



Youth-Led Social Entrepreneurship: Enabling Social Change

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Abstract. The types of strategies and tactics a young social entrepreneur may pursue to create social change, as well as the social change they succeed in creating, are impacted by their capacity to deeply engage in traditional decision-making structures. This study considers two youth-led social enterprises, the strategies they pursue (socialization, influence, or direct control) and the level of impact they achieve (individual, community/interorganizational, or systemic) and offers a framework of youth-led strategies for creating social change at different scales. The findings also provide insights into the innovative nature of these enterprises wishing to enable more youth to become social entrepreneurs.

Keywords. social entrepreneurship; youth leadership; youth-led; social change; systemic change; impact; scale; Sierra Youth Coalition; Apathy is Boring; Canada.

1. Introduction

Some social entrepreneurs are young people (Mars, 2009); in other words, they are between the ages of 18 and 30 when they launch their social ventures. Young entrepreneurs are the focus of many programs, educational and otherwise (e.g., Chelala, 2008; Chigunta, 2002) and some academic literature (e.g., Kourilsky & Walstad, 2007). While the essence of a social entrepreneur is that he/she creates his/her own social venture, the types of strategies and tactics a young person may pursue to create social change, as well as the social change he/she succeed in creating, may be limited by his/her capacity to deeply engage in existing traditional decision-making structures (such as having access to networks of influence and taking part in the development of government policy, or the setting of business strategy). “For the most part, young people are provided with few opportunities to engage in discussions about their economic, social and environmental futures ... It would seem that participation is still conceived to be an adult activity” (Matthews, Limb, & Taylor, 1998, p. 135).

As a result, youth make up their own social movements, which are known to critique the status quo, and to create their own solutions (Pleyers, 2004). In addition, young people can act as champions of an innovative idea, thus priming

it for acceptance by the wider population (Gladwell, 2002). While the lack of access to traditional decision-making structures enables innovation, being young alters the opportunities available to create systemic change (Zimmerman, 2007). As noted in this UNICEF commissioned report, “while youth social entrepreneurs may not have yet had the opportunity to make ‘system wide change’, they are still playing a fundamental role in the welfare of their communities” (Maak, 2007, p. 4). Given the constraints that youth face, there is a need for theorizing that is specifically about youth-led social entrepreneurship, especially given that most of our education programs are geared at people of this age group.

This article considers two youth-led social enterprises and provides insights into youth-led social entrepreneurship and the tactics used by young social entrepreneurs to make social change, thus addressing a gap in existing literature. By bringing together literature on youth leadership with the literature on social entrepreneurship, this paper explores two Canadian youth-led, socially-oriented organizations and considers:

1. Youth-led strategies for creating social change at different levels of impact (i.e., different scales); and
2. The implications of these findings for those wishing to enable more youth to become social entrepreneurs and facilitate them in creating systemic change.

The article begins by defining social entrepreneurship, and youth-led organizations, and justifying why youth-led social entrepreneurs should be a focus of study. This is followed by a section that considers existing literature on youth-led strategies for creating social change, and the impact of social enterprises, and offers a framework of youth-led strategies for creating social change at different scales. Two Canadian case studies were used to inductively develop the framework, and thus the article introduces the context of youth social entrepreneurship in Canada and the details of these two cases. The article ends with a discussion on the implications for theory, for policy-makers, and for young social entrepreneurs, concretely addressing calls for research in this area (Ilkiw, 2010; Johnson, 2003).

2. Youth-Led Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship has many different definitions (Dees, 1998; Thompson, Alvy, & Lees, 2000; Waddock & Post, 1991; Weerawardena & Mort, 2006); most of which imply that it relates to exploiting opportunities for social change and improvement, rather than for profit maximization (Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, & Shulman, 2009). One very encompassing definition, which was offered recently, is that “social entrepreneurship encompasses the activities and processes

undertaken to discover, define, and exploit opportunities in order to enhance social wealth by creating new ventures or managing existing organizations in an innovative manner” (Zahra et al., 2009, p. 522). This is the definition used in this study. In Canada, a social enterprise may be a non-profit or a for-profit venture which works towards a double bottom line; it works to solve a social problem while also ensuring its own financial sustainability or profitability (Johnson, 2003). As there have been recent articles which present literature reviews about social entrepreneurship as a term (e.g., Swanson & Di Zhang, 2010; Weerawardena & Mort, 2006), no attempt will be made here to detail the emerging consensus about the concept, instead this study will focus on introducing youth-led social entrepreneurship.

Youth-led organizations – where all the major leadership roles (including the Executive Director or CEO) and the majority of the membership on the Board of Directors are young people – are the top of the youth leadership spectrum (Zimmerman, 2007). In other words, creating a youth-led social venture provides the most opportunity for a young social entrepreneur to take leadership and lead innovation. Youth-led organizations also typically encourage creativity and allow for mistakes, a key factor in facilitating innovation (Johnson, 2003).

Both adult-led and youth-led enterprises face many constraints; however, there are some important differences (Chigunta, 2002). Data on youth entrepreneurs suggest that:

“...compared to adults, young people are disadvantages in the following areas: more youth face problems of access to resources such as capital; more youth people start their enterprises with lower levels of initial capital; more enterprises owned by youth people have a lower market value or inventory; more youth entrepreneurs are engaged in a narrower range of activities; more youth people tend to operate from homes or streets; more youth people do not bring experience and contacts to the business, and; more enterprises owned by youth tend to rely on simple tools or had no equipment at all.” (Chigunta, 2002, p. 7)

While these findings are not specific to social enterprises led by young people, it is likely that for a youth social entrepreneur the same constraints exist in starting a new venture, and given that the literature also shows that youth have more challenges in creating social change (Ilkiw, 2010; Matthews, et al., 1998), this indicates the need for youth-led social entrepreneurship to be studied as a separate area.

