
Principled action by young people: R4Respect

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Abstract

There is an international movement promoting youth participation models and principles to empower more young people to be active in positive social change. To counter the prevalence of domestic violence, young people are more often targets of change rather than the instigators. Primary prevention of domestic violence is being pursued through gender-based respectful relationships education with young people. Generally, these programs are delivered using conventional adult educator models. In this study, the first year of activity of an emerging youth-led program for delivering respectful relationships education (R4Respect) is evaluated through the views of the young participants, aged from sixteen to twenty-four years, and non-participant adult stakeholders. The development of the model was guided by *Good Practice Principles for Youth Development* (Seymour 2012). The program is assessed using the Tiffany–Eckenrode Program Participation Scale (TEPPS) (Tiffany et al. 2012). For this article, the major themes of the study were reviewed to identify those most relevant to the Good Practice Principles. The study affirms the importance of these principles to building a participatory model in which young people feel valued and supported. Increased funding, capacity, and greater clarity and fairness in roles and responsibilities among the youth participants are suggested as program improvements.

Introduction

In Australia, prevention of domestic violence through respectful relationships education has become a priority for public action with the development and implementation of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children 2010–22 (National Plan 2016). This plan is unprecedented in its long-term outlook and in funding allocations for new service delivery, law enforcement, research and prevention activities. It is grounded in a gender-based analysis of domestic violence and an understanding that until men and boys take greater responsibility to promote gender equality and respect for women and girls, efforts to curtail domestic violence are limited. The focus on prevention in the National Plan (2016) has provided an impetus for the development of the R4Respect program — the subject of this article.

The findings from the National Youth Attitudes Survey (Our Watch 2015) reported a range of disturbing views held by young people about coercion and violence in relationships, including that one in four young people think ‘it’s pretty normal for guys to pressure girls into sex’. In an effort to counter the prevalence of violence in family and other intimate relationships illustrated in these national data, young people are more often targets for change rather than the instigators. Primary prevention of domestic violence is being pursued through gender-based respectful relationships education, which is generally delivered for young people using conventional adult-led learning models. Peer-to-peer education with young people is not common in fields like domestic violence prevention (Stanley et al. 2015).

To foster the involvement of young people in the primary prevention of domestic violence in a way that is meaningful, empowering and improves their wellbeing, research suggests it is important to apply principles of effective youth development and participation (Seymour 2012; Sharpe 2012; Tiffany et al. 2012). Youth participation models vary in the scale and scope of decision-making and autonomy young people adopt (Sharpe 2012; Tiffany et al. 2012; Wong et al. 2010). Evidence shows that youth participation models based on the Good Practice Principles, which promote the strengths and diversity of young people and foster their decision-making, responsibility and learning in a safe and supportive environment, produce better outcomes and experiences for young people (Seymour 2012; Sharpe 2012; Wong et al. 2010). Zeldin and colleagues (2014: 338) argue that ‘the most effective type of youth participation is typically labeled as youth-adult partnership . . . characterized by the explicit expectation that youth and adults will collaborate in all aspects of group decision making’. Checkoway (in this issue) draws on the outcomes of a social justice model in Detroit to advocate an ‘adults as allies’ approach in which he states that young people ‘want adults [to] let them make decisions yet hold high expectations for them, without falling into authority roles. They want adults who want to develop genuine relationships, something that otherwise is missing from their lives.’ In general, researchers and practitioners in the youth field do not adopt a one preferred approach to engaging young people; instead, they tend to support principles that guide rather than prescribe good practice.

In this article, we report on the evaluation research conducted to examine the first year of activity of R4Respect — a Queensland youth-participation and peer-to-peer education model aimed at preventing domestic violence. R4Respect is sponsored by YFS Ltd, a not-for-profit organisation that delivers a range of services to the people of Logan, south of Brisbane, in Queensland, Australia (YFS Ltd 2017). YFS Ltd is particularly committed to supporting young people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged to build their independence and to become active citizens. Through R4Respect, YFS Ltd has engaged with young people aged sixteen to twenty-four years, through face-to-face and online peer-to-peer educational activities, supporting them to develop the values, knowledge and skills they need for respectful relationships. R4Respect breaks new ground in the way young people are supported to conduct peer-to-peer education and awareness on respectful relationships, activities typically provided by experienced adults.

