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Youth Voice Scoping Review: Alignment and Recommendations for an Adolescent Male-Specific Healthy Living Program

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Jake Grady and Graci Fleet received payment as full-time interns, supervised by Dr. Chris Gilham and Brandon Hamilton, with funding from the MITACS program and Bridges Counselling Inc. Brandon Hamilton was employed by Bridges Counselling Inc. (receiver of provincial and federal funds for GuysWork implementation) as the GuysWork Project Coordinator. Chris Gilham received consultation fees from Bridges Counselling Inc. to help lead research activities for GuysWork. Brandon Hamilton was a member of the Nova Scotia Provincial GuysWork Advisory Board.

Abstract

We undertook a scoping review to find main themes in peer-reviewed literature on bringing youth voice into youth programming across multiple contexts, with the aim of using these themes as recommendations for those considering youth programming or already involved in youth programming. We then assessed the youth voice component of GuysWork, an adolescent male-specific healthy-living program in Nova Scotia's schools. This assessment served as an example of how the recommendations can be applied to current programming for youth. Twenty-nine articles were included after screening. Data were extracted for descriptive statistics and thematic analysis was used to synthesize data into recommendations. The four main recommendations included 1. Youth voice should take place in environments of equal power and respect, 2. Youth voice should be open, meaningful, and ongoing, 3. Youth voice requires fostering a safe, trustworthy, supportive environment, and 4. Curricula should be consistently created and delivered with youth involvement. These recommendations can be used to design and sustain youth programming with and for youth.

Keywords: youth; youth voice; youth programming; engagement; healthy living; male-identified

Résumé

Nous avons effectué une revue exploratoire afin d'identifier les principaux thèmes de la littérature scientifique évaluée par les pairs concernant l'intégration de la voix des jeunes dans les programmes jeunesse, et ce, dans divers contextes. L'objectif était d'utiliser ces thèmes comme recommandations pour les personnes envisageant de mettre en place des programmes jeunesse ou y participant déjà. Nous avons ensuite évalué le volet « voix des jeunes » du programme GuysWork, un programme de promotion de la santé et du bien-être destiné aux adolescents dans les écoles de la Nouvelle-Écosse. Cette évaluation a servi d'exemple pour illustrer comment les recommandations peuvent être appliquées aux programmes jeunesse existants. Vingt-neuf articles ont été retenus après le processus de sélection. Les données ont été extraites à des fins de statistiques descriptives et une analyse thématique a permis de synthétiser les résultats en recommandations. Les quatre principales recommandations sont les suivantes : 1. La voix des jeunes doit s'exprimer dans un climat d'égalité et de respect mutuel ; 2. La voix des jeunes doit être ouverte, significative et continue ; 3. La voix des jeunes requiert l'instauration d'un environnement sécuritaire, digne de confiance et bienveillant; et 4. Les programmes doivent être élaborés et mis en œuvre en impliquant systématiquement les jeunes. Ces recommandations peuvent servir à concevoir et à pérenniser des programmes jeunesse avec et pour les jeunes.

Mots-clés: jeunesse; voix des jeunes; programmes jeunesse; engagement; mode de vie sain; personnes s'identifiant comme hommes

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Introduction

Youth Voice and GuysWork

Youth voice within youth programming can be understood along a continuum from youth sharing their perspectives to youth leading change (Mitra, 2018). We understand youth voice as more than simply gathering views (Gillett-Swan & Baroutsis, 2024). Youth voice is a form of youth participation engaging children and adolescents in meaningful and sustained efforts to improve the settings, systems, and organizations that impact them (Ozer et al., 2018). This includes intentional and structured practices (Ean et al., 2024; Emerson et al., 2023) that move beyond performativity (Pearce & Wood, 2016). Lundy's (2007) 4-part model is helpful here: *space* (opportunity to express views), *voice* (facilitation to express views), *audience* (views must be listened to), and *influence* (views must be acted upon, as appropriate) are needed for youth voice to be meaningful, and to properly enact the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (1989). Recent research on student voice in school programming highlights the importance of students feeling heard, supported, and taken seriously by teachers, which fosters engagement and a sense of belonging (Fredricks et al., 2019; Wallace & Chhuon, 2014 in Conner et al., 2022). Similarly, Mitra (2018) outlined how youth voice can enhance school culture, rethink instruction by using inquiry as a method for change, and spark teacher learning.

We agree with Pearce and Wood (2016) that youth voice facilitates engagement "…in dialogue and action that makes clear to them the conditions of their own lives" (p.117), which can then drive actionable changes in their environments. Kennedy et al. (2019, p. 208) used the term "youth inquiry" to capture youth participation. A systematic review of youth inquiry approaches in the United States over a 20-year period showed "positive, and in many cases, lasting changes in their environments, including their schools, neighborhoods, and communities" (p. 221). These changes occurred for peers and adults, often institutionalizing youth roles in decision-making. Policy-level impacts were especially evident when youth targeted decision-makers, demonstrating the power of listening, collaboration, and leadership (Mitra, 2018). We have arrived at our position on youth voice through our involvement in the implementation and evaluation of GuysWork in Nova Scotia's public-school systems. Created by Moe Green, GuysWork is a school-based healthy-living program for adolescent boys, run in partnership with Bridges Counselling, a counselling centre for families struggling with relationship issues and a specialty in counselling for domestic abuse and anger management. A recent pilot study funded by the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women as part of their provincial action plan to prevent domestic violence, known as *Standing Together*, demonstrated that GuysWork is associated with shifts in some masculinity norms in 13- and 14-year-old boys (Gilham, 2023). These results align with national recommendations for the upstream prevention of partner and gender-based violence (Government of Canada, 2022).

Currently, funding through Women and Gender Equality Canada and the province of Nova Scotia supports an expansion of GuysWork, including a three-year longitudinal evaluation across Grades 6 to 8, with year one involving nine schools and approximately 75 Grade 6 boys. GuysWork is predicated on youth engagement via activities that promote youth voice. Alumni (high school and postsecondary youth who previously participated) review activities and provide feedback on their potential for engagement. Feedback from current student participants occurs during the conclusion of each lesson through "check-out" questions that invite reflection, with insights shared in facilitator Communities of Practice. Youth also contribute through focus groups

hosted by provincial departments and have presented GuysWork at advisory committees, professional development conferences, and faculties of education.

GuysWork facilitators build inclusive environments by listening without interruption, encouraging participation without pressure, and summarizing conversations for shared understanding. Check-out responses sometimes prompt further school-level discussions and action. Educators report high levels of engagement, and many participants request continuation of GuysWork after sessions conclude. Together, these practices illustrate how youth voice informs both the design and facilitation of GuysWork. For us, the key interest is in how such practices align with broader themes of youth voice in youth programming in peer-reviewed literature, and how these themes inform both GuysWork and youth programming more generally.

Scoping Review Context

Blakeslee and Walker (2018) write that "one way for organizations to focus on the process and aims of meaningful youth participation is to identify the *relational mechanism* that facilitates youth contributions to decision making *in a range of contexts*" (p. 3, emphasis added). They continue by citing Zeldin et al. (2013) who note that components of youth participation and voice involve organized youth-adult dialogue and collaboration, with the goal of improving and sustaining an organization, program, or practice. While there is plenty of literature on factors needed for successful youth voice implementation (Blakeslee & Walker, 2018; Maletsky & Evans, 2017; Zeldin et al., 2013), and research studies that identify youth health workers perspectives, (Havlicek et al., 2016; Storer et al., 2025), we found that literature on youth voice 'in-action' was lacking. Thus, our scoping review sought to identify literature where researchers deliberately planned to evaluate youth voice in "a range of contexts" (Blakeslee & Walker, 2018, p. 3). Some examples of these varied contexts were youth-adult partnerships and co-contributions (Ean et al., 2024; Klein & Bell, 2023; Pickering et al., 2022), fostering ongoing communication with youth, (van Schelven et al., 2024; Mirra & Garcia, 2022), and within supportive, inclusive environments, (Kontak et al., 2022; Walsh et al., 2023). Thus, we feel that our scoping review addresses a gap in the literature, between those identifying *mechanisms* for youth voice, and the actual *practice* of youth voice itself within studies. Youth voice has also served essential roles in other youth health programs, like GuysWork.

Youth development (YD) programming is described in the literature as any program that provides education to, or addresses the needs of, youth (Bloomer et al., 2023). YD programming literature highlights that youth voice can be fostered through the program's development and design, with ongoing evaluation and opportunities for feedback from youth (Bloomer et al., 2023). Youth voice has also been found within intimate partner violence (IPV) oriented youth development programming (Storer et al., 2025). Similar youth voice engagement practices are also reflected within these IPV programs, from bystander intervention programs to IPV prevention programs, and from professionals' experiences who work with youth harmed by IPV (Storer et al., 2025). This literature highlights that youth voice practices are essential for youth's engagement (youth-adult partnerships, feedback from youth), and the authors add that leadership roles for youth (such as advisory boards/councils) have been helpful in fostering youth voice, too (Storer et al., 2025). While we know the many factors that may assist in fostering youth engagement, research that tracks implementation of these factors remains sparse.

