DY wn2 hng ot aftr skool?

Short Messaging as a Tool for
Recruiting Young People to Participate in After School Programs

by Erin Ryan-Walsh

Submitted to the Faculty of Extension
University of Alberta
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts in Communications and Technology

April 1, 2011

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Abstract

Engaging youth in positive extra-curricular activities, such as organized clubs and sports can prevent them from engaging in at-risk activities, such as drug and alcohol abuse, criminal activity, and gang involvement. Non-profit service providers, exist to engage youth, 15 - 24, in positive after school activities, however they often struggle to keep them involved and to recruit new youth for their programs. While there could be a variety of reasons for decreased participation in after school programs, the purpose of this study is to explore ways in which adolescents might use short messaging as part of a coordinated communications strategy with after school programs in order to recruit their peers to participate in these programs. Short messaging is the primary method of communication for young people today.

The study involved a local youth serving organization and included a workshop on short messaging and individual interviews with youth, 16-19. Findings are based on emergent themes from the literature and data and further summarized by applying a theoretical framework that considers the formal properties of the communications medium, as well as various implementation considerations in program design. Key learnings from the study are further synthesized into a set of measures and indicators for evaluating a short messaging campaign.

The study determined that short messaging is a popular communications tool for young people that has the potential to recruit them to participate in after school programs, however it is not a replacement for other forms of communication. In addition to this, it should also be recognized for its qualities as a medium, such as two way communication and accessibility, as well as the content of the messages. Successful campaigns are those that have strong youth adult partnerships and involve youth in the development and implementation of the campaign.

Introduction

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore ways in which adolescents might use short messaging as part of a coordinated communications strategy with after school programs in order to recruit their peers to participate in these programs. For the purpose of this study, "short messaging" refers generally to sending and receiving text [could include picture and other] messages between cellular phones. "Coordinated communications strategy" is defined as a communications strategy, coordinated with a local non-profit organization, in order to recruit young people to participate in their programs. Short messaging is one possible tool that might be adopted in this strategy.

Background

As children grow up they tend to move away from their families and rely on their peer groups as they develop their individual identities and transition to adulthood (Helve & Bynner, 2007, p.1). Engaging youth in positive extra-curricular activities, such as organized clubs and sports during this transition can prevent them from engaging in at-risk activities, such as drug and alcohol abuse, criminal activity, and gang involvement. Non-profit service providers exist to engage youth, 15 - 24, in positive after school activities, however they often struggle to keep them involved and to recruit new youth for their programs.

While there could be a variety of reasons for decreased participation in after school programs, this study will focus on how the youth serving organization studied for this project communicates with youth. According to their Managing Director, their

primary methods of recruitment and communication to youth include newsletter mail-

outs, flyers at schools, presentations in the community and in schools, as well as posters

in various locations. In addition, [they] rely on word of mouth and relaying information

to services providers and like agencies to distribute information. (personal

communication, August 31, 2010)

According to a comprehensive communications strategy completed for the organization by

WilliamJoseph Communications (2006), the majority of staff reported using the website to

communicate with youth followed by newsletters, program one pagers, and brochures. They also

tend to communicate more with parents than the youth themselves.

Youth are avid users of mobile technology, in particular short messaging. According to

the April 2010 *Teens and Mobile Phones* report from the Pew Internet and American Life

Project, 75% of youth, 12-17, own cell phones and most of these youth use text messaging. Text

messaging has become the "primary" way for youth to communicate with their friends,

surpassing social networking sites (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell & Purcell, 2010). They use text

messaging to communicate with friends, make plans, and to share personal updates. More and

more, youth are adopting this technology for personal use and youth serving organizations and

schools are exploring new ways to get to know their audience and to maximize the potential of

this tool (Lasica, 2008). Young people's experience with text messaging, blogs, and social media

sites, such as Facebook and MySpace have conditioned them to expect and respond to two way

communication. In fact, research findings suggest that they may prefer this type of

communication over more traditional communications strategies currently used by youth serving

organizations (Fine, 2006, p. 67).

Existing Studies

  In the next section, I review the literature on short messaging and youth. I identify and discuss three main groups of studies from the literature which are user practices and norms, marketing, and campaign pilots. In addition to this, I also review literature on youth development and engagement in order to better understand best practices for working with youth. The literature review shows a growing body of research in the field generally, however there has been little done on short messaging and youth engagement.

  The literature review also identifies deficiencies in the literature that form the basis for my study. The majority of the existing literature is based on the practices of youth in Asia and Europe as their adoption was earlier than North America. My work contributes to a Canadian understanding of youth and short messaging. Much work has been done on how youth use short messaging and social media to communicate with each other, but very little has been done on how they communicate with youth serving organizations or how these organizations can use these tools to communicate with them. However, studies on civic engagement, marketing to youth, campaign pilots, and youth development and engagement help to provide an understanding for using short messaging as a possible recruitment tool. These studies focus on adult generated campaigns and content, whereas my work focuses on youth perspectives around possible campaigns and the use of short messaging as a recruitment tool.

Study Approach and Research Question

  The study was conducted in Calgary, Alberta, Canada by holding a workshop about short messaging for current members of a youth leadership group, ages 16 - 19. The workshop gave participants an opportunity to develop and test a simple short messaging service and to

brainstorm campaign ideas, using this experience as a basis for follow up discussion about the use of short messaging as part of a coordinated youth engagement strategy. Individual follow up interviews were held with the workshop participants and an adult leader who attended the workshop.

Research question.