For this article, we explicitly reviewed the thematic analysis undertaken in this research to select and discuss the major themes that had most relevance to the Good Practice Principles. Our evaluative research has affirmed that good principles of

practice with young people provide an approach that young people and community leaders value for its capacity to engage young people in positive social change. R4Respect is making a useful and unique contribution to both the fields of youth development and domestic violence practice. We outline our key findings, revealing that to improve the model, young participants want greater clarity in their roles and a fairer spread of tasks and responsibilities amongst the group. Both adult and youth stakeholders suggested that with more training, funding and members, the young team driving R4Respect would be able to increase the positive impact of their work raising awareness about domestic violence and respectful relationships among their peers. Finally, we report that while R4Respect began as a youth–adult partnership model, the open position adopted by YFS Ltd on the type of participation model has been crucial in enabling young people to drive the development of the program.

The R4Respect strategy and practice principles

The formation of R4Respect and public launch in September 2015 was prompted by the need to respond to the attitudes of young people to interpersonal abuse and violence. Experienced staff at YFS Ltd developed and agreed on a concept of Youth Ambassadors on paid scholarships in mid-2015, and by November 2015 the R4Respect program had recruited twelve Youth Ambassadors aged from sixteen to twenty-four years. Our approach is an example of the process that Checkoway (in this issue) refers to as ‘adults reaching out’. R4Respect recognises that the definition of a ‘young person’ can take into account a range of cultural and contextual issues (UNDP Program 2014). For the purposes of the program’s governance and structure, R4Respect has employed a similar definition of ‘youth’ to that of the United Nations General Assembly, which defines a young person as someone between the ages of fifteen years and twenty-four years and nine months (UNDP Program 2014). The definition adopted by R4Respect also mirrors similar youth-led development programs in Australia, such as the Oaktree Foundation, which has implemented a policy specifying that all volunteers must be under the age of twenty-six, while encouraging others beyond twenty-six years to get involved as mentors, trainers and donors (Oaktree Foundation 2016). R4Respect’s Youth Ambassadors are the young people at the core of R4Respect’s youth participation model. R4Respect currently employs a Youth Coordinator and has previously employed a Campaign Officer, both over the age of 24 but under the age of 30. None of these age ranges is fixed in policy. As the program develops, it is anticipated that young people will influence the direction of any age-participation approach or policy that may be adopted.

The Youth Ambassadors promote respectful relationships using peer-to-peer education sessions in local high schools, by raising awareness of the issue of domestic violence through traditional and social media and by engaging with the local community at social events and activities. These activities generally are activity-based educational sessions, information stalls and public presentations, organised and delivered by the Youth Ambassadors, with the aim of appealing to young people. The Youth Ambassadors began running their own fortnightly meetings and planning their events with limited adult involvement after approximately nine months of operation. The adult mentors provide training, support and feedback to the Youth Ambassadors. This relationship is to promote their learning and ensure their

own and other young people's safety. The sensitivity of the issues and potential to prompt self-disclosure of harm from some youth participants requires understanding and clear protocols for the young people to work within. To develop their skills, disclosure protocols and more, the Youth Ambassadors who lead the educational sessions have enrolled in formal training, such as LoveBites (National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect 2017).

The attendance records from R4Respect events indicate that in 2016 the Youth Ambassadors reached over 3,500 students through their peer-to-peer respectful relationships education sessions. This number does not include community and social media outreach. The particularly innovative aspect of R4Respect is the peer-to-peer educational work in a field that is predominantly adult-led education and awareness raising (Stanley et al. 2015). Respectful Relationships education material used by R4Respect is drawn from the evidence-based information promoted by Our Watch (2015) and the Department of Education, Victoria (2016), which recognises the gender-based nature of domestic violence. Given the contribution of gender-based inequality to domestic violence (National Plan 2016), the promotion of gender equality features as a guiding principle in the R4Respect program.

The Good Practice Principles developed by Seymour (2012) and the international literature on youth participation and gender-based violence programs, such as Restless Development (2016), influenced the formation of R4Respect as a start-up partnership model between adults and young people, now evolving into a youth-led model. In collaboration with numerous youth organisations, Seymour (2012) formulated and validated six major principles and a comprehensive range of indicators to act as a guide and checklist to assist organisations in establishing effective and ethical youth-development models. The six principles — learning and development; leadership and decision-making; an inclusive ethos; community service; partnerships and social networks; and ethical promotion — are described in her article in this special edition and explored later in this article.