Purpose

We undertook a scoping review to find main themes in peer-reviewed literature on bringing youth voice into youth programming, with the aim of seeing these themes as recommendations for those considering youth programming or already involved in youth programming. We then assessed the youth voice component of GuysWork, an adolescent male-specific healthy-living program in Nova Scotia's schools. This assessment served as an example of how the recommendations can be applied to current programming for youth. The purpose of this paper is to report on the process and findings from these activities. Our hope is that our recommendations benefit others involved in youth programming, including youth, educators, and other professionals who learn and work in schools, provide, or otherwise take part in youth programming.

Methods

Scoping reviews address an exploratory research question by systematically searching, selecting, and synthesizing a wide range of literature to determine the breadth of evidence on a particular topic (Peters et al., 2015). They represent a type of knowledge synthesis that scopes, or *maps*, a body of literature with relevance to time, location, source, method, and origin (Levac et al., 2010). In accordance with the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) methodology (Peters et al., 2020), our review is specific to a population (youth) and outcome (programming development or changes), with a particular focus on context (youth voice, and school and community). We followed the JBI methodology (Peters et al., 2020) for evidence screening and selection (two reviewers screen each source with a third reviewer involved to resolve conflicts) and study-selection process (narrative format), and without quality appraisal of sources. More specifically, our five-stage scoping review protocol included the following steps, (1) identifying the research question (s) and aligning the aims, (2) identifying relevant studies and aligning inclusion criteria with the research question (s), (3) selecting studies by establishing inclusion/exclusion criteria with an iterative team approach to selection and data extraction, (4) charting the data using qualitative thematic analysis and numerical summary and (5) collating, summarizing, and reporting as well as identifying the implications for study findings for policy, practice, or research specifically related to GuysWork programming (Peters et al., 2015). In step five we again applied thematic analysis to arrive at themes.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for inclusion in this scoping review, the articles must have (a) focused upon a youth-related age (middle school to postsecondary-age individuals), (b) focused on youth engagement or participatory-youth approaches in education, youth involvement in decision-making in health-related or social contexts, or educational programming, such as participatory action research or youth-led initiatives, (c) explicitly included how youth voice(s) were used in programming, (d) have been based on empirical studies that used qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods that present insights into youth engagement, and (e) was published as peer-reviewed and written in English. An article was excluded if it (a) did not focus on youth voice and feedback throughout the duration of the study, (b) did not state how youth voices were used (needs to be more than just collecting youth feedback), (c) was a source that only concentrated on educational practices without exploring youth participation or engagement, (d) was a study protocol, (d) did not present observational data (editorials, opinion pieces, program reviews were excluded) and were non-peer reviewed pieces.

Information Sources

The following academic databases were searched for relevant studies, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) on ProQuest, PubMed, PsycINFO, and PsycARTICLES.

Search Strategy

A comprehensive search strategy was used to identify relevant literature from a variety of academic sources. Guided by the following general framework question, what is youth voice and what are the best ways to support it? preliminary searches were conducted by Authors 1 and 4 using the assistive technology tool known as Elicit - The AI Research Assistant with filters applied for articles published after 2010, adjusted with the 'show more' option to reveal 500 potential matches. During the initial selection process, abstract summaries were reviewed and selected based on the presence of relevant key terms such as *youth voice, youth led, youth participation, youth-participatory action research, youth engagement, and youth—adult partnership*. A list of academic articles was then compiled, and each source was analyzed for keywords to which a Population, Concept and Context (PCC) framework was applied to further refine the search criteria. The selected concepts—youth, participation, community settings, and school settings—provided the foundation for further searches.

Using the four concepts previously stated, a list of synonyms was generated for each of the core concepts (See Table 1). The databases Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) on ProQuest, PubMed, PsycINFO, and PsycARTICLES were searched. The filter peer review filter was turned on, and a date limit of two years was used for ERIC, PUBMED, and PsycARTICLES. PsycINFO database had less than five results, so we increased the search timeline to include the past 10 years. Respectively, the search resulted in ERIC (227), PubMed (711), PsycINFO (12) and PsycARTICLES (171) for a total of 1,121 articles.

Table 1

Final Search Terms Using Population/Concepts/Context Framework

Youth	Participation	Community	School
adolesce*	youth participation	community-based programs	educational institution
teen*	youth engagement	region	classroom
young people	active youth participation	neighborhood	high school
high school students	positive youth development	local area	middle school
middle school students	youth—adult partnerships	area	centre of learning
young participants	decision-making	society	academy
marginalized youth	student voice	zone	college

Youth	Participation	Community	School
Canadian youth	program participation	state	department
teenage girls	program decision-making	population	institu*
teenage boys	young people's perspectives	general public	
younger generation	youth involvement	public	
	involving youth	province	
	youth as partners	non-profit	
	program design	charity	
	young people as resources		
	youth-partnered projects		
	voices of youth		
	youth voice		

Study Records

Data Management

Citations identified during the search were imported into Covidence (https://www.covidence.org/), a web-based platform used to facilitate screening and data extraction for scoping and systematic reviews, for deduplication and study selection.

Selection Process

Articles were first screened by two authors (Authors 1 & 4) independently according to the eligibility criteria evaluating for relevance on the titles and abstracts only. When no or insufficient information was available on the citation it was sent through to full-text screening. This second level of screening involved a full-text review, where two authors (Authors 1 & 2) independently screened items for relevance according to the eligibility criteria. Reasons for exclusion were recorded at this level. Disagreements were resolved by a third reviewer (Author 4).

Data Collection Process

An extraction template was developed by one author (Author 2) and then independently piloted on two papers by three authors (Authors 1, 2, & 4) before final extractions were independently completed by two authors (Authors 1 & 4). Disagreements were resolved by consensus. Data were extracted in the following categories, bibliographic details such as author, journal, year, country, and participants, aim, type and methods of study, youth program details that describe the youth voice and engagement format, results, recommendations, and study limitations.

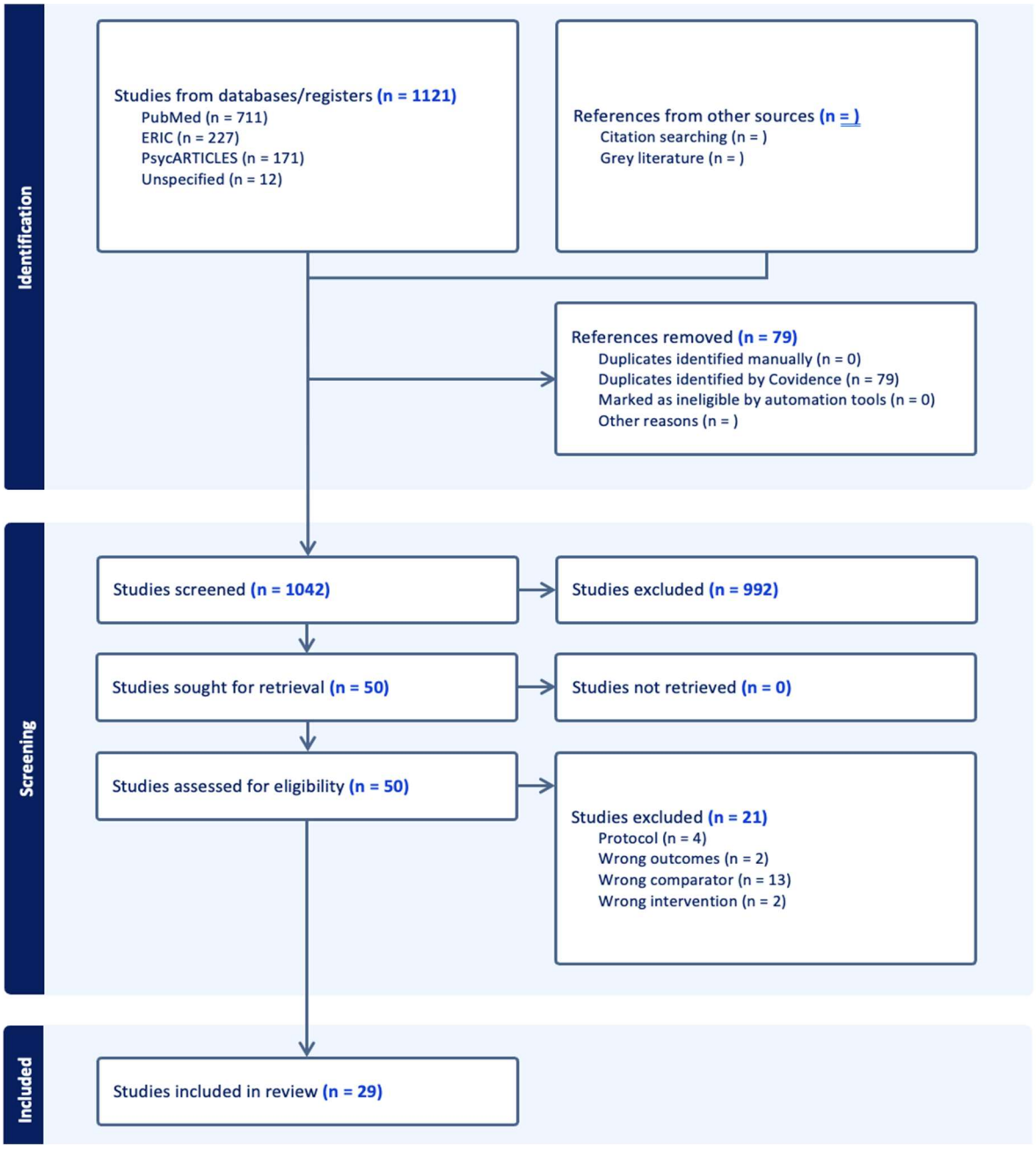
Results

Summary of Included Articles

The database searches resulted in finding 1121 studies. Covidence identified 79 duplicates which were automatically removed. We did a title and abstract screening of 1042 articles, deeming 992 irrelevant. These 992 articles did not match our specific inclusion criteria. This resulted in 50 full-text studies to screen. Full text screening resulted in the removal of an additional 21 articles, leaving 29 articles in this scoping review (see Figure 1). Results are categorized by bibliographic details and study characteristics below.