3. Youth-Led Strategies for Creating Social Change

Gauthier (2003), in an article about youth engagement in civic participation, offers a typology that expresses a young person’s degree of involvement (and influence). The typology ranges from socialization, to influence, to power through partnerships. Socialization may occur through involvement in an

organization (such as through volunteer or paid work), or through “mock” decision-making (such as a class assignment). Influence may occur through protests, through being a representative on a youth advisory body, through influencing decision-making within an organization, etc. Power occurs through shared decision-making by way of partnerships (Gauthier, 2003). Helferty and Clarke (2009) applied the same typology to student-led initiatives, and found that it was also applicable to the types of social change tactics a youth-led venture can pursue. For example, awareness-raising activities would fit into the socialization category, while building a wind turbine would fit into the power category. These authors expanded the power category to also include youth-led initiatives that are not embedded in partnerships (Helferty & Clarke, 2009). This article uses this typology of strategies because it captures the range of tactics a youth-led social venture may pursue (as developed through this inductive study). This article defines a socialization strategy as raising awareness; an influence strategy as encouraging another person or entity to change their behaviour or policies; and a power strategy as directly having control to make the change.

Another aspect of creating social change is the level of impact. This can range from a micro level, such as impacting individual people, to a macro level, such as creating systemic change (Gottlieb & Riger, 1972). Cable and Degutis (1997), in an article on outcomes from social change efforts, identified four levels – the individual outcomes, the organizational outcomes, the community outcomes, and the macro structural level outcomes. Considering these in relation to impact, this article considers three levels – the individual, the inter-organizational or community, and the systemic (macro). This is the level of change the organization has succeeded in impacting, and does not necessarily mean that they deliver the service at this level. For example, the systemic level indicates that the desired social change has been institutionalized, while the individual level indicates that a person’s awareness or behaviour has been impacted.

This scale, on the outcomes of the social change efforts, is different from the focus of other studies that focus on “scaling social impact” (Dees, Anderson, & Wei-skillern, 2004; Princeton Survey Research Associates International, 2006). Dees et al (2004), for example, consider how an organization can directly expand its innovation’s reach through dissemination, affiliation, or branching. Scaling social impact is not about developing strategies to address the social problem (by creating individual attitude/behaviour, organizational or systemic change); but rather it is about the scaling of the approach in order to reach a wider audience. This article is focused on youth-led strategies for creating social change and having an impact at different levels. Table 1 displays the three levels of youth-led strategies for creating social change in relation to the three levels of impact.

Table 1: Three Strategies for Creating Social Change in Relation to their Level of Impact

		Level of Impact		
		Individual	Community / Interorganizational	Systemic
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 national / international communities aware of, and care about, the social problem.
	Influence	Enable individuals to influence other individuals to address a given social problem in their own individual lives.	Enable organizations or localized communities to influence those in their communities / constituency to take action to address the social problem in a community context.	Enable broad sector(s) or national / international communities to influence broad populations to take actions to address the social problem in a broad context.
	Power	Support individuals in developing the capacity to directly impact the social problem through their individual actions.	Directly impact the social problem through actions on a community level.	Directly impact the social problem through actions on a national or international level.

The meaning of each category within the framework is described in Table 1. What is important to note is that these strategies and levels of impact are not mutually exclusive. It is not possible to create systemic awareness without individuals being aware. It is also possible for the same organization to pursue more than one strategy at the same time. For example, an influence strategy of encouraging an entity to change its policies may need to be complemented by an awareness strategy.

4. Youth-Led Social Entrepreneurship in Canada

Although there are many youth-led organizations in Canada (such as Sierra Youth Coalition, Apathy is Boring, 411 Initiative for Change, Otesha, Santropol Roulant, Me to We), there has been relatively little research done to define youth-led social entrepreneurship in a Canadian context. This has been blamed on a resistance by young Canadians to the term social entrepreneurship. And even though many young people in this country have embraced dual bottom-line initiatives as early as the late nineties and early 2000s (Johnson, 2003), there has been a discomfort by young social change agents with the ‘business terminology and ideology’ used in the social entrepreneurship movement (Johnson, 2003).

Resistance to social entrepreneurship in Canada has also been attributed to the history and development of the social safety net, which has been pervasive since the 1960s (Johnson, 2003), and thus an expectation by Canadians that it is the role of government to address social problems.

The current generation of young people is also disconnected from traditional political institutions where decision-making takes place and very often will choose ‘informal’ and new ways of becoming engaged rather than buying into traditional institutions (Burkhard, 2007). Part of the reasoning for this has been cited as a lack of mentorship, and thus an inability to access networks of influence, leading to a sense of financial insecurity and self-doubt (Aujila, 2008). In the early 2000s, those who are part of the Nexus generation or Generation Y indicated a strong desire to be more socially and civically active, but felt frustrated by constraints and barriers in each of the voluntary, public and private sectors, thus they were motivated to develop their own organizations (Johnson, 2003). As a result there are young social entrepreneurs in Canada who overcome these obstacles. They have created organizations and who have worked hard to create lasting social change (Ilkiw, 2010); “young people want to be taken seriously and are organizing themselves, researching, building knowledge, and advocating for themselves, in ways that make sense to them” (Ilkiw, 2010, p. 39).