Consistent with the principles, a high priority was placed on ethical and inclusive practice with young people by YFS Ltd, R4Respect's sponsoring community organisation. Efforts were made to recruit a balance of male and female members, and to recruit young people who could relate to the diversity of experiences represented within Logan City. Logan is one of the most culturally diverse cities in Queensland with 26.1 per cent of its 287,500 residents born overseas and 2.8 per cent being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island descent. At least 215 different nationalities and ethnic groups are represented in the Logan community (Logan City Council 2013: 5).

The twelve Youth Ambassadors come from a range of culturally diverse backgrounds, which include the Pacific Islands, Burundi, Kenya, New Zealand Maori and Aboriginal. While the gender of the Youth Ambassadors fluctuates based on attrition and recruitment, R4Respect has committed to, and maintained, a gender balance. A decision was made to recruit a group of young people who were not already in publicly recognised positions of leadership, but demonstrated a capacity to engage with young people of all backgrounds, including the most 'hard to reach' or marginalised. Priority was also placed on young people having a strong voice in decision-making; mentoring and training; and financial support through a paid scholarship awarded yearly to all Youth Ambassadors. The scholarships, valued at

\$2000 Australian dollars, are sponsored by YFS Ltd and other corporate donors to subsidise Youth Ambassador participation costs and recognise their contribution to the program. Two casual paid work opportunities have also been made available to the Youth Ambassadors by YFS Ltd for administrative work required to run the R4Respect program.

Youth social change theory, principles and models

R4Respect and this evaluation are grounded in an asset-based framework that views young people as ‘resources to be developed’ (Roth and Brooks-Gunn 2003). In contrast, deficit models of youth are common in mainstream media, and generally view young people through the social problems some may endure, such as substance abuse and crime, rather than through their capacities (Roth and Brooks-Gunn 2003; Walker et al. 2014). Programs that support youth participation can empower young people and improve their wellbeing (Restless Development, 2016; United Nations Children’s Fund [UNCF] 2012; Wong et al. 2010; Zeldin et al. 2014). When young people take an active role in program decision-making and operation, this can result in benefits for themselves, other young people and the wider community. Walker and colleagues (2014), for example, outline how young people have the capacity to motivate and reach other young people to better understand and act on issues of significance. Denison et al. (2012; also Valente et al. 2007) found peer-led interventions may be more effective than teacher-led interventions in influencing young people on public health issues, and Delgado and Staples (2008) report that young people as advocates can attract media attention and sympathy, which contributes to policy change.

There are challenges, however, in meaningfully engaging and retaining young people in programs. It is reported that a barrier to effective youth participation is that many adults do not have the skill or confidence in young people to share decision-making with them (Walker et al. 2014). Checkoway (in this issue) describes the concept of ‘Adulthood’ as a ‘condition in which adults assume that they are better than young people and are entitled to act upon them simply because of their age’. Denison and colleagues (2012; also UNCF 2012) stress the importance of offering young people active roles in decision-making and program delivery that are not tokenistic and not characterised by a minimal role in decision-making. The empowerment theoretical framework developed by Wong et al. (2010) distinguishes five different types of youth participation: a vessel approach in which young people lack a voice and participation; a symbolic approach where young people have a voice, but adults have most control; a pluralistic approach in which young people and adults share control; and an independent model, in which young people are more empowered and autonomous. This independent model is what R4Respect refers to as youth-led. In defining youth–adult partnership models, Zeldin and colleagues (2014: 338) state, ‘Y–AP is characterized by the explicit expectation that youth and adults will collaborate in all aspects of group decision making from visioning, to program planning, to evaluation and continuous improvement.’ Strategies that foster authentic youth participation are those in which young people initiate and/or share decision-making and responsibility with adults (Jacquez et al. 2013; Tiffany et al. 2012; Wong et al. 2010; Zeldin et al. 2014). From their assessment of the Y–AP model, Zeldin and colleagues (2014: 338) conclude that:

‘Y-AP ... derives its influence when adults have the willingness and ability to share power, while concurrently preparing youth through scaffolding, mentoring and direct instruction.’