Figure 1

Prisma Chart



Bibliographic Details

The majority of the research was conducted in North America (*n* = 19; United States = 16, Canada = 3), followed by the UK (*n* = 4), Africa (*n* = 2); Kenya = 1, unknown = 1), South America (Brazil; *n* = 1), Cambodia (n = 1), Greece (*n* = 1), and unknown (*n* = 1). Most of the articles were published in 2022 (*n* = 14) and 2024 (*n* = 8), followed by the years 2023 (*n* = 6) and 2021 (*n* = 1). All articles screened and extracted were divided into study design categories, qualitative (*n* = 17) and mixed methods (*n* = 12). Of the qualitative, there was a "catch-all" category ("qualitative") (*n* = 11), photovoice/focus group (*n* = 2), cross project analysis (*n* = 2), facilitated forum (*n* = 1), workshop study (*n* = 1). The mixed methods consisted of focus group/survey (*n* = 5), unidentified (*n* = 3), case study (*n* = 2), youth participatory action research (*n* = 1), and a "qualitative + quantitative" category (*n* = 1).

The 29 articles reported on four distinct aims or contexts. Most interventions focused on health-based studies (*n* = 9) and civic education (*n* = 9, reported in the next paragraph). Of the nine health-based articles, four consisted of health in educational contexts, such as sex education (Harris et al., 2022; Tamashiro & Fonseca, 2024), school mental health (Walsh et al., 2023), and youths' perspectives on school engagement (Kontak et al., 2022). Three consisted of health in social contexts, such as minoritized youth experiencing homelessness (Damian et al., 2024), health policy making (Jacobs & George, 2022), and COVID-19 experiences (O'Malley et al., 2024). Two focused on health in research contexts, such as collaboration between youth and adults (Ean et al., 2024; van Schelven et al., 2024).

An equal number of interventions were focused on civic education (*n* = 9). Of the nine articles, four focused on social civic engagement such as civic engagement in the neighbourhood (Alegria et al., 2021), and youth's voices being expressed and heard (Fahmy & Osnes, 2023; McGinnis & Mitra, 2022; Pollock et al., 2023). Three articles focused on decision making, such as decision making and perspectives (Sykas & Peonidis, 2022; Waller et al., 2022), and arriving at consensus (Wright et al., 2022). Two articles focused on civic engagement in educational settings, such as participation rights (Mannion et al., 2022) and redesigning civic education in schools (Mirra & Garcia, 2022).

Schools was the third setting category (*n* = 6). Of the six articles, two focused on programming, such as design and development of programming (Cureton, 2023; Doley et al., 2021), and one focused on sources of barriers to engagement (Sjogren et al., 2022). One article focused on student well-being regarding teacher responsiveness and academic goals (Kahne et al., 2022), one article focused on educational "thinking tools" (Lewis et al., 2023) and one focused on decision making in the implementation of an agricultural program (Nyang'au et al., 2022).
Youth-adult partnership-focused studies were the fourth context or setting theme to emerge (*n* = 5). Of the five articles, three focused on youth-adult collaboration in educational settings, such as co-designing and co-researching (Frankel et al., 2024; Pickering et al., 2022) and addressing specific student needs (Masia-Warner et al., 2024). One article focused on features that promote participation (Klein & Bell, 2023), and one article focused on minority youth and their experiences of programming (Ruhr & Fowler, 2022).

The 29 studies were divided into four categories based on the type of engagement or intervention methodology used. Of those studies, 16 utilized some form of focus group or intentional discussion, such as semi-structured focus groups exploring barriers to engagement (Sjogren et al., 2022), open-ended interview questions about boy's bodily perceptions (Doley et al., 2021), focus groups and interviews regarding microaggressions and anxiety among youth

(Masia-Warner et al., 2024), and in-depth interviews to explore motivations for engagement (Cureton, 2023).

Seven studies trained youth as co-facilitators alongside adults, such as youth being trained to lead health engagement activities (Ean et al., 2024), youth trained as peer-researchers to analyze engagement (Kontak et al., 2022), and youth as researchers alongside adult allies in youth participatory action research (Wright et al., 2022). Three studies (plus an extra study from focus groups/intentional discussion) focused on youth involved in civic action —for example, using photovoice for change within their communities (Damian et al., 2022; Walsh et al., 2023)— and youth interrogating social forces (O'Malley et al., 2024). Three studies (plus an extra study from focus groups and intentional discussion) focused on providing surveys and questionnaires, such as questionnaires to investigate youth engagement and decision making (Nyang'au et al., 2022), and self-report questionnaires (Sykas & Peonidis, 2022) (see Appendix for a summary table of key extracted information).

Themes

To determine the key themes in the literature we used thematic analysis to extract information according to the following process. We composed short summaries by combining—excerpting and in some cases paraphrasing—passages from each article to arrive at *Results and Discussion combined* and *Recommendations and Limitations combined*. The following summary we based on the van Schelven (2004) study exemplifies the results of the procedure that we followed in each study we reviewed.

At the beginning of the study, most initiatives for involvement came from the researchers, who invited the co-researchers to contribute. This gradually grew into a partnership as their continuous involvement enabled co-researchers to become familiar with the study and develop ownership of the tool of the study. Efforts of the researchers to involve the co-researchers in every aspect of the study (continuous communication, attentive listening, discussing and incorporating contributions) contributed to their growing involvement/engagement.

We then highlighted keywords and phrases from each of these summary sections. The following are the keywords collected from the summary of the Results and Discussion combined section of the van Schelven (2024) study, partnership, continuous involvement, ownership, involve, co-researchers, continuous communication, attentive listening, and incorporating contributions. We then wrote summary statements for results and discussion combined and recommendations and limitations combined that were intended to capture the essence, so to speak, of those sections. For example, the summary statement we wrote in the results and discussion combined section for the van Schelven (2024) was, Intentional continuous involvement of youth resulted in their engagement. These synthesized, summarizing sentences were then brought together according to their similarities and given theme titles. This resulted in six themes in the Results and Discussion combined section and seven themes in the Recommendations and Limitations combined section (see Table 2).

We then reviewed the 13 total themes and removed those related to next steps for conducting research because we were interested in themes related to youth voice for programming. After removing studies involving youth directly in research and fostering a safe environment (results and discussion column) as well as research processes, participant demographics, curricula development, and lack of participant diversity, we were left with nine themes (see Table 3).

We reviewed these remaining themes and synthesized them one final time as part of our iterative thematic analysis with the purpose of being able to share them concisely and clearly as

recommendations. This resulted in four main final themes or recommendations which are discussed below.

Table 2
Theme Titles—First Analysis

Combined key phrases	
Results and discussion	Recommendations and limitations
Involving youth directly in research	Research process
Fostering a safe environment	Participant demographics
Involving youth in decision making	Curricula development
Youth's opinions on curricula	Youth—adult partnerships
Changes required in engagement research	Power imbalances
Youth as leaders	Lack of participant diversity
	Environmental restrictions or barriers

Table 3
Theme Titles—Second Analysis

Combined key phrases	
Results and discussion	Recommendations and limitations
Involving youth in decision making	Youth-adult partnerships
Youth's opinions on curricula	Power imbalances
Changes required in engagement research	Environmental restrictions or barriers
Youth as leaders	

Recommendations

First, engagement and youth voice were most prominent within environments of equal power and respect (Ean et al., 2024; Fahmy & Osnes, 2023; Klein & Bell, 2023; Mannion et al., 2022; Pickering et al., 2022; van Schelven et al., 2024; Waller et al., 2022; Walsh et al., 2023; Wright et al., 2022). Mannion et al. (2022) identify that youth engagement was valued higher when respectful intergenerational dialogue was present, when relevant topics were discussed, and when decisions led to impacts. Pickering et al. (2022) note that youth felt empowered to be engaged as co-researchers, where sharing power in decision making was highlighted as most important for their engagement and sustained enjoyment. Klein and Bell (2023) found that youth engagement was influenced by the quality of relationship building between youth and scientists, and the quality of equitable power dynamics among the groups.