Furthering the tendency of this generation to look for alternatives to traditional modes of social change, there has been a growing acceptance and willingness to embrace social entrepreneurship amongst the entire Canadian population in recent years and a move amongst prominent figures to encourage the development of support mechanisms for social entrepreneurs (Martin, 2008). In addition, there has been a rise of enabling organizations that support young social entrepreneurs through capacity building and opportunities for collaboration (such as through the Centre for Social Innovation in Toronto) and through increased financing (such as through The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, or through Ashoka’s Youth Venture Program). Moreover, a new organization called Youth Social Entrepreneurs of Canada has emerged (Ilkiw, 2010). These young social entrepreneurs have been mapped and identified (Khosroshahi & Corriero, 2006), although they have not been comprehensively studied to date. As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, there has, however, been a clear call for research in this area (Johnson, 2003). Below we discuss two youth-led social ventures, their strategies and tactics for social change and their levels of impact.

5. Case Studies

This research uses a case study methodology (Yin, 2003). It is an exploratory study with an inductively-derived conceptual framework. Following a grounded theory approach (Glaser, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the conceptual framework was inductively built by comparing the empirical findings to relevant

typologies in the literature. When selecting cases, it is important to articulate the criteria used (Yin, 2003). These two cases were selected because: 1) they were founded by a young person or by young people; 2) they continue to be led by a young leader in the most senior management position and they have a predominately youth Board; 3) their mandate is Canada-wide, thus bounding the potential systemic impact to all of Canada; 4) they have operating budgets of over \$300,000 per year; 5) their mission addresses a social problem; 6) the two cases represent different social problems; and 7) the needed information was available.¹ These criteria are important because: 1) they ensure that the organization was, and still is, a youth-led social venture; 2) that they are of a relatively large size and thus have the potential to have had a systemic impact; 3) that the cases have the same systemic level impact (i.e., Canada-wide) and are thus comparable; and 4) that the findings are generalizable beyond one sector.

Data were collected through both primary and secondary means (Patton, 2002). Secondary documents included annual reports, funding proposals, and website content. Primary data were collected through direct observation and through interviews with current and past employees and volunteers.

Analysis was inductive and iterative (Glaser, 1998). First, in examining the data, we coded the tactics (and their related programs) employed by both organizations over time and then clustered them into coherent groups. We then considered our findings in relation to the existing literature and determined that Gauthier (2003) was the best fit. In relation to the scale, we also coded for the actual level of impact and determined that three levels of impact were best for describing these cases. The second round of analysis deductively described the cases based on the new framework and by the reduced categories of tactics (and their related program). The description in each of the boxes in the 3 x 3 framework (see Table 1) were inductively revised to fit the data. The final written case was reviewed by the Executive Director of each organization to ensure accuracy.

Youth Social Entrepreneurship Case 1: Apathy is Boring (A is B)

Introduction

Seeing that many of their peers felt disengaged from the democratic process, and that less than 25% percent of voters under the age of 24 had cast a ballot in the 2000 federal election (Parkinson, 2007), Ilona Dougherty (then 23 years old), Paul Shore (then 30 years old) and Mackenzie Duncan (then 20 years old)

1. Youth-led social enterprises are not documented as such, so it is difficult to assess the total number of organization which would meet these criteria. An initial internet search identified 50 potential organizations, though their financial information was not always available. These two cases were selected for their accessibility.

founded Apathy is Boring (A is B), January 4th 2004. Five months later, the 2004 Federal Election was called and work began on what would be Apathy is Boring's first federal "Get out the Youth Vote" campaign. Using a website, digital media technology, concerts, and a media outreach campaign, Apathy is Boring was able to reach thousands of young people across Canada in less than four months and encourage them to become more active citizens (Apathy is Boring, 2010).

Six years later Apathy is Boring is a national non-partisan charitable organization that uses art and technology to educate Canadian youth about democracy, and has become a Canadian leader in the area of youth engagement and civic participation. A is B encourages civic participation among unengaged Canadian youth by educating them about democracy, inspiring them, and giving them the tools to become active citizens. A is B's 'youth in democracy' goals are to increase the youth vote, increase youth volunteerism, and build a sustainable dialogue between politicians and youth (Apathy is Boring, 2010). This is accomplished through four program areas: 1) concerts & events that encourage youth to get involved in their communities, survey them about their democratic participation habits, and create an opportunity for dialogue between elected officials and youth; 2) a youth friendly program that includes workshops, tools, and resources to engage youth in decision-making and educate decision-makers on how to engage youth; 3) a website, apathyisboring.com which provides youth with information, 'how-tos', and support to get them involved in democracy; and 4) election campaigns that reach out to youth and provide them with the information they need to make an informed vote (Apathy is Boring, 2010).

Knowing that apathetic youth have a tendency to get overwhelmed, or just tune out if organizations are too 'preachy', Apathy is Boring has developed a strategy that is based around moving young people from 'low risk entry points' to more sustained and 'deeper' involvement. This spectrum of activities ranges from simply attending a concert, filling out a survey, or checking out artist profiles on the website, to participating in 'street team' volunteering opportunities at events, engaging in dialogues with decision-makers, and finally, becoming long-term volunteers, active community members, and decision-makers themselves (Apathy is Boring, 2008). All of these methods are constantly evaluated, and A is B is working to ensure that its methodology is founded in an evidence-based approach, rejecting 'the way things have always been done' in favour of using metrics and qualitative research to determine the needs of young people and the realities of what will motivate them to become socially engaged (Apathy is Boring, 2010).