The evaluation

To evaluate the R4Respect program from February to December 2016, using lived experience, we conducted interviews with twelve Youth Ambassadors and ten adult stakeholders who had some experience in working with the Youth Ambassador group. The data collection included twenty individual interviews and one interview where two Youth Ambassadors participated together. The Youth Ambassadors were also invited to participate in a follow-up group interview in August; six participated. Attendance, event and social media metrics data were also examined to gain information on the extent of the engagement of the Youth Ambassadors with other young people. Eight of these adult stakeholders were educators or community leaders and two were parents, each of a different Youth Ambassador. We sought their assessment of whether R4Respect was operating as an effective model of youth participation; whether the program benefited domestic violence prevention efforts; and how the program could be improved to provide new ways of responding in the field of domestic violence and to foster the participation and skills of young people.

Our research approach was informed by principles guiding ethical research with young people, which are well developed in the literature. Heath and colleagues (2009; see also Kirby 2004) report on the need to recognise and mediate power imbalances between adult researchers and youth researchers and subjects, and to foster the participation of young people in research of interest to them. We sought to ameliorate the potential for a power imbalance by engaging a young research assistant aged under twenty-four years to conduct all interviews with the Youth Ambassadors (at three of these, the research assistant was accompanied by the co-researcher). A reference group that included two Youth Ambassadors and the research assistant was also established. The research assistant was employed to co-interview the participants, assist in the analysis of themes, provide a degree of cross-checking of the interpretation of the narrative data with participants and support the reference group. These strategies also sought to overcome any potential barriers to the Youth Ambassadors speaking freely and openly as one of the researchers also provide a mentor role to the Youth Ambassadors. The reference group members met several times, but they acknowledged that their interest waned due to the commitments of the Youth Ambassadors to the delivery of R4Respect activities, as well as their external study and work commitments. Their input was minimal in the research reference group. On reflection, more research skills training and casual pay for this role may have enabled greater participation from the reference group members.

We developed an interview schedule, which was based on a validated measure of youth participation developed to assess how young people viewed their participation (Tiffany et al. 2012; Zeldin et al. 2014). The Tiffany–Eckenrode Program Participation Scale (TEPPS) (Tiffany et al. 2012) assesses the nature of youth decision-making, including how young people are included and valued. The TEPPS measure includes questions that seek young people’s own views on issues, such as:

‘Adults in the program act on what I have to say’; ‘I feel I have a lot of influence over decisions about the program’, and ‘The program is having a positive influence on my confidence in being part of public activities.’

We selected TEPPS to support our research not because it is a superior youth-participation measure to others but because it contains elements that align well with the Good Practice Principles guiding the R4Respect program. While TEPPS is a quantitative measure of participation, for this evaluation the items on TEPPS were adapted to inform the interview schedule, resulting in our questions being aligned closely with the elements of the TEPPS scale and the Good Practice Principles. Given the small number of participants, the small-scale evaluation and adaptations to TEPPS made by the researchers, TEPPS usefully informed the interview schedule, rather than being applied as a quantitative measure.

The TEPPS four sub-scales align well with the principles developed by Seymour (2012) and enabled us to assess the participation experience and outcomes of the Youth Ambassadors. They are: personal development; voice/influence; safety/support; and community engagement. Since TEPPS did not specifically address the issue of diversity and inclusion, we developed and incorporated a question that sought participant views on whether the gender, culture or other aspects of the identity of the Youth Ambassadors impacted on their participation. In addition, all participants were asked to provide their thoughts on whether R4Respect has a positive impact on the views young people have about domestic violence and their ideas on ways to improve R4Respect. Thematic analysis was chosen as a method for data analysis in this study as it enables the researchers to have an active role in identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun and Clarke 2006: 78–9). This active role recognises that, as researchers, we bring our own values and positions to our work, and thus our analysis may well be driven by our own theoretical interest in the topic.

In the initial evaluation, themes were identified in the data by the researchers based on two main criteria: the significance participants placed on them, and the presence of disparate (non-common) themes. For this article, the initial thematic analysis (and thematic maps) were reviewed to identify themes most relevant to the Good Practice Principles. The use of the Good Practice Principles in R4Respect was set as a ‘global theme’ around which other major themes could be organised. A global theme is defined as ‘a summary of the main themes and a revealing interpretation of the text’ (Attride-Stirling 2001: 389). The frequency with which themes appeared in the data was not recorded explicitly. As noted by Braun and Clarke (2006: 82), the ‘keyness’ of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures, but rather on whether it captures something important. In this analysis, the relevance to the Good Practice Principles was the issue of importance.