Second, engagement and youth voice were also prominent where there was open, meaningful, and ongoing communication with youth (Ean et al., 2024; Kontak et al., 2022; Mannion et al., 2022; Mirra & Garcia, 2022; O'Malley et al., 2024; van Schelven et al., 2024;

Waller et al., 2022). van Schelven et al. (2024) note that intentional continuous involvement of youth resulted in their engagement. This was sustained through continuous involvement at every step of the process, allowing for ownership of the project itself. Within their study, Mirra and Garcia (2022) allowed youth to carry open conversations, which highlighted their ability to engage in productive dialogue. While youth's opinions on the topic of conversation differed, allowing youth to take charge of communication sustained their involvement.

Third, youth voice and engagement were prominent where a safe, trustworthy, supportive environment was fostered (Ean et al., 2024; Kahne et al., 2022; Klein & Bell, 2023; Kontak et al., 2022; Lewis et al., 2023, van Schelven et al., 2024; Walsh et al., 2023; Wright et al., 2022). Kontak et al. (2022) indicate that youth engagement was influenced by the social environment. Trusting relationships with teachers and experiential learning were essential in continued engagement. Walsh et al. (2023) point out that youth participants emphasized their involvement in mental health programming as integral to enhancing relevancy of supports. Walsh et al. (2023) also found that youth-adult links are essential for successful mental health initiatives.

Fourth, literature identifies that curricula should be consistently created and delivered with youth involvement (Harris et al., 2022; Lewis et al., 2022; Waller et al., 2022). Harris et al. (2022) report that student voice should be incorporated into the development of curricula to make them more relevant, relatable, and reliable. Also, curricula should be diverse, and reflective of youths' lived experiences (Damian et al., 2022; Harris et al., 2022; Mirra & Garcia, 2022). Mirra and Garcia (2022) identify that school-based literacy should incorporate youth lived experiences into the cultural and historical context. Studies should allow for dialogue across differences and promote the sharing of ideas. It is essential that youth actively participate in the development of curricula (Harris et al., 2022; Lewis et al., 2023; Mirra & Garcia, 2022; O'Malley et al., 2024). An important example of differential dialogue comes from Mirra and Garcia (2022), who involved youth in discussions about guns, schools, and democracy. While youth had differing opinions and feelings toward weaponry, the youth-led discussion remained productive.

Discussion

Our primary objective was to interpret the main themes in peer-reviewed literature on youth programming where youth voice was key to the programming and offer them as recommendations to those involved in youth programming, as well as assess GuysWork. After an iterative, detailed, step by step qualitative thematic review of the literature, we arrived at the following four recommendations for those planning to be involved in youth program development, 1) Youth voice should take place in environments of equal power and respect, 2) Youth voice should be open, meaningful, and ongoing, 3) Youth voice requires fostering a safe, trustworthy, supportive environment, and 4) Curricula should be consistently created and delivered with youth involvement.

Our recommendations match important literature on the topic of youth voice. A 2018 systematic review synthesizing how to support meaningful participation of young people in organizations and systems highlights that at a structural, procedural, and organizational level, youth voice must be included (Blakeslee & Walker, 2018). Including youth at these levels can foster positive outcomes from the engagement itself, such as increased wellbeing. Organizations should understand under which circumstances engagement is useful in decision-making situations. In addition, they note that meaningful participation is not simply showing up but concerns also the quality of the activity and the influence it has on participants. For example, facilitators should aim for three areas of influence – voice, decision making, and leadership. They may do this by

"building positive relationships, engaging youth in first-hand learning, and supporting developmental progression" (p. 4). It is suggested that, without these clearly defined principles (specific to the organization and setting), it is difficult to operationalize and elicit meaningful participation from youth, which can result in "lip service" (p. 4). Four processes are noted as useful in this dynamic, a strength-based belief system that inspires growth, a comprehensive support system that provides a sense of community, opportunities to try new roles, and visionary leadership that is committed to change.

These recommendations align with our current scoping review in many ways. Lewis et al. (2023) suggest that both involving youth and valuing their contributions should be standard practice in youth programming. To ensure youth voice, youth should have the opportunity to engage in both verbal and written forms of participation (McCabe et al., 2023), including multi-modal forms using various technologies, especially for youth whose abilities or confidence were challenged when called upon to share orally (Lewis-Dagnell et al., 2023). Maria and Garcia (2022) suggest that content of curricula should incorporate youth's lived experiences into the current cultural and historical climate. Harris et al. (2022) mention that including student voice into development efforts of curricula is essential in making it more relevant and relatable. This pairs well with research on the importance of the quality and influence of an activity, rather than showing up or participating (Blakeslee & Walker, 2018). In this way, when an activity is relevant, both culturally, historically, and through involvement of youth in development, this may have a positive effect on meaningful engagement and participation.

A 2021 scoping review of Youth Advisory Structures (YAS) provides insight and recommendations for youth participation and engagement (Haddad & Vaughn, 2021). Youth participating in YAS experienced personal development in many ways, from developing skills, to increasing confidence. For example, "reciprocal teaching, learning, and reflection" (p. 494) are essential in breaking boundaries in youth-adult partnerships to decision-making practice. In this way, youth's meaningful involvement manifests as approval of and attendance in the program or event itself. Meaningfully involving youth in participatory ways has been found to increase a broad sense of wellbeing, from healthier decision making, to a higher likelihood of seeking postsecondary education. Through YAS, youth have been found to strengthen curricula, take charge of their developmental practices, and feel empowered to create change – especially if they're part of a marginalized group. With regards to future research, it is suggested that resources must be distributed to train facilitators in ways that best promote active engagement and involvement in YAS. O'Malley et al. (2024) suggest that activities should be created by students, and that they should feel empowered to do so. In addition, Frankel et al. (2024) note that research must disrupt hierarchy between youth and adults, so that both populations can collaborate to identify, name, and interrogate divisions of labor. These arguments align well with Haddad and Vaughn (2021) in their discussion on "reciprocal teaching, learning and reflection" (p. 494) in breaking down boundaries of youth-adult partnerships in decision-making practices.

While the above scoping reviews align with ours, it should be noted that this research focuses primarily on specific youth development programs, such as policy and practice (Blakeslee & Walker, 2018), and youth advisory structures (Haddad et al., 2021). Within our scoping review, we set out to identify research conducted on *any type* of youth-related programming, so long as youth voice was a prominent theme. Youth-related programming within our scoping review range from youth's civic engagement (Algería et al., 2022; Mirra & Garcia, 2022), to digital health interventions (Emerson et al., 2023), education (Conner et al., 2022; Cureton, 2023; Frankel et al., 2024), photovoice (Damian et al., 2022; Pickering et al., 2022), and sexual health/sexual violence

prevention (Baynard et al., 2022; Lewis et al., 2023), to name a few. Seeing that we have found similar results (with a broad range of contexts) to other scoping reviews (that have a specific program-related focus), we feel that our research serves as a partial answer to Blakeslee and Walker's (2018) work that asks researchers and organizations to identify mechanisms fostering youth voice in "a range of contexts" (p. 3). Thus, our scoping review broadens the discussion to include youth voice within various types of youth health programming, yielding similar results to existing research that is more specific.

Given the four recommendations from our iterative thematic analysis and how well it matches key literature reviews on the topic, we then engaged in assessing GuysWork programming. Our assessment is as follows, in brief.

Equal Power and Respect

GuysWork reflects the importance of equal power and respect, particularly through its circle-based facilitation of interaction. The circle structure disrupts hierarchies and creates a space where facilitators and youth can interact as equals. Facilitators are trained to model shared authority, listen without judgment, and validate youth contributions—practices which are consistent with the equitable power dynamics emphasized in the literature (Ean et al., 2024; Pickering et al., 2022). The program's emphasis on co-facilitation and community standards allow youth to help shape the norms that govern their participation. This mirrors the literature's call for involving youth as co-designers of their programming (Klein & Bell, 2023). Youth feedback is used to adapt and develop lessons, ensuring that their perspectives are integrated. More broadly, youth programming across settings (education, health, community) can operationalize equal power by establishing youth advisory structures, embedding youth in shared decision-making, and co-creating group norms as standard practice.

Blakeslee and Walker (2018) suggest that meaningful participation requires structural, procedural, and organizational commitment to youth voice, highlighting the importance of building positive relationships, engaging youth in first-hand learning, and supporting their developmental progression. Additionally, Haddad and Vaughn (2021) emphasize "reciprocal teaching, learning, and reflection" (p. 494) as essential components in breaking down youth-adult barriers and building effective partnerships. These principles align well with the GuysWork approach, but they also suggest that more formalized structures, such as a youth advisory body, could further deepen the program's commitment to equal power and collaboration.