Apathy is Boring has been fortunate to have the support of The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation which has provided stable funding in the first years of A is B's development, the Federal Government of Canada which has provided project-based funding on and off over the last six years, and most recently the support of Ashoka which recently named co-founder and Executive Director Ilona Dougherty as one of 27 Canadian Fellows (Apathy is Boring,

2010). Apathy is Boring has also worked to develop sustainable forms of self-generated revenue, most successfully through its youth-friendly program which offers workshops, presentations, and consulting services that focus on the challenges faced by NGOs, government, and elected officials in engaging uninvolved youth (Apathy is Boring, 2010).

Table 2: Apathy is Boring – Strategies for Creating Change and Level of Impact

		Level of Impact		
		Individual	Community / Interorganizational	Systemic
Strategies for Creating Strategic Change	Socialization	Website – Youth-focused Information	Website – Youth-friendly Resources	
		Contests, Action Alerts, Petitions, Timely Updates, Social Networking	Outreach to MPs Re: Contests, Youth-focused Marketing	
		Concerts	Pre-concert Dialogues	
		Street Teams	Election Campaign – Candidate’s Kit	
		Election Campaign – Youth-focused Marketing	Go Vote Coalition	
		Gear	Youth-friendly Program – Org. Workshops & Presentations	
			Community Training Program	
	Influence	Youth-friendly Program – Youth Workshops & Presentations	Governor General Youth Dialogues	Elections Canada Recommendations
			Election Campaign – Media Campaign	House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedures and House Affairs
	Power	Volunteer Program, Employee & Internships		

Socialization

A large part of Apathy is Boring’s work fits in the area of the socialization of young people, offering them ‘low risk entry points’ to learn about the importance of civic participation. From volunteer street teams who attend festivals and concerts across Canada and survey youth about their current democratic participation habits, to A is B’s website, contests, action alerts, social networking, and concerts where youth are inspired by artists acting as ambassadors for social change, to become more active citizens, youth are offered what they do not often have access to, that is, a simple explanation of how the democratic process connects to their lives and why they should get involved. This socialization is

critical to addressing the issue of youth apathy given the significant disconnect between young people in Canada and the traditional institutions where decision-making takes place; and that many youth in Canada report lack of information about the democratic process as being a key reason why they are not involved (MacKinnon, Pitre, & Watling, 2007).

Apathy is Boring's election campaigns which have featured television commercials, ads in free weeklies and an online campaign, also focus on individual socialization ensuring that young people know that there is even an election happening and encouraging them to make an informed vote. A is B's short-lived clothing line used art as a means to socialize youth about civic engagement. This clothing included printed text from the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as quotes from well known Canadian political figures, exposing youth to their rights as citizens, as well as to a window into Canadian democratic history (Apathy is Boring, 2004).

Apathy is Boring also socializes on an inter-organizational or on a community-wide level through its youth-friendly program. This broader socialization is mostly aimed at 'adult' organizations and elected officials who work with youth, including NGOs such as the David Suzuki Foundation, Development and Peace, and Rights and Democracy (Apathy is Boring, 2010). This program area aims to create opportunities for youth to become decision-makers by socializing 'adults' on the importance of youth engagement and by offering them suggestions of how they can integrate youth into the decision-making structures of their organizations or campaigns. This is accomplished through a variety of tools that include a website, workshops, a community training program, outreach to Members of Parliament through contests, and about youth-focused marketing inviting elected officials to pre-concert dialogues with young people, as well as a candidate's kit which outlines how candidates can engage youth in their campaigns and encourage them to vote. Apathy is Boring has also worked to socialize the broader community through its work with various coalitions, most notably, the 2006 Go Vote Coalition (Apathy is Boring, 2010).

Influence

Apathy is Boring has been able to take its work beyond socialization to influence several program areas. On an individual level, A is B's workshops, including 'Civic Participation Workshop' and '10 Tips to Get Politicians to Listen to You', take education beyond socialization by offering youth a chance to learn concrete skills about how to get involved (Apathy is Boring, 2010). These tips are specific, attainable, and allow youth to influence both elected officials and their peers, and educate them about issues that are important to them.

On a community level, Apathy is Boring has been able to influence local communities by offering them tools to facilitate youth in becoming more active

citizens through its Governor General youth dialogues series and its election media campaigns during the 2004, 2006, and 2008 federal elections (Apathy is Boring, 2004, 2008, 2010). The Governor General youth dialogues have been powerful forces in local communities as they bring together youth, local decision-makers, elected officials, and the Canadian Head of State. Having the Governor General present in these local communities facilitates a raw and honest dialogue between parties that would not otherwise have the opportunity to interact. And this has led to stakeholders making lasting changes in the way they interact with each other and with youth (Office of the Secretary to the Governor General, 2010). The election campaigns that A is B ran during the '04, '06, '08 elections garnered significant media attention. Well over 200 interviews were conducted in the mainstream media (Apathy is Boring, 2004, 2007, 2008). The exposure that Apathy is Boring afforded this issue, especially in local communities where A is B has a physical presence, or held an event during these campaigns, was significant and impactful in bringing the issue of youth voter apathy to the forefront, thus influencing both individuals and local communities in facilitating youth voter engagement.