Findings

Main themes from the qualitative data

In analysing the qualitative data to examine how the Good Practice Principles were represented in the R4Respect Youth Ambassador program experience, eight main themes across the six principles were identified. These themes are listed and numbered (but not ranked) in Table 1. They address developmental outcomes, program and organisational practice, and program processes.

Table 1 Main themes relevant to the good practice principles.

| Theme | Description |
|---|---|
| <i>Developmental outcomes</i> | |
| 1 Confidence-building and skill development | There was a clear expression of growth in confidence and public speaking and decision-making skill among the Youth Ambassadors. |
| 2 Taking pride in work and feeling valued | The Youth Ambassadors were very positive about the feedback they were receiving, expressed pride in their achievements and felt valued. |
| <i>Practice</i> | |
| 3 Equity in roles and tasks | A strong view emerged of frustration and disappointment among the Youth Ambassadors group that some members were not contributing enough time to the program. |
| 4 Adult stakeholders — optimism and caution | Overwhelmingly, adults were optimistic and positive. Due to the complexity and sensitivity of domestic violence and relationship issues, a theme of caution and desire for adults to remain in a close partnership with the Youth Ambassadors was identified. |
| 6 Promoting respect and diversity | All participants acknowledged that the ethos of respect needed to be central to all aspects of R4Respect. |
| 7 Youth mentoring | The important support role played by adult mentors was recognised by all participants. |
| <i>Processes</i> | |
| 5 Building program capacity to achieve. | To grow and develop, it was widely acknowledged that R4Respect needed more funding and more Youth Ambassadors. |
| 8 Building a youth movement | The Youth Ambassadors spoke of their goal to involve young people in R4Respect well beyond Logan. |

Learning and development

Both the Good Practice Principles and the sub-scale personal development from TEPPS place a priority on planned training, mentoring, support and leadership development. Principle 1: Learning and development highlights the importance of understanding the core values, skills and knowledge needed by program leaders, and using this knowledge to inform recruitment, development and training. Youth Ambassadors were recruited to be program leaders more on the basis of their views of respect in relationships, domestic violence and their interest in acting to promote respect, rather than actual knowledge, as YFS Ltd staff felt that this could be developed. Adult stakeholders involved in the recruitment said that knowledge was initially low relative to the high level of interest shown by the young people. By the time of the evaluation research, Youth Ambassadors were able to clearly articulate the values and main messages at the core of R4Respect.

Each young person spoke of how they began with limited knowledge of domestic violence and running a program, but their knowledge was growing. Their growing confidence and knowledge (Theme 1) was attributed to the ongoing training, mentoring, and experience in delivering messages with their peers. As one Youth Ambassador explained, ‘We are getting educated along with the youth we are engaging with, which is awesome.’ All Youth Ambassadors expressed some anxiety and reticence, but felt they were acquiring more confidence and reported receiving good feedback on their capable and engaging presentations from adult

stakeholders. This confidence is reflected in the theme of pride in their work and feeling valued, which was expressed by the young people. This experience may not have been the same for the three Youth Ambassadors who relinquished their scholarships after several months. While none of the young people stated that they did not feel valued or included, the reasons they cited for their decision to leave included: language and communication was too complex; the demands of study commitments; and their need for paid work. These factors provide some indication that the Youth Ambassadors who left the program had questioned their value in the group and the value of the program to themselves. No participant commented on whether any follow-up action had occurred to respond to the issues raised by those who relinquished their scholarships.

A number of Youth Ambassadors voiced pride (Theme 2) in their achievements of reaching over 3,500 secondary students in less than a year, speaking publicly at over twenty community events, hosting a forum with over forty youth-related organisations present (Innovation in Youth Participation, Logan, June 2016) and speaking on children and young people as agents of change at an international domestic violence conference titled Prevalent and Preventable (Our Watch 2016): Practice and Policy in the Prevention of Violence against Women and Children in Adelaide (September 2016). Improved job prospects, new learning and being part of a good cause were benefits of participation in R4Respect, as indicated in the group interview:

Researcher: What benefits are you getting from being in R4Respect?

Youth Ambassadors:

I feel like I really will make a difference.

This is good for my study in law, CV and my career.

