inter-organizational scales were clearly associated with influence being youth's primary strategy.
2. To have impact at the national/international scale, consider using the engagement type 'political engagement': national/international impacts were most commonly a result of political engagement.
3. To have impact at the national/international scale, consider working within the system through organizational types such as 'advisory bodies': advisory bodies often achieved national/international impacts (i.e., as collective participants inside the system), rather than putting pressure on the system from outside of it. That said, evidence shows that individuals can also make an important contribution without being part of an entity.
4. To have impact, consider 'thinking like a movement': different players may need to use different strategies at different times, and sometime simultaneously in order to reach the scale of impact hoping to achieve.
5. To have impact, experience may not matter but strategy does: strategy appears most significantly associated with impact than do other factors, such as the age of the organization or the duration of the initiative.

4.4. Implications for youth advocates and for those who support, work with, and educate youth

The results of this research are relevant for youth advocates, and those who support, work with, and educate young people. In order to support young people in improving their effectiveness as change-makers, youth advocates may consider the following findings as well as the findings listed above under 'Implications for Young Leaders':

1. Youth are more impactful and aim for higher scales of impact than we give them credit for: youth think big and are risk takers. Do not forget to celebrate and acknowledge youth-led successes and impact.
2. Certain topics might be more accessible for youth to have impact on than might others: young people tend to work much more frequently on topics categorized under equality, empowerment, and social justice.

4.5. Implications for evaluators

The results of this research are relevant for evaluators examining the work of youth-led social change initiatives as well as those examining adult-led organizations that incubate or facilitate youth-led impact. Evaluators may wish to consider the following findings:

1. Put youth back into the narrative: youth are more impactful, and aim for higher scales of impact than we give them credit for. Acknowledge when an impact or initiative has been youth-led.

2. Evaluate the impact youth have on society: it is easy to simply focus on the skills or training a young person receives based on their participation in an initiative. But ensure that the impact a youth-led initiative has on society is also evaluated. The adapted [Clarke and Dougherty matrix \(2010\)](#) or the Youth-led Social Change Framework, both offered in this paper, can be useful tools in this context.

4.6. Opportunities for future research

Based on the research conducted for this paper, areas that were not addressed but which may be relevant and of interest include: the perceptions of youth; access to power by youth of different cultures; the advantages and disadvantages of different organizational types for youth-led ventures; and additional measures for the impacts of youth-led initiatives on society. By gaining a better understanding of certain characteristics and stereotypes that are frequently attached to members of the youth demographic, and how this may influence the ability of youth-led initiatives to create positive social impact, would enable better intergenerational equity. Also, by considering youth of different cultures, classes or ethnicities, a better understanding of the barriers and possibilities for different young people might be possible. By understanding the advantages and disadvantages of being young when creating social change, and how that matches with appropriate topics, organizational types, engagement types, and strategies, better social entrepreneurship and leadership training programs could be designed. Finally, more research is needed that quantifies the role of youth in impacting social change in other contexts. This study focused on Canadian youth that were described in English-language papers. It could be replicated in other contexts to determine the generalizability of the framework and findings.

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