Open, Meaningful, and Ongoing Communication

GuysWork operationalizes open, meaningful, and ongoing communication through its check-in and check-out practices, as well as youth directed conversations on program topics, offering consistent opportunities for youth to voice their thoughts and feelings in a structured yet open-ended way. These practices align with findings that sustained dialogue and attentive listening are vital for enhancing youth engagement (Mirra & Garcia, 2022; van Schelven et al., 2024). Additionally, the program's bi-weekly Community of Practice (CoP) meetings provide a platform for facilitators to integrate youth feedback into ongoing program delivery. This iterative feedback mechanism ensures that communication is not only continuous but also actionable, reinforcing the program's responsiveness to youth needs. Across youth programs more generally, building structured feedback loops (e.g., youth-led forums, periodic retreats, or digital channels) helps ensure that young people's perspectives shape implementation over time rather than as a one-off input.

Blakeslee and Walker (2018) recommend creating favorable narratives around youth-adult partnerships and providing clear structures to make youth contributions influential rather than tokenistic. This aligns with the need for GuysWork to strengthen longitudinal feedback mechanisms by establishing clearer processes that enable youth to provide meaningful feedback beyond session-based interactions. Many lesson revisions and adaptations occur when a facilitator sees an opportunity to do so, based on self-reflection and youth feedback. To provide explicit first voice youth feedback, an additional approach such as an annual retreat or workshop with youth participants could strengthen youth-first voice feedback on the lessons. This annual gathering could help with the implementation of a more longitudinal feedback mechanism to better track and adapt to participant's needs over time.

Safe, Trustworthy, and Supportive Environments

A safe and supportive environment is central to both youth engagement and the success of GuysWork programming. The program's trauma-informed facilitation framework is designed to recognize and address the diverse lived experiences of participants, fostering inclusivity. By modeling authenticity and creating space for vulnerability, facilitators help normalize emotions that are often stigmatized among male youth, such as sadness or fear. These practices align with the literature, which emphasizes the role of trust and a supportive social environment in fostering engagement (Kontak et al., 2022; Walsh et al., 2023). The program's community standards, developed collaboratively with participants, help ensure a respectful and inclusive atmosphere. This focus on relational safety is consistent with the literature's findings on the importance of building trusting youth-adult relationships for sustained engagement (Lewis et al., 2023). Furthermore, this theme aligns with the detailed findings of a recent scoping review on relational practices in youth participatory action research (Malorni et al., 2022). More broadly, trauma-informed and identity-affirming practices such as predictable routines, consent-based participation, and multiple modes of expression, are foundational conditions for participation across youth programming, particularly marginalized groups.

However, the program could further enhance inclusivity by addressing the unique needs of non-male-identifying and non-binary youth. Haddad and Vaughn (2021) suggest that providing youth opportunities to try new roles and build confidence contributes to a sense of safety and well-being. Additionally, Blakeslee and Walker (2018) stress the importance of providing comprehensive support systems and visionary leadership to create environments where youths feel valued and safe. While GuysWork has made strides in creating inclusive spaces, exploring additional supports or alternative group structures could ensure a more comprehensive approach to gender inclusivity, as recommended in the literature (Lewis et al., 2023). Recommendations from Lewis et al. (2023) include giving minority youth (LGBTQ+ and BIPOC) the space to choose if and when to participate so that youth feel that their contributions are valued and are part of a larger, ongoing conversation, rather than a single session or activity, to begin early in establishing an accessible, inclusive space for minority youth, openly call out and discuss stigma when it occurs, and offer debrief options for minority youth, either in focus-group sessions or written response format.

Youth Involved in Curriculum Development

GuysWork programming reflects this recommendation through its integration of feedback from both current participants and alumni. Many of these alumni, now high school or post-secondary students, are involved in assessing and refining program activities. This participatory

approach helps ensure the curriculum remains relevant, relatable, and reflective of youth experiences (Harris et al., 2022). The program's iterative design process—which incorporates focus groups, session feedback, and facilitator reflections—helps ensure that youth voice is consistently centered in the curriculum. This aligns with the literature's call for curricula that are co-constructed with youth and responsive to their cultural and historical contexts (Mirra & Garcia, 2022). More generally, embedding youth in curriculum development processes ensures programming is not only relevant but also sustainable. When youth help shape content, activities, and delivery, programs across education, health, and community sectors can better reflect lived realities, foster ownership, and adapt more effectively to changing needs.

The literature also suggests that youth engagement can drive policy and systemic changes when youth are empowered to advocate for themselves and their peers (Kennedy et al., 2019). GuysWork could further empower participants by providing more opportunities for youth-led advocacy, such as community presentations or collaborations with policymakers. These initiatives could extend the program's influence and empower youth to play a more active role in shaping the systems that impact them.

Summary

Overall, GuysWork programming shows strong alignment with the four recommendations identified in our scoping review. By fostering equitable power dynamics, ensuring open and ongoing communication, creating safe and supportive spaces, and involving youth in curriculum development, the program incorporates key practices found in recent academic literature on youth voice. At the same time, there are opportunities to deepen the positive impact of GuysWork, including expanding youth leadership roles, broadening inclusivity, and supporting long-term youth voice initiatives. These alignments and areas for growth suggest that GuysWork represents both a model for youth voice programming and a work-in-progress that can inform broader educational and community-based initiatives.

Limitations

While this scoping review offers insights concerning youth voice, there are several limitations to consider. First, this study examined youth voice in the context of youth development for both in- and out-of-school time spaces, which combine the often inflexible nature of school schedules with the voluntary and flexible learning environments offered through out-of-school time spaces. We could have focussed our review on one or the other however we were keen to find commonalities across settings. While this paper offers some recommendations that would still be applicable in differing spaces, it does not address the complex scheduling and human resource challenges schools face, which is the primary setting for most GuysWork programming.

Scoping reviews focus on breadth rather than depth of information on a topic (Tricco et al., 2016) however with specific inclusion criteria we were able to focus on youth voice as it relates to the creation and implementation of youth programming, across a range of contexts. There is significant youth voice literature and much of it was not included in this review due to our criteria. We did not report on the demographics surrounding youth identity in the literature we found.

Finally, the positionality of two of us likely influenced the analysis process: Author 2 and Author 3 have been involved in GuysWork for several years now. To balance this insider influence and bias, Author 1 and Author 4—who have had little involvement directly in GuysWork—were engaged in finding, screening, extracting, and synthesizing the literature, with ongoing guiding assistance from Author 2 and Author 3.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to report on the scoping review we undertook to interpret the main themes in peer-reviewed literature on youth programming where youth voice was key to the programming. We used these themes as recommendations in our assessment of the program and practices of GuysWork, an adolescent male-specific healthy-living program in Nova Scotia's schools. Within GuysWork and more broadly across youth programming there are important implications including embedding youth in curriculum development processes to ensure programming is sustainable and reflective of their lived realities. Co-generation of curriculum fosters a sense of ownership and is likely to increase engagement both in curriculum production and enactment. Fostering safe environments through trauma-informed and identity-affirming practices such as predictable routines, consent-based participation, and multiple modes of expression provide opportunities for all youth, particularly those traditionally marginalized, to have their voices heard and taken seriously. Open and meaningful communication through structured feedback loops (e.g., youth-led forums, periodic retreats, or digital channels) helps ensure that young people's perspectives shape implementation and curriculum consistently and over time rather than as one-off, performative inputs. Operationalizing equal power by establishing youth advisory structures, embedding youth in shared decision-making, and co-creating group norms as standard practice are practical ways to bring youth voice to bear at formal, systemic levels. The recommendations from this scoping review and the practical examples found in GuysWork, including areas the program could improve upon, remind us once again that youth voice is a form of youth participation engaging children and adolescents in meaningful, intentional and sustained efforts to improve the settings, systems, and organizations that impact them (Ozer et al., 2018).

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Appendices

Appendix A

Summary Table

Citation	Study Aim	Engagement/Intervention	Results	Recommendations	Limitations
Alegria et al., 2022	Collaborating with low-income communities to develop intervention focused on civic engagement addressing neighbourhood-level problems that impact wellbeing.	Qualitative interviews were where in which participants were asked to share perceptions about their neighbourhood were analyzed. Three major themes were identified: youth pride for their communities, desire for change, and perceptions of power and responsibility. A civic engagement program was then developed and feedback about the program was provided by youth.	Thematic analysis revealed that the Five C's, including the Sixth C, and the Big Three were present throughout empowerment programming. Competence emerged as the dominant theme in the youth and caregiver focus groups: With youth, 49 excerpts were related to competence. Of those 49 excerpts, 21 were related to social competence, 15 behavioral, 12 moral, 11 cognitive, and eight emotional. Life skill development represented the second most dominant theme for youth (n = 43) and caregivers (n = 40). Of the 43 youth excerpts, 21 recommended growth in skills to prepare for the future; 13 to develop the ability to overcome challenges; seven to develop the ability to work on a team and get along with others; four responses pertained to growth in skills needed to succeed in life; two related to growth in skills that advance daily activities; two in the ability to take care of self, and one in the ability to problem solve. Evidence of a positive, sustained, and caring relationship among youth and program facilitators emerged in four youth and nine caregiver excerpts.		