On a systemic level, A is B has been able to influence from a policy perspective. In 2008 / 2009, A is B conducted research for Elections Canada concerning the impact of new voter ID requirements on Northern and First Nations Canadians. Through this report, A is B provided policy recommendations based on extensive knowledge regarding marginalized communities, including young people's relationship towards the democratic process. These recommendations which suggested changes to the current way of marketing elections, as well as recommendations outlining changes that would improve accessibility of the electoral process, are currently under consideration by Elections Canada, thus influencing a key policy-maker to make changes that will affect voter participation on a national level (Apathy is Boring, 2010).

Apathy is Boring has also contributed to the policy process. In Fall 2007, A is B provided an important voice on youth issues by testifying in front of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedures and House Affairs regarding changes to the Elections Act specifically around the issue of increasing the number of advanced polling days; an issue that would have an impact on youth voter turnout (Apathy is Boring, 2010).

Direct Control (Power)

A is B's primary direct impact on youth and their voting and engagement habits is through its extensive volunteer and internship program. Well over 250 active volunteers across Canada and over 25 interns have worked with A is B since 2004 (Apathy is Boring, 2010). Apathy is Boring is able to offer concrete opportunities for these youth to go beyond socialization to actively changing their individual

participation habits. A is B's staff and board members are also youth themselves, and all members of the organization, from volunteers to staff, collectively participate in the visioning process for A is B, facilitating learning while also providing direct control over the direction of the organization. A is B hopes that its influence will grow over the coming years, leading to direct control of youth engagement initiatives at a local community and eventually national level. However, these goals have not yet been attained due to a lack of commitment of funding from external sources and a lack of capacity within the organization itself.

Youth Social Entrepreneurship Case 2: Sierra Youth Coalition (SYC)

Introduction

The Sierra Youth Coalition (SYC) was founded in 1996 by Amelia Clarke (who was then age 23) as the youth arm of the Sierra Club Canada. The SYC has grown into Canada's largest youth environmental group with members in all regions of Canada. In 2009, SYC was active on 72 universities and college campuses and in 30 high schools, and had over 700 active members (Sierra Youth Coalition, 2009). SYC acts as a networking and resource centre for youth between the ages of 15-30 who are concerned about environmental and social justice issues. SYC's mission is "to empower young people to become active community leaders who contribute to making Canada a more sustainable society" (Sierra Youth Coalition, 2010). SYC achieves its mission by providing tools, training, coordination, and networking (Sierra Youth Coalition, 2002). This successful 2002 proposal to the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation cites:

The Sierra Youth Coalition remains to be Canada's only national youth environmental Coalition. Our role in the Canadian youth environmental movement has been crucial in engaging and motivating youth across the country in a coordinated way around important issues to youth today. With the support, training and programs we have provided in the last three years, we have catalyzed a growing demand for youth in Canada to be actively involved in grassroots organizing in their own schools and communities. We feel that SYC has a responsibility to continue to build our capacity to accommodate the interest, energy and creativity of youth across Canada. One of the ways we continue to do this is by providing an outlet for youth to address factors in society that are the root causes of social and ecological problems we currently face ... SYC provides a coordinated, legitimate and organized way for youth to influence this change in positive ways in their own communities. (Sierra Youth Coalition, 2002, p. 1)

In order to remain a by-youth-for-youth organization, Amelia Clarke and SYC's youth-led Board² purposely designed SYC so that the key leadership roles would transition frequently. While Amelia Clarke served as the first Executive

Director³ for a term of three years, most of the subsequent Executive Directors (EDs) have served a two-year term. A result of this is that each ED, in cooperation with their Board composed of young people, has taken the organization in a slightly different direction; new programs have been added and old programs improved. For example, Karen Gorecki, the ED from 2000-2002, helped found the Youth Environmental Network, of which SYC was a key member organization. Rosa Kouri, ED from 2004-2006, helped found the Canadian Youth Climate Coalition in 2006, again with SYC as a key member organization. Under Lindsay Telfer, the ED from 2002-2004, a new SYC program called the Youth Action Gatherings was launched. Under Rosa Kouri, the SYC's Sustainable High School Project was launched; and under Youri Cormier, the ED from 2007-2009, the SYC's Education Fund and the High School Climate Challenge were launched. SYC currently runs a number of programs including the Sustainable Campus Project, the Sustainable High School Project, High School Climate Challenge, Youth Action Gatherings, Bike Tours, Advocacy & Activism, and the Education Fund. Currently, there is also a focus on Anti-Oppression Training (Sierra Youth Coalition, 2009, 2010). In the past, SYC focused on Youth in Decision-Making as a program area, and while that still continues, it is now included in a broader Advocacy & Activism program area. SYC has also seen a number of other programming changes in recent years. For example, rather than considering internships to be a program area in itself, interns are considered a part of the ongoing staff complement, and staff development is considered part of Human Resource Management. Another change to note is that previously there were time-limited awareness initiatives, such as the Eco-Echo Tour (which has evolved into Bike Tours) and The Bet, an initiative to have Canadians commit to steps to reduce their carbon footprint. The Bet was dropped due to a new competing initiative from the Canadian Government called the One Tonne Challenge; instead, SYC encouraged Canadians to make pledges through the government website.

Table 3 displays the summary of SYC programs, past and present, in relation to their Strategy for Creating Change and their Level of Impact.