Leadership and decision-making

Principle 2: Leadership and decision-making emphasises young people's expertise, their right to be involved and to be informed, and the right to have their own opinion, to express their view and to be heard. R4Respect has a fundamental commitment to recognising young people's expertise and to ensuring they are set up to succeed as they develop and exercise their expertise, leadership and decision-making skills. The theme that Youth Ambassadors feel valued by their peers, mentors and adult stakeholders was evident in the way the Youth Ambassadors described their contribution to decision-making and planning through regular meetings and their online chat groups. The Youth Ambassadors acknowledged that they were mostly running their own meetings and educational sessions without adult mentors present. They were taking less responsibility in building corporate and government partnerships and in making requests for funding. The growing 'voice' of all Youth Ambassadors was a common message. Their desire to lead the program was articulated clearly in the following group discussion with two Youth Ambassadors:

Interviewer: Do you feel that R4Respect is increasingly youth-led?

Youth Ambassador A: Our whole motive is young people talking to young people, so young people running the ship from top to bottom is our overall aim, and that will allow us to engage better with schools.

Youth Ambassador B: It is becoming increasingly youth-led, and that adds to being able to connect with young people and having an organisation that really practices what its message is.

Theme 3: Unfairness in roles and tasks among themselves arose in interviews with several young participants. They expressed a desire for a clear structure, more equal roles (including the clarification of what was required of paid and unpaid roles), and sharing of decision-making among the Youth Ambassadors. They expressed their concerns through comments like:

Assign Ambassadors to specific roles, duties and positions to ensure responsibility and progression of ideas.

My status within the group is not as great as [that of] others.

The structure of the R4Respect ambassador group can be unfair at times, when the people here today in this room are all so involved and dedicated, and others have been really uninvolved.

Several Youth Ambassadors had the opportunity to undertake paid casual work for their work in R4Respect, enabling them to commit more time than others and to assume leadership roles. This casual pay was received well by the beneficiaries of the work, but their selection for paid work was viewed as unfair by at least one of the Youth Ambassadors. The tension resulting from the perceived unfairness in workloads and contribution by the Youth Ambassadors is an area they have flagged for further discussion and policy development.

Theme 4 relates to the optimism that was overwhelmingly stated by adult stakeholders in describing the achievements of R4Respect. Yet this was balanced with some caution about the capacity of the program. That capacity related to the ability of the Youth Ambassadors to retain a consistently high standard in gender-based awareness and education activities, and the capacity of the program to attract recurrent funding for the recruitment and training of more Youth Ambassadors. As identified by Walker and colleagues (2014), adults have some reluctance about, and lack some confidence in, the capacity of young people to manage program tasks without adult support. Several adult stakeholders explicitly stated that they favoured an adult–youth partnership model. One adult stakeholder stated that ‘direction was lacking when the adults took a step back . . . that having the entire movement directed by young people may not be beneficial to the organisation [YFS Ltd]’. This person stated that the Youth Ambassadors performed well in peer-to-peer education sessions but felt that their capacity to ‘run’ the organisation of R4Respect was limited. This capacity related to their skills in managing time, people and tasks.

The adults with professional education experience urged the program to maintain high standards of knowledge, service and training with the Youth Ambassadors — particularly to enhance their knowledge of gender-based violence and ways to respond to young people who raise attitudes that are contrary to the program aims or disclose their experience of harm and need for help. These are valid concerns that R4Respect will need to continuously monitor and respond to as necessary. In general, adult stakeholders were supportive of young people having a high degree of decision-making and responsibility, but recommended that there be an enduring role for adult mentors in the program. Exactly what role adults

will play into the future within R4Respect is yet to be determined, but the Youth Ambassadors seem keen to be in the driver's seat to determine this.

An inclusive ethos

Principle 3: An inclusive ethos values difference and advocates for the adoption of explicit practices to help achieve diversity in organisational and program membership. A publicly acclaimed feature of R4Respect is the way it promotes the values of inclusion, diversity, respect, equality and non-violence in every aspect of its functioning and educational work. The decision to recruit young people beyond the leaders already in publicly recognised positions of leadership in schools and groups, and to recruit a gender balance, were acknowledged as a positive strategy by research participants. The recruitment of Youth Ambassadors from diverse backgrounds was also considered to be advantageous in extending the reach of the program to some of the more marginalised young people in Logan.