Appendix continued

Citation	Study Aim	Engagement/Intervention	Results	Recommendations	Limitations
Cureton, A. (2023)	Youth development framework on after school programming for refugee development; Motivation and engagement in after-school programming	In-depth interviews were held with refugee youth to explore their motivations for engagement in after-school programming. Interview questions targeted students' perceptions of assets and skills they brought to after-school programming and effectiveness of such programming in comparison to the formality of school.	Refugee youth exemplified agency in describing their motivation to participate in after-school programs as a form of remembrance, allowing them to engage in activities associated with their previous lives. As well, refugee youth preferred to seek out homework assistance from stakeholders associated with refugee-led agencies and community-based organizations – instead of school staff. This demonstrated the importance of an enabling environment based on a high level of trust, familiarity, and availability. Finally, youth evidenced their contributions to their communities by participating in community-based organizations that encouraged civic engagement. Applied to a particularly vulnerable yet resilient population like refugee youth, this framework emphasizes refugee youths' need for positive support and skills development by engaging with teachers, staff, and volunteers who offer homework assistance and language support.		Limitations include youth for whom English is not their first language. Narratives may have been impacted due to a language barrier.

Appendix continued

Citation	Study Aim	Engagement/Intervention	Results	Recommendations	Limitations
Damian et al., 2022	Gaining an understanding of the health and health-related social needs of youth–with an intentional focus on LGBTQIA+ youth–experiencing homelessness during COVID-19	Using photovoice, youth created photo narratives to share their stories and recommendations for change in their community. One-on-one meetings were scheduled with youth, who provided narratives of what the photos mean to them with respect to community change and homelessness.	Of the 70 photos (with corresponding narratives from youth), three major themes were identified: mental health and substance use challenges, basic human needs, and social support system. Youth expressed depression, anxiety, trauma, alcohol and illicit drug use, and loneliness. Several participants noted the need for more mental health classes and alcohol and substance use treatment programs in schools and communities targeted towards persons experiencing housing instability. Participants noted challenges with having a proper social support system in place, and the need for greater government engagement.	Considering the demographic critical race theory and queer theory should have been used in the present study. Considering the population demographics, future research should incorporate critical race theory and queer theory as well as the concept of intersectionality.	Limitations include the limited capacity of photovoice to capture the complex and nuanced challenges of housing insecurity. The study did not use frameworks of intersectional theory, critical race, or queer theory.

Appendix continued

Citation	Study Aim	Engagement/Intervention	Results	Recommendations	Limitations
Doley et al., 2021	Incorporation of *design thinking* into a school-based program for boys targeting body dissatisfaction; Guiding researchers, teachers, and community leaders in design and development of body image and eating disorder prevention program	Various modes of engagement were used, including interviews with adolescent boys and parents and an open-ended body image questionnaire. Five themes were identified: the need for privacy and safe space, the need for interactive resources and multimedia, the need to understand social norms and attitudes, and the need to consider classroom practicalities.	Three major themes were identified: youths' pride in their communities, desire for change, and perceptions of power and responsibility. Participating youth often described aspects of their neighborhoods that they were particularly proud of and impressive degree of resilience of community members, such as peers' stellar academic achievements despite the community's under-resourced schools. When asked what they might like to change in their communities, youth coresearchers frequently articulated specific suggestions: enhancing the physical appearance or cleanliness of public areas, increasing the availability of social spaces and activities for youth, and enhancing community equity. Some participants called on their fellow citizens to change individual behaviours in a direction that would collectively lead to improvements. Most participants expressed a desire for "people that are in power of the city," "the government," "officials," or "somebody important" to make system-level changes. In one group, participants mentioned that the program helped them improve their leadership skills by learning how to collaborate in a team. These youth also commented that interviewing people who worked on the community issue helped them feel more empowered to work toward creating change. In both groups, youth mentioned that the program had been a positive experience by amplifying their voices and leadership in their community.		

Appendix continued

Citation	Study Aim	Engagement/Intervention	Results	Recommendations	Limitations
Ean et al., 2024	Engaging young people in health research; outcomes of youth advisory group on health and research engagement	Youth were trained to lead health engagement activities in their schools and communities. Four categorizations of engagement included: training on health topics, observation and interaction in the laboratory, preparing health education materials, and involvement in health campaigns (such as COVID-19 vaccination clinics)	Engagement activities based on input from students and stakeholders may have fostered great respect. Frequent visits to the laboratory and interactions with researchers contributed to building trust and relationships. Learning new health and research topics through participatory activities may have improved literacy. Health-promotional activities and communication with research participants may have increased uptake of interventions. Health may have been enhanced via the health promotion interventions.		
Fahmy & Osnes, 2023	Young women's powerful voices for civic change; young women co*authoring little words, BIG ISSUES* workshop	This study utilized girl-led activism through performance-based methods. Students envisioned a more inclusive community by practicing how to author responses to the hurtful words that relate to large societal issues. Developed participants' physical, emotional, and civic voice in pursuit of vocal empowerment.	Throughout the process of cocreating and facilitating the *little words, BIG ISSUES* workshop, the SPEAK young women activated the potential of applied performance to critically examine controversial social issues. Six values were identified through the workshop: identifying values that guide how they speak, exploring the current story in which hurtful words are spoken, imagining a new story of responses that help rather than hurt, creating skits that show how helpful responses were realistic and useful, and generating a list of guiding principles and phrases that could be used in a variety of future instances.		

Appendix continued

Citation	Study Aim	Engagement/Intervention	Results	Recommendations	Limitations
Frankel et al., 2024	Examining how youth and adults co-designed and co-taught literacy mentorship class	This study asked how the Literacy Mentorship Debrief (LMD) contribute to shifting subject-subject relations among youth and adults, and how these subject relations shifted divisions of labour and the use for mediating artifacts in and beyond the Literacy Mentorship Class (LMC).	As a site for shifting relations and engaging contradictions as double binds, we found that the LMD increasingly afforded opportunities for students, their teacher, and researchers to grapple with the double binds that arose within and across these activity systems. As participants in debriefs, youth reorganized the collective activity system and, in so doing, reshaped their own and their mentees' opportunities to build relationships with each other and with texts.	Future research should disrupt notions of a hierarchical relation between mentors and mentees and instead focus on engaging youth and adults together to identify, name, and interrogate issues in the divisions of labour.	White adult mentors working alongside youth- of-colour mentees, raise the possibility of power. Debriefs were, in theory and practice, directed to the mentors, teachers, and researchers.
Harris, Sheilds, & DeMaria, 2022	This study explored rural youths' perceptions of current sex education, abstinence, comprehensive sex education curricula.	Opinions of the sample were first gathered through a survey (Sex Education Evaluation Survey). Semi-structured focus groups were then used to guide conversation around the current sex-education curriculum	While survey respondents reported broadly neutral perceptions about the quality of their sex education, focus groups expressed strong negative views. Survey results regarding safer sex education were overwhelmingly supportive, and youth questioned the authority and knowledge of teachers teaching abstinence-only-until-marriage education.	To strengthen future forms of sex education, school officials should incorporate student *voice* in development efforts. This will create a more relevant, relatable and reliable curriculum.	School-imposed restrictions on participant recruitment limited access to certain classes, contributing to low participation rate.

Appendix continued

Citation	Study Aim	Engagement/Intervention	Results	Recommendations	Limitations
Jacobs & George, 2022	Addresses youth participation as important for health policy-making.	Examining how youth participation can be included in policy-making by examining youth participation in Adolescent and Youth Health Policy (AYHP) formulation processes. Semi-structured interviews with policy actors highlighted opportunities and challenges that arise from youth participation in AYHP.	Respondents and participants in this study reported neutral to negative evaluations of the school-based sex education content they received. findings suggest that in regards to sex education needs, students are heterogeneous and attention to student voice can reveal the distinct educational needs of certain groups.	By revealing students' ideal content preferences, student voice can illuminate the ideas, beliefs and topics rural adolescents value. These insights offer targeted and strategic direction for curriculum design and improvement, helping school officials develop curricula that foster greater student engagement and empowerment, which could curtail any potential reactance.	The research focused on the experiences of one group of rural youth in one town in one state. school-imposed restrictions on participant recruitment limited access to certain classes, contributing to a low participation rate and the overrepresentation of students 18 years and older (n = 63)

Appendix continued

Citation	Study Aim	Engagement/Intervention	Results	Recommendations	Limitations
Kahne et al., 2022	Analyzes where student voice may promote academic goals, responsiveness of teachers and administrators	Student survey records were analyzed. For example, the districts 2019 5Essentials Survey which covered school climate and classroom experience.	The majority of ninth-grade students in CPS thought their school leaders and teachers were responsive to their concerns. Fifty-nine percent agreed that school leaders responded when students had concerns about school policies, and an additional 12% strongly agreed. An even larger percentage said that their teachers would respond to students' concerns about their classes (61% agreed and 17% strongly agreed). Consistent with expectations, students who reported that their teachers and school leaders were more responsive to their concerns tended to have lower rates of absences from school. This coefficient is statistically significant ($p < .001$). We find that responsiveness measured at the school level appears to diminish students' absences, though this effect is of borderline statistical significance ($p < .10$). We find that greater responsiveness tends to be associated with higher GPAs. These results provide additional evidence that it is a school's responsiveness to students' concerns, not some other attributes that one might associate with a "good" school, that is correlated with variation in students' academic outcomes.	In future research, teacher and administrator responsiveness to student concern should be evaluated as separate constructs.	