2. In SYC language, the Board is called the Executive Committee or ExComm for short.

3. In SYC language, the position of the Executive Director is termed the National Director.

Table 3: Sierra Youth Coalition – Strategies for Creating Change and Level of Impact

		Level of Impact		
		Individual	Community / Interorganizational	Systemic
Strategies for Creating Social Change	Socialization	Sustainable Campus Project - Conferences	Sustainable Campus Project – Awareness Initiatives	Sustainable Campus Project – Audits conducted by classes for the University
		Sustainable High School Project - Trainings	Sustainable High School – Awareness Initiatives + Assessments	
		High School Climate Challenge	High School Climate Challenge	
		Youth Action Gatherings	Youth Action Gatherings	
		Eco-Echo Tour / Bike Tours	Eco-Echo Tour / Bike Tours – Community Presentations	
		Youth in Decision-making	Youth in Decision-making	
		Advocacy and Activism	Advocacy and Activism	
		Website Information	Website Information – Online Resources	
		Anti-oppression Training and Community norms sessions at events		
	Influence	Sustainable Campus Project - Trainings	Sustainable Campus Project – Campus Multi-stakeholder Committees	Sustainable Campus Project – University Sustainability Policies and Offices
		Sustainable High School Project - Trainings	Sustainable High School – Multi-stakeholder Committees	
		High School Climate Challenge - Actions	High School Climate Challenge - Actions	
		Youth Action Gatherings - Trainings	Youth Action Gathering – Follow-up Projects	
		The BET	Youth in Decision-making	
		Advocacy and Activism	Advocacy and Activism	
		Anti-Oppression Training		
	Power	Employees / Interns	Sustainable Campus Project – Student-led Initiatives	
		Education Fund	Education Fund	

Socialization

Almost all of Sierra Youth Coalition's programs and initiatives involve raising awareness or socializing youth about environment and social justice issues. The Sustainable Campus Project, which was launched in 1998, focuses on assisting and empowering students to make their universities more sustainable (Beringer, 2006; Helferty, Clarke, & Kouri, 2009). This program uses national and regional conferences to sensitize individual student leaders to campus sustainability issues and train them on how to create change. For example, in the 2007-2008 academic year over 500 participants from 70 different universities and colleges attended one of the six conferences (Sierra Youth Coalition, 2008). Of these 70 campuses, general environmental awareness-raising initiatives were undertaken at 45, green weeks were held at 15, student environmental conferences were held at 15, recycling awareness at 13, days of action at 8, and bike repair awareness at 6. In addition, at the systemic level of change, socialization was achieved through campus sustainability assessments at 31 campuses, and greenhouse gas inventories at 20 campuses (Helferty & Clarke, 2009). SYC's sustainable campus program has reached almost all of the 92 universities in Canada (Helferty & Clarke, 2009) and thus can be considered to have reached a systemic level of socialization.

The Sustainable High Schools Project, which is an adaptation of the Sustainable Campus Project for high school students, was active in 27 schools in the 2007-2008 academic year (Sierra Youth Coalition, 2008).

Sustainable High Schools project grew out of SYC's Youth Action Gatherings, summer camps where youth ages 14-19 learn how to become more involved in social and environmental advocacy. Participants came out of the gatherings with new knowledge and tools wondering, where do we go from here? As most of them were high school students, it made sense to help them develop an assessment and greening project based on the university model, but adapted to the high school context. (Sierra Youth Coalition, 2008, p. 6)

In the 2008-2009 year, over 107 high school students attended the Youth Action Gatherings and another 75 attended conferences related to the Sustainable High School project (Sierra Youth Coalition, 2009). These gatherings sensitize youth to environmental and social justice issues, and through the follow-up activities, these youth raise awareness in their high schools. The Youth Action Gatherings provide:

... youth with the resources, skills and support they need to develop critical thinking skills and a unique way of applying these to their passions. As part of this program SYC offers week long summer retreats for young people to come together, explore issues, gain skills, meet like-minded youth, and create action plans for the coming year... The students each generate individual action plans such as running an environment week in their high school, developing an enviro-

zine (newsletter), starting a barter market, organizing a conference, having a parking meter party, starting an environment group, etc. (Clarke, 2006, p. 1)

In 2008-2009, of the 30 high schools involved, 16 were conducting school-wide sustainability assessments and 7 were involved in the High School Climate Challenge (Sierra Youth Coalition, 2009); thus, this program can be considered to have had community-wide impact through socialization.

Starting in 1997 through speaking tours, SYC began socializing youth and groups environmental issues. The first tour was conducted by train across Canada and focused on climate change. The subsequent “Eco-Echo Tour” focused on ecological footprints. The Climate Change Caravan in 2001 was SYC’s first bike trip where over 35 young people cycled across Canada – supported by a bio-diesel powered bus – and gave presentations. They visited roughly 120 towns and cities along the way, making presentations about climate change to town councils, schools and community groups (Sierra Youth Coalition, 2002). Since then, there have been a number of awareness-raising bike trips, including the Deconstructing Dinner Caravan (2003) where youth biked from Canada to the World Trade Organization meeting in Mexico to raise awareness on food security; and the ‘To the Tar Sands’ (2007) and the ‘Return to the Tar Sands’ (2008) bike trips which both raised awareness about the Alberta tar sands and climate change (Sierra Youth Coalition, 2010). These tours can all be considered to have community-wide impact through socialization.

SYC’s programs, Youth in Decision-Making, Advocacy and Activism, and Anti-Oppression Training, while intended to influence at the community / interorganizational level, also ended up socializing the individuals and organizations involved to the issues being advocated. Website information is also a means of socializing people to SYC’s programs, and therefore also provides some individual socialization to the social problems SYC addresses.