Theme 6 relates to how well the diversity of young people worked to engage other young people. One adult stakeholder noted that 'in fact there is some criticism that it [R4Respect] lacks white Anglo reps'. The Youth Ambassadors who were active in delivering educational sessions to students spoke of how well young people engaged in the sessions when young men and young women to whom they could relate facilitated the learning. A Youth Ambassador recounted an experience when two young women from R4Respect delivered two sessions to students and there was a noticeable rise in disruptive behaviour from male students. After this experience, the Youth Ambassadors implemented their own policy, which ensures that whenever they present respectful relationships education sessions in co-educational schools, they always have a male and female Youth Ambassador presenting. This does not yet apply to presentations to adults, or any community outreach. It has not presented as an issue in these environments. All participants spoke in some way about the need to manage gender dynamics and promote gender equality in the R4Respect work.

To date, the current age range of young people has worked for R4Respect. No participant raised concern about the age range in R4Respect and no one mentioned age limits or ranges. Younger Youth Ambassadors who were still attending school had less ability to attend events during school hours, yet commented that they did not feel excluded by the older members and that they did the same 'things' as them. An issue that did emerge was that the oldest Youth Ambassador, at twenty-four years, may either have to leave the program in 2017, or R4Respect may consider broadening the definition to ensure the ongoing inclusion of Youth Ambassadors over twenty-four years in the program. In addition, the Youth Coordinator and previously employed Campaign Officer are both over the age of twenty-four but under the age of 30. These age ranges may need to be formalised in the future development of the R4Respect model towards greater youth responsibility without deterring the role of supportive adults.

Community service

Principle 4: Community service promotes the contribution young people make to their community through their service to community actions and activities. This principle explores the idea that through community service, young people can bring

benefits not only to themselves but also to the people and the community around them. The Youth Ambassadors commonly believed that the respectful relationships education they presented in schools had a positive influence on other young people and that their work was valued widely.

This theme (Theme 2) is affirmed by feedback and social media received after presentations, and from positive feedback from adult stakeholders and community leaders. In a recent R4Respect session survey of 90 Year 11 secondary high school students, for example, 89 per cent agreed that ‘R4Respect has given me a better understanding of respectful relationships and domestic violence’ and 85 per cent agreed that ‘I would recommend more programs like R4Respect in schools’.

Several of the education stakeholders who had witnessed the Youth Ambassadors facilitating activities with students and adults also spoke of how well they gained interest from people of diverse cultures, backgrounds and ages on the complex issues of domestic violence and respectful relationships. The adult stakeholders considered this to be an important community service benefit of the program. In the group interview, there were enthusiastic cross-conversations about the community service benefits of R4Respect among the Youth Ambassadors, making it difficult to attribute comments to individuals. The dialogue was recorded as follows:

Everyone feels rewarded in helping spread awareness of domestic violence and teaching youth about respect . . . Having young people engage with other young people is probably our biggest strong point and one we should express more with our promotion.

Partnerships and networks

Principle 5: Partnerships and networks values the contribution that different organisations and groups, and individuals, can make to each other and community capacity when they make positive and meaningful commitments to work together. R4Respect emphasises the skill and role of young people in building and making use of partnerships and networks. The desire to build an R4Respect movement that has no geographical boundaries and involves many more young people was a consistent theme (Theme 8) raised by young people in the study. The Youth Ambassadors have expanded their social media followers to build a following from 200 to 1400 during the course of the research, but they mostly preferred using face-to-face meetings with young people.

There has also been value in face-to-face meetings to network between Youth Ambassadors and senior figures in the community sector, business and politics. Adult stakeholders acknowledged that these meetings have contributed to a groundswell of community support for the program, as well as instilling confidence in the Youth Ambassadors. As highlighted previously, an indicator of the positive regard community leaders are developing for R4Respect was the invitation for two Youth Ambassadors to speak at the international domestic violence conference in Adelaide (Our Watch 2016). From this event, one of the Youth Ambassadors was invited to be on the National Community Attitudes Survey Advisory Group managed by the Australian National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS 2016).

Ethical promotion

Finally, the Good Practice Principles emphasise the importance of ethical promotion supported by a framework of policies, strategies and principles, positive images of young people and appropriate resourcing to achieve outcomes. R4Respect was acknowledged favourably for the positive images, role models and stories that the Youth Ambassadors were promoting — by and for young people to the community. This was expressed by a Youth Ambassador as ‘a big positive and advantage of our program is that we are for the youth from the youth’.