Appendix continued

Citation	Study Aim	Engagement/Intervention	Results	Recommendations	Limitations
Klein & Bell, 2023	Concerned with what design features promote participation and support relational equity between scientists and youth.	Data came from mentoring sessions, ethnographic fieldnotes on mentoring interactions, focus groups, and pre–post surveys. Qualitative data came from two years of STEM OUT mentoring program.	Key findings include the need to design structures that position all participants as having expertise, highlight relationship-building as integral for youth–scientist interactions, and facilitate equitable power dynamics. To intentionally support relationship-building activities, we designed three new tools: a youth survey used to elicit their project interests and match with mentors' expertise; a project guide for mentors, including a timeline and project assessment rubrics; a reflective-practice protocol to frame mentors debriefs during the car rides between RTA and the university.		Limitations stem from the short duration of youth–scientist interactions.

Appendix continued

Citation	Study Aim	Engagement/Intervention	Results	Recommendations	Limitations
Kontak et al., 2022	The purpose was to understand youth perspectives on health promoting schools and school youth engagement	Ten youth were trained as peer researchers using a Youth Participatory Action Research approach. The peer researchers interviewed 23 of their peers on perspectives related to school youth engagement. Example questions included: "What is your school doing well to be a healthy school community?"	It was evident from the youth interviews that a social environment is a vital part of a healthy school community. Youth described a healthy school community as a setting with a social environment that is safe, enjoyable, happy and where people are kind and respectful to one another. Within this social environment, a desire for a safe, fair, diverse and accepting community was broadly indicated; however, this was not always reported as a reality that participants experienced in their current school context. Youth specifically shared the significance of having trusting relationships with teachers that are understanding and observant. However, youth indicated this relationship may be impacted if they felt their ideas were not being heard or taken seriously. Approaches to teaching and learning were also identified as key factors to influence a healthy school environment. Of particular importance was the role of experiential learning to enact a healthy school community—including the incorporation of different forms of movement (e.g. dance) and creativity (e.g. baking, knitting) into their class activities, as well as more collaborative group activities.		

Appendix continued

Citation	Study Aim	Engagement/Intervention	Results	Recommendations	Limitations
Lewis et al., 2023	Evaluating learning from youth participation in sexual and reproductive health (SRH) research and services; youth participation providing "thinking tools" for planning and evaluating young peoples' involvement	This study provided opportunities for youth to be co-contributors and challenge power imbalances between youth and adults, for example, involving youth advisors in analysis of meetings, and foregrounding youths' ideas within these meetings.	Mainstreaming young peoples' meaningful involvement requires system-level change. Creating space for candid dialogue about nuances, benefits, and challenges of patient-public research is key. Using frameworks for youth participation (such as the "7Ps" model) can provide productive "thinking tools" to support conversations.	Key learning suggests that mainstreaming meaningful involvement of youth participants requires a system-wide change. Standard practice should include the valuation of youth participants and their contributions.	Limitations from youth participants involvement stem from their involvement being too "late", with limited time and resources to build trusting relationships
Mannion, Sowerby, & I'Anson, 2022	Examining link between youth participation rights and "doing well" at school	In this study methods were chosen that would ideally enable young people to explain how participation helped them "do well in school". Methods included "walk-along" interviews and focus groups using photo-elicitation. Research questions asked about how students participate in influencing and determining school-based practices in classroom activity, and when students' participation makes a difference in their sense of selves, relationships, roles in civil society, and "doing well' at school.	Participation opportunities were supportive in four arenas: formal curriculum, wider curriculum, decision-making groups, and connections with the wider community. Across arenas, the word "respect" was frequently used in accounts. Many initiatives were characterized by a focus on respectful relationships, the valuation and acknowledgement of wider achievement, and the promotion of a school-community ethos. Key findings are that more valued participation occurred when respectful intergenerational dialogue was present, when topics addressed were relevant, and when representative decisions led to impacts.		

Appendix continued

Citation	Study Aim	Engagement/Intervention	Results	Recommendations	Limitations
Masia-Warner et al., 2024	Extensive university-community collaboration to be culturally responsive to needs of Black high school students	This study utilized focus groups and interviews, along with three different scales: Social Anxiety Subscale for the Screen of Child Related Disorders (SCARED), university Rhode Island change assessment scale (URICA), and the Barriers to Adolescent Seeking Help scale (BASH). Some insights gained were that microaggressions, discrimination, and internalized racism exacerbated social anxiety disorder (SAD), and that youth had a preference for a school counsellor of the same ethnic background. Suggestions made to boost cultural pride and increase resilience against discrimination.	Core CBT strategies were maintained for effectiveness, but rich feedback from students, caregivers, and community stakeholders was directly translated into tangible changes reflecting the target population's cultural strengths and challenges. This effort adds to a small but growing body of literature suggesting value in modifying evidence-based treatments to assist Black youth in overcoming stressors pertinent to their experiences. Our preliminary results suggest that ICON was positively received and resonated with Black students, who have left us with the lasting impression that they felt deeply seen and heard by this intervention. These findings are particularly encouraging given the common barriers to mental health services in communities of color, including concerns about stigma, shame, perceived weakness, and mistrust in treatment due to racism.		

Appendix continued

Citation	Study Aim	Engagement/Intervention	Results	Recommendations	Limitations
McGinnis & Mitra, 2022	This study explores how youth make sense of United Nations sustainable development goals; youth-led local civic action	Observations and interviews of middle and high school students participating in the CPS project	First, the study demonstrates the value of intermediary educational organizations as a catalyst for civic action, connecting student efforts with supportive nonprofit organizations. The value of educational intermediaries includes the possibility of scalability of project-based programming. Second, this study shows ways in which this project's global framework encourages systemic thinking among student participants and supports agency-building in young people by linking the notion of "making a difference" locally to global activism. Students and teachers tended to focus on establishing actions with attainable goals, with schools embarked on multiple small projects engaging a larger number of young people in the work. Student-teacher partnerships as a process of bringing about civic action allows teachers to guide the ways students link broad social concerns with attainable actions and to aid students in navigating policy and structural barriers, and to help young people to gain access to institutional resources and encourage broad participation by the student body.		

Appendix continued

Citation	Study Aim	Engagement/Intervention	Results	Recommendations	Limitations
Mirra & Garcia., 2022	Redesigning civic education in schools to leverage student experience and foster creativity	Youth engaged in guiding questions aimed at understanding each other's perspectives and experiences with firearms, engaging in multidimensional dialogue alongside discussing political interests. Youth were encouraged to imagine future civic pathways.	The researchers found that their youth participants held complex and nuanced views about guns, but also possessed the ability to engage in productive dialogue with others whose views were different. This was most prominent when structured mainstream approaches to civic education were used. In addition, instead of using linear policymaking pathways and narratives of claims and warrants, youth and educators instead experimented with the innovative possibilities in the unsettled what-ifs of storytelling and inquiry. So, while structured forms of civic education led conversation, the innovative storytelling possibilities carried open conversation.	Recommendations for school-based speculative civic literacy should put youths lived experiences into cultural and historical context. It should allow for storytelling and dialogue across difference, and foster a social dreaming beyond the constraints of current institutional bounds.	
Nyang'au, Ochola, & Maobe (2022)	Determine influence of youth decision making on implementation of agricultural program	The study used questionnaires to investigate the influence of student youth participation in decision-making on implementation of a school agricultural program.	The researchers found a strong positive correlation between level of participation in decision making and level of implementation of the agriculture programme.	Increase levels of student youth participation in decision making on implementation of the programme will improve effectiveness in imparting agriculture skills to young people for self-reliance	

Appendix continued

Citation	Study Aim	Engagement/Intervention	Results	Recommendations	Limitations
O'Malley et al., 2024	Framing youth-voice principles as tools for youth in examining, describing, and creatively expressing subjective realities for the duration of COVID	The intervention curriculum was adopted from practices described in existing youth-voice related literature. Participants were given prompts to help them interrogate social forces coming from school and home environments as well as from public health policies regarding their wellbeing during COVID-19.	Coping with social isolation and loss of extracurricular opportunities was a consistent theme. Subthemes included decreased access to youth development activities associated with school and the community; a sense of loneliness; reductions in unstructured social time and a loss of social freedom; disappointment associated with canceled social events and, conversely, a sense of relief from the social demands of the school environment. School and schooling were commonly discussed. Subthemes included a feeling that teachers made a meaningful effort to personally connect with students during COVID-19; a sense that teachers were more accessible because they were also socially isolated and seeking connection, instruction-related experiences of the virtual learning environment, and the feeling of disorientation when returning to school.	Implementation of youth-voice strategies is best done within the school's calendar, rather than at the margins of school life. Rather than adults designing the intervention activities and prompts, students should be empowered to do so.	Limitations include the after-school component of the program, in which youth might not participate due to transportation concerns