Influence

The Sierra Youth Coalition influences individuals through its trainings as part of the Sustainable Campuses Project, as part of the Sustainable High Schools Project, and at the Youth Action Gatherings. Ryan Kilpatrick, a then 17-year-old SYC volunteer and Youth Action Gathering participant, explained in 2005 that “on the surface SYC appears to be a paradox: it is influential and capable, but democratic and open. But that is its greatest strength: the sense of empowerment it gives to those who encounter it and the passion aroused and retained by its members, employees, and supporters. It is capable of much and is constantly finding new ways to apply itself” (Sierra Youth Coalition, 2005). Another example of this is The BET, an initiative in 2001 where SYC asked Canadians to pledge to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. This program was promoted by the Climate Change Caravan, and by 2002, SYC and the Climate Change Caravan

had succeeded in committing approximately 4500 Canadians to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by taking part in The Bet (Sierra Youth Coalition, 2002), thus influencing these individuals to make changes in their lives.

The Sustainable Campus and Sustainable High Schools Programs also influence on a community-wide level helping students develop campus-wide multi-stakeholder committees at the schools. In universities, these multi-stakeholder committees might be a sub-committee of the university's senate. These committees provide students with a seat at the decision-making table. SYC has also helped numerous universities and colleges adopt environmental policies, sustainability policies, environmental management systems and sustainability offices (and officers) (Helferty & Clarke, 2009). With SYC as the influencer, these have resulted in systemic change within Canada's higher education institutions specifically and within Canada's higher education sector.

SYC has a history of activism that dates back to the APEC and WTO protests of the 1990s. We continue to believe that youth play an important role in shaping the world of tomorrow, by taking risks and speaking loudly and in unison... The members of SYC have a lucid take on the future they want to inherit and consequently, they are willing to criticize societal wrongs, take action to prevent harm to peoples and the environment in which they live, while providing new solutions, ideas and alternatives. After 12 years of existence, SYC owes much of its success to having been able to provide a network and space where young visionaries come together and imagine and build in their communities the world they want to live in. (Sierra Youth Coalition, 2008, p. 8) As part of their Advocacy and Activism work, in 2006, SYC started a program to try to reform the teachers' pension plan in Ontario to be environmentally ethical. They also sent youth delegates to national and international conferences as part of their Youth in Decision-Making stream. This included having a young person on the Canadian delegation at the Johannesburg World Summit for Sustainable Development (Clarke, 2006), and sending youth representatives to numerous United Nations Commissions on Sustainable Development, the United Nations Convention on Climate Change, and the World Trade Organization meetings (Sierra Youth Coalition, 2010).

Direct Control (Power)

SYC is able to go beyond socialization and influence through opportunities provided to their own employees and interns on leading environmental and social issues, thus empowering these individuals to directly impact their own behaviour. In addition, SYC has a direct impact by allowing individuals to raise funds for their own initiatives through the Education Fund. "The Education Fund was launched by SYC in January 2008 in collaboration with Sierra Club of Canada Foundation. This Fund is a vehicle allowing SYC members to raise charitable

funds for education projects” (Sierra Youth Coalition, 2008, p. 10). This program is a powerful tool that puts the decision-making power into the hands of youth.

The Sustainable Campus Project also has direct control over some initiatives which impact university campuses. For example, A “major development happened in Quebec, where the Generations Pact was integrated into the project to manage a \$240,000.00 fund for student-led sustainability initiatives” (Sierra Youth Coalition, 2009, p. 4). In addition, a number of the campuses which SYC works with have passed levies to generate funds each year for student-run projects, such as the installation of solar panels (Helferty & Clarke, 2009).

SYC continues to work to create change at all three levels of impact through strategies of socialization, influence and direct impact. Although achieving systemic impact continues to be a challenge, successful programs such as the sustainable campuses program show the increasing capacity of SYC to achieve this level of social change.

6. Implications for Theory

The main theoretical contribution of this article is to offer a framework of youth-led strategies for creating social change. This study aims to contribute to the literature by emphasizing that youth-led social entrepreneurship can take a multiple-strategy approach. Given that youth have little access to traditional decision-making systems, the result is that young people are best able to pursue socialization and influence strategies over a power strategy (i.e., having a direct control). Both the Apathy is Boring and Sierra Youth Coalition case studies demonstrate that although it is possible for youth social entrepreneurs to eventually use all strategies for creating social change, and achieve levels of impact from the individual to the systemic, it is noticeable that in both cases the tactics tend to be most concentrated in the areas of socialization and influence rather than power. Both organizations wish to create systemic impact, and believe the fastest way to this would be through a power strategy. Considering the progression of tactics over time by both of these organizations, the earlier years were entirely focused on socialization and influence strategies with impact at the individual and, to a lesser extent, interorganizational levels. It took years before these two organizations were able to achieve ongoing community/interorganizational and systemic impacts. Apathy is Boring, as a younger organization, has, as of yet, had much less opportunity to pursue a power strategy.

These findings are consistent with the findings of Helferty and Clarke’s (2009) study which looked at youth-led climate change initiatives on university and college campuses.