The largest number of comments did, however, focus on appropriate resourcing, which had an influence on roles, responsibilities, the ways in which young people felt included or excluded, and the capacity of the Youth Ambassadors to reach out to other young people. The limited capacity a small group of young people has to reach other young people and influence change was a recurring theme (Theme 5) from adults and young participants. By limited capacity, participants were referring primarily to the limited funding to support the foundation of R4Respect and to build the numbers of young people involved. A Youth Ambassador suggested, ‘More funding is needed. While we are all young people we still all have our own lives.’ This person was primarily referring to funding that could enable more paid positions within R4Respect. Financial incentives appear important to keep young people involved and active within the group. It is also evident that they all have limited, fixed incomes. They all spoke of their need for paid work.

The employment of a full-time contract Youth Coordinator for R4Respect, and the development of more structured administrative positions for two Youth Ambassadors on casual pay, occurred near the completion of the evaluation. The addition of a Youth Coordinator, whose role is to develop R4Respect’s transition to a youth-led model as well as organise the program’s day-to-day operations, is start of a clearer structure and designation of responsibility in which the participants expressed interest. This increased capacity with paid workers may help to identify, and provide assistance to, Youth Ambassadors who need more support to participate in the program. The Youth Coordinator’s responsibility to ensure the Youth Ambassadors are properly trained and supported in the R4Respect program, and her presence as another role model, are also likely to strengthen the decision-making and governance capacity of the young people. The Good Practice Principles suggest that an ethical framework needs to be articulated clearly. This may be an area that R4Respect refines in the future development of the program.

Future of the model and conclusion

Our evaluative research indicates that the R4Respect program is functioning in a manner consistent with the Good Practice Principles as recommended by researchers (Seymour 2012; Tiffany et al. 2012; Wong et al. 2010). This is evident in features of the program: the participation of Youth Ambassadors in R4Respect is active, yet variable for individuals; they are a diverse group culturally and their influence is growing; they feel valued and supported; and they receive numerous invitations and wide acclaim. In addition, the findings show that adult stakeholders and community leaders are commending and promoting the new peer-to-peer

education and respectful relationships awareness-raising by young people that features in R4Respect.

From its commencement as a pluralistic model with adult-youth decision-making and responsibility, R4Respect is shifting to a model where the young people are more independent and autonomous. This is an aspiration of the young participants in the program, and they are working towards achieving it with support from adults who share their vision. The success of this aspiration will be more likely with the employment of the Youth Coordinator and other paid positions within the program. Their ability to build the governance, funding and capacity of R4Respect will influence the type of model that evolves and its success.

The Youth Ambassadors overwhelmingly indicated their desire for a clearer and fairer organising and decision-making structure. This desire illustrates the structural and practice challenges facing R4Respect as an emerging youth-led model. The Youth Ambassadors are passionate about their agency and autonomy, both as individuals and collectively as a movement, but they still require assistance with some rudimentary tasks. For instance, R4Respect's administration, corporate requests and finances are mostly managed by experienced, paid staff at YFS Ltd.

The need for governance support from adults is a commonly raised issue, particularly in relation to the need to access adult knowledge and networks to attract sponsors and funding and to maintain legal and financial accountability (Brown et al. 2015; UNCF 2012; Walker et al. 2014). The Youth Ambassadors have now all received initial training in gender-based violence. The focus has more recently shifted to continuous weekly training presented by three Youth Ambassadors who have certificates as LoveBites facilitators. These Youth Ambassadors are recognised by the experienced adults as capable peer trainers. Less attention has been paid to supporting the Youth Ambassadors to develop the skills needed to maintain, run and grow the program. Young leaders with a well-articulated visions for R4Respect are yet to emerge. As proposed in the Good Practice Principles, the Youth Ambassadors need to have a clear say in their group's strategic direction, leadership and role in building the capacity and sustainability of R4Respect.

This capacity-building will ideally be achieved by the development of a mentoring and training program, the designation of responsibilities and an internal organisational structure to which the Youth Ambassadors agree, as well as additional corporate and government funding. This may well be improved through targeted recruitment of additional new Youth Ambassadors with specific skills needed to develop the program, the continuing engagement of a Youth Coordinator and further diversification of roles in addition to the Youth Coordinator. With more resources, a clearer program structure and ongoing empowerment of the Youth Ambassadors to develop skills required to run the program, R4Respect will be well equipped to achieve its goal of building a broad-based youth movement dedicated to promoting respectful relationships. It is good principled practice by and with young people.

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