Appendix continued

Citation	Study Aim	Engagement/Intervention	Results	Recommendations	Limitations
Pickering et al., 2022	Student co-researchers coming together to explore youth engagement	Over two years, photovoice and arts-based participatory research was conducted with the EnRICH Youth Research Team. The article was written from the perspective of high-school and university students on the project. Youth were given the opportunity to contribute to resilience in their community by understanding their perspectives on youth engagement.	The high school students noted it was empowering to feel engaged as co-researchers. They described their previous experiences with other organizations engaging youth as consultative—or tokenistic—and did not enjoy this type of collaboration. Shared power in decision-making for this photovoice project was one of the most important and valued aspects highlighted by high school students as integral to their motivation to participate, their sustained enjoyment of the collaboration, and feeling fulfilled, empowered, and meaningfully engaged. The high school students benefitted from equal opportunities for decision-making and control as co-researchers; learning qualitative research skills, and opportunities to build their resumes or CVs. Strategies to create a safe space included setting clear expectations and boundaries regarding equal collaboration; eliminating structural barriers to participation (e.g., geographical, monetary, and time barriers); transparency about informed consent; selecting a familiar meeting space (i.e., a research lab in downtown Ottawa); and providing time to socialize informally before and after meetings.		

Appendix continued

Citation	Study Aim	Engagement/Intervention	Results	Recommendations	Limitations
Pollock et al., 2022	Publicly expressing students' ideas about equal human value; furthering youth voice and critical consciousness toward societal inclusion	This study utilized student focus groups, anonymous participant questionnaires, and student-created messages and backstories regarding critical consciousness toward societal inclusion and justice.	Youth participants indicated that the #USvsHate call to amplify student voice offered a next step to act upon awareness of social issues. Four invitations related to the projects "anti-hate message" were important to participants: the invitation to comment personally on improving society; the creative invitation to share perspectives in any media form; the invitation to speak to a promised public audience; and the invitation to join a collective "us" improving society.	Incorporating social media helps support a youth-centric approach to participation and enables meaningful engagement.	
Ruhr & Fowler, 2022	Exploring experiences, perceptions, and perceived benefits voiced by youth minorities	This qualitative study utilized focus groups to evaluate whether the Five C's (Competence, Caring, Character, Connection, and Confidence) were prominent among a group of youth, participating in empowerment programming. Focus group discussion centered on experiences, perceptions, and perceived benefits of? program involvement.	Focus group data was collected from youth that participated in one or more of three empowerment programs between 2017–2019 and from a caregiver of each youth. Thematic analysis revealed that the Five C's, including the Sixth C, and the Big Three were present throughout empowerment programming.		

Appendix continued

Citation	Study Aim	Engagement/Intervention	Results	Recommendations	Limitations
Sjogren et al., 2022	Individual differences in engagement Sources of barriers of engagement Minority students participating in after school program	Latent profile analysis and semi-structured student focus groups were used to explore individual differences in , sources of, and barriers to, engagement for minority students. Two questions were: What are the perceived sources and barriers related to youth engagement in after-school programs? Do sources and barriers to engagement in afterschool programs differ by students' engagement profile?	The present paper examined baseline differences between participants who attended no events, one event, and two or more events using a series of t-tests and chi-square tests. Few differences were statistically significant at the level of $p < .05$. At baseline, participants who attended more events were less likely to be male, $\chi 2(2) = 17.48$, p = .000, were younger, $F(2) = 4.77$, p =.000, reported more positive social norms, $F(2) = 3.53$, p = .029, and reported more proactive bystander behavior, $F(2) = 3.03$, p =.049, than participants who attended fewer events. Groups were not significantly different from ethnicity, race, sexual minority status, sexual perpetration and victimization, overall perpetration and victimization, and reactive bystander behavior.		
Sykas & Peonidis, 2022	Drawing on contemporary educational and political theory; participation in direct democratic decision-making	A structured, self-report questionnaire and systematic observation were used to measure how the School Community Assembly SCA promoted direct participation in democratic decision making, how SCA improved the school's social climate, and how SCA contributes to the development of certain democratic attitudes and skills.	Descriptive analyses highlight the content of afterschool program as a key source of youth-reported student engagement across all focus groups. For example, students explained the various courses that initially drew them to engage in Starters such as sports classes, cooking classes, jump rope, and drumming. Many students explained that Starters is "fun because you have activities you would be interested in that you can do, like gym kind of things." Youth consistently highlighted the fun aspects of the environment as rationale for their continued engagement.		

Appendix continued

Citation	Study Aim	Engagement/Intervention	Results	Recommendations	Limitations
Tamashiro & Fonseca, 2024	Developing a mobile application about safe sex and contraception with active participation of adolescents and experts	This study used a focus group technique to develop a “serious game” for sexual health with two stages: development of the technology itself, and evaluation of the content, appearance and useability	Scoping review, excluded	Future research is required to see whether the developed app is a useful sex-education tool. A follow-up study to measure app usage and knowledge on the subject would be ideal.	
van Schelven et al., 2024	Guiding good practices in patient and public involvement; collaboration young people with chronic conditions; development, testing implementation of digital tool	Various groups of YPCC (Young People with Chronic Conditions) were involved as “co-thinkers” and “advisors” in decision making in the design of MyBoT, a digital body map tool. Youths' participation was measured in a design session, workshops, and dialogue session.	Initially, the two co-researchers were involved in the roles of informer and co-thinker, but their decision-making power within the study increased over time. In the final stages of the study, the co-researchers and researchers became partners. Researchers play an essential role in bringing all perspectives together, integrating them within the technical and financial constraints and ultimately building a tool that is tailored to its users' needs. Other factors that contributed to their growing involvement were the enthusiasm and dedication to the topic of the co-researchers and the efforts of the researchers to involve them in every aspect of the study, which included continuous communication and attentively listening, discussing and incorporating contributions made by the co-researchers.		A limitation was diversity among the sample of youth participants with chronic conditions. They were mostly female and relatively highly educated.

Appendix continued

Citation	Study Aim	Engagement/Intervention	Results	Recommendations	Limitations
Waller et al., 2022	Youth perspectives into policy – crucial for future health and wellbeing; translating evidence from *Access 3* project; supporting development of new state policy on youth health and wellbeing; ensuring active contribution of young people	Engagement consisted of a knowledge translation activity between adult professionals and youth, on a 1-day facilitated forum	At the beginning of the study, most initiatives for involvement came from the researchers, who invited the coresearchers to contribute. This gradually grew into a partnership as their continuous involvement enabled coresearchers to become familiar with the study and develop ownership of the tool of the study. Efforts of the researchers to involve the coresearchers in every aspect of the study (continuous communication, attentive listening, discussing and incorporating contributions) contributed to their growing engagement.	The researchers point out that formal processes for knowledge translation have not been "built into" development of prior youth health policy making. Their findings provide a strong platform for future efforts to support evidence-informed policy-making.	
Walsh, Herring, & McMahon, 2023	Exploring youth experience and beliefs about school mental health promotion and suicide prevention programs	During workshop 2, participants were instructed to capture three photos for the focus group that represented personal, community, and school mental health. Focus groups were then formed with open-ended questions discussing experiences of school mental health and suicide prevention relating back to photovoice.	The workshop in this study established 25 policy recommendations. Of these recommendations, the most popular ones (by vote) were: hiring and development of youth-health workers, involving young people at the heart of decision-making, and the importance of youth-health indicators and screening. The majority of youth thought the workshop activities meaningfully contributed to the task of translating research into youth-health policy possibilities (93.3%) and felt they were able to contribute in the small group discussions (88.8%). The youth who did not feel this way gave recommendations: moderating of dominant group members, greater diversity of health disciplines, and increase ability to provide greater contribution to the topic areas.		

Appendix continued

Citation	Study Aim	Engagement/Intervention	Results	Recommendations	Limitations
Wright et al., 2022	Youths' dialectic goal for arriving at consensus; fierce, intentional debates	Youth researchers and adult allies/co-researchers came together to support youth as they engaged in youth participatory action research. The study consisted of Google Hangout meetings where youth advocated for community change and engaged in curricula surrounding historical, economic, and social histories of the present inequalities in their communities.	Many participants believed that school-based mental health supports, such as counselling, mental health awareness and identification of mental health difficulties as integral for effectively targeting young people's overall mental health. Moreover, there was a sense of expectation that schools should address young people's mental health difficulties and needs, given the significant portion of time that young people spend in school. Perceived kindness, empathy and availability were described as key characteristics of supportive school personnel (including teachers, counsellors, coaches, and principals). Participants believed that sharing young people's lived experience with mental health could enhance the relevancy of supports. Furthermore, participants recognized the need for school mental health initiatives, including mental health programmes, which align with the unique contextual needs of schools, given the diversity of schools' needs and issues. Participants shared the need to strengthen links between young people and adults in the wider school context, for productive (and much-needed) student–school personnel collaboration in mental health initiatives.		