While an influence relationship is a situation in which many student groups find themselves, it may not be the most strategic in terms of engaging youth, developing leaders, or ensuring action is taken on climate change ... In addition,

it does not engage youth leaders on an equal footing with other campus stakeholders, so leadership development and buy-in from students will be lower than in a shared power relationship, and the uptake of student ideas (or understanding why student ideas were not adopted) is likely lower than in the shared power relationship. (Helferty & Clarke, 2009, p. 297-298)

For Apathy is Boring and Sierra Youth Coalition, it is also ideal to be able to pursue a power strategy and have a direct impact on the social problem. That said, especially given that the target audience is young people, it is also necessary to pursue a socialization strategy and to have impacts at the individual level. Even when Sierra Youth Coalition started to have the capacity to directly impact campus sustainability initiatives in Quebec through their Generations Pact funding program, it did not stop them from continuing to their socialization and influence tactics in the sustainable campus program. With new participants each year, a socialization strategy is constantly necessary, though easier and easier as the young participants start to achieve systemic change. The strategy used must be determined based on each individual case or social problem that the group is hoping to tackle; and often more than one strategy is the best scenario. What is worrisome is if youth-led social ventures get stuck at the level of individual impact, rather than moving towards systemic impact.

The second contribution of this study is to highlight that the impact of a lack of access to decision-makers encourages innovation by youth-led social enterprises. Innovation is a key part of social entrepreneurship. Social media and technology have allowed for mass mobilization, facilitating youth - who are often early adapters - to have more capacity to mobilize. Youth have opportunities that adult organizations do not have (e.g., testing new ideas, and new communications mediums). Apathy is Boring, for example, has experimented with different social media initiatives, continuing with those that have been more successful in reaching wide audiences.

Youth-led organizations are also easily able to integrate volunteers and low-paid positions to allow for more activity at less cost. The Sierra Youth Coalition, for example, was able to organize bike trips and related community presentations - requiring full-time commitment of approximately 35 people for four months - with as little as one paid staff person. These types of initiatives have a high level of risk, but the youth-led organization is willing to take that risk because they are less worried about failure (they can always try something different if it does not work).

7. Implications for Policy-Makers

In order to encourage young entrepreneurs and to support their work, policy-makers should remain open to supporting the risk and innovation that comes with the ventures these young people develop. In both the cases of Apathy is Boring

and Sierra Youth Coalition, they were enabled by The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation whose mandate is to “fund programs, often innovative, to foster a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient society” (The J. W. McConnell Family Foundation, 2010). This focus on innovation facilitated the Foundation in taking a risk by supporting youth-led ventures like A is B and SYC.

Encouraging innovation is also a critical element in ensuring that young people do not get stuck in only developing ventures that have an impact at an individual level. As these two case studies have articulated, it is hard for youth-led ventures to move to systemic impact through a power strategy, despite the fact that these methods are often the most desirable. In order to encourage youth-led organizations to have the most impact possible, policy-makers and enabling organizations should support youth in exploring their options beyond their current practices. One way of facilitating this is to offer mentorship opportunities. Mentorship allows access to networks of influence, thus offering youth more access to decision-makers who can help them facilitate systemic influence or direct impact (Aujila, 2008). It is also critical for levels of business and government to engage in supporting young social entrepreneurs; “But supporting socially entrepreneurial initiatives at a national level will require more than the leadership of one small organization. Ultimately, it is an area that will require leadership from the public and private sector, as well as from business schools across the country” (Johnson, 2003, p. 18).

8. Implications for Young Social Entrepreneurs

This study holds several lessons for young social entrepreneurs, both in terms of which strategies are likely to be achievable, but also how to have the most social impact possible. Young social entrepreneurs need to recognize their strengths and limitations. It is critical that young social entrepreneurs use their capacity for risk-taking, their ability to keep costs low (especially in terms of staff salaries), and their knowledge of social media to their advantage. Although they might not have access to decision-makers, these strengths can provide them with opportunities to mobilize their peers to support their cause. Young social entrepreneurs should question their strategies and aim for tactics which go beyond what seems obvious, to the tactics that will have the most impact. It is important that these youth-led organizations continually re-evaluate and question themselves to ensure that their impact will be wide and lasting.

Both Apathy is Boring and Sierra Youth Coalition actively participated in coalitions and collaborated with other organizations and high-level partners, such as the Governor General and university administrations, in order to have the most impact possible. Collaboration, such as joining a coalition, joining a network or youth council, or developing inter-organizational partnerships, will help in ensuring that the widest possible impact is achieved.

Lastly, it is also important for young social entrepreneurs to recognize, as both A is B and SYC have experienced, that developing the capacity for change on the systemic level can be slow to realize. Thus, youth-led organizations should work to recognize their place in the broader movement and find support from other youth, but also from adult organizations through intergenerational partnerships that can help them sustain their organization over the longer term. SYC looked to Sierra Club Canada for this support, while A is B looked to the Governor General, Elections Canada, and other high-level partners.

9. Conclusion

This study outlines the experience of two Canadian youth-led social ventures and articulates the challenges these two organizations have faced in impacting change at a systemic level. The study also demonstrates that for both ventures their organizational capacity developed over time, as did access to decision-makers, which are two key factors in a youth-led organization's capacity to have direct impact. Socialization and influence may be more accessible strategies for youth-led organizations to impact social change given their access to mass mobilization, low paid staff, and social media, but these approaches, though critical parts of an overall strategy, may ultimately prove to be more time intensive and less directly effective in addressing a given social problem. This study's research design is limited to only two social ventures offering services in the Canadian context, and does not examine social ventures whose primary focus is to sell products or goods. Further research is needed in this area to determine whether a lack of access to decision-makers by youth-led ventures in fact supports the innovative and trend-setting nature of these ventures. Also, in what other ways does being a youth-led social entrepreneurship create unique challenges? In addition, research that further considers the typology (3x3) offered in this study, to examine its applicability to youth-led social entrepreneurships which sell products (as opposed to offer services), could be pursued. Finally, youth-led social enterprises in general, and more about their actual impact in particular, are areas of potential future research.

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