How can youth serving organizations use short messaging effectively to recruit young people to participate in their programs?

Findings

The data analysis method was borrowed from McCracken's (1988) five stages of analysis and Cresswell's (2010) research tip for analyzing data (p. 186). Using this method I was able to derive the following themes from the literature and data:

- Short Messaging, One of Many Tools

- Effective Short Messaging for Youth, and

- Developing a Short Messaging Campaign.

The themes led to a theoretical context that applied the concepts of "the medium is the message" (McLuhan, 1964), fourteen characteristics of new media (Logan, 2010), and promise, tool, bargain (Shirky, 2008) in order to further explore the findings, answer the research question, as well as identify communications strategies for how youth serving organizations can use short messaging to recruit youth into their programs. Because this was an exploratory study, theory emerged from the themes and was applied at the end of the study in order to summarize the key findings from the study and then to help refine them into measures and indicators at the end.

The findings establish short messaging as a popular communications tool amongst young people that has the potential to recruit them to participate in after school programs, however it is not a replacement for other forms of communication. It is one of many tools that can be incorporated into a larger communications strategy for youth. In addition to this, it should also be recognized for its qualities as a medium, such as two way communication and accessibility, as well as the content of the messages. The literature on youth development and engagement and the application of promise, tool, bargain demonstrate that it is imperative to develop strong youth adult partnerships in order for a campaign to be successful. Making the right promise (why youth should participate), choosing the right social media tool, and making an appropriate bargain (what youth can expect in return for their participation and what you can expect from them) can determine the failure or success of a campaign.

Discussion

In the discussion section I answer the research question by discussing key learnings from the findings. They are divided into the following categories:

1. When is Short Messaging an Appropriate Tool?

2. Know Your Audience

3. Developing a Campaign - Engaging Existing Members, and

4. Involve Youth in the Development of Your Campaign

I further synthesize the key learnings into a set of measures and indicators that can be used to evaluate a short messaging campaign. Deficiencies in this study and areas for future research are also addressed.

Literature Review

Research on youth and short messaging is recent and can be traced back to the early 2000s with studies based primarily in Europe and Asia. As the uptake of short messaging has increased worldwide so have corresponding studies based in the United Kingdom and North America. Key scholars in this area include Ling (2007; 2004), Kasesniemi & Rautiainen (2002), Ito et al (2010), and boyd (2010; 2007). Their work on youth, short messaging, and new media has established a foundation for subsequent work in this area. The literature on short messaging and youth can be divided into the following groups of studies:

- User practices and norms,

- Marketing, and

- Campaign Pilots.

In addition to the studies on youth and short messaging, the literature on youth development and engagement helps to establish a framework around working with youth and engaging them through short messaging.

User Practices and Norms

User practices and norms are defined as the adoption of mobile phones and short messaging by youth, their habits, and attitudes towards short messaging. User practices and norms are not limited to the use of the phone, but also encompass the emergence of an adolescent mobile phone culture.

A short history.

Although short messaging has been available since the early 90s (Taylor & Vincent, 2005), its adoption by North American youth is still quite recent (Castells, 2004; Pitfield, 2005).

Asian and European youth were early to adopt short messaging (Castells, 2004) for a number of reasons. Cost was an impetus as it was inexpensive to send a text message, yet expensive to make a voice call. In North America this was not an issue and therefore there was little financial incentive (Pitfield, 2005). Another limiting factor in regards to North American adoption was system incompatibility which in recent years has been resolved. In Europe, there was universal adoption of the GSM system which made short messaging between providers seamless (Pitfield, 2005; Taylor & Vincent, 2005).

According to Ito and Okabe (2005), the uptake of mobile phones and short messaging by Japanese youth was largely influenced by space and a lack of privacy in their family homes. North American youth do not face these same space issues and could easily have private phones or conversations in their bedrooms and at that time would not have been as eager to find alternate means of communication (p. 6). However, now that mobile phones and short messaging have become more popular in North America privacy has become a key reason for adoption.

A large part of the US popularity and uptake of short messaging by youth was driven by marketing. Wireless companies began to recognize the youth as a marketable audience for their services (Castells, 2004). As well, *American Idol* and their text in to vote campaign is credited with increasing the popularity of text messaging amongst American youth (Pitfield, 2005). They were given a reason to use short messaging and, with this, its popularity grew. Parents were also keen to purchase phones for their kids in order to keep them safe and in contact at all times.

Statistics.

According to the April 2010 *Teens and Mobile Phones* report from the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 75% of youth, 12-17, own cell phones and 88% of these youth use text

messaging. A total of 54% of all youth surveyed use text messaging compared to 38% in February 2008, with over half the youth sending 50 or more messages a day and 1,500 messages a month. Text messaging has become the "primary" way for youth to communicate with their friends, surpassing social networking sites at 25%. While text messaging is popular, voice calls remain a common way for youth to communicate, in particular with their parents (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell & Purcell, 2010).

Texting among US teens has increased in the last 18 months while "face-to-face contact, instant messaging, mobile voice and social network messaging have remained flat during the same period, while use of email and the landline phone have decreased slightly" (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell & Purcell, 2010, p. 44).

How do youth use short messaging?

Short messaging is the preferred communication method for exchanging private messages with close friends, sharing interesting tidbits of information, making connections, and arranging face to face meetings (Castells, 2004; Ito et al., 2010; Kasesniemi & Rautiainen, 2002; Klimsa et al., 2006; Ling 2007; Ling, 2004; Stald, 2007). It is also "a way to discreetly ask others if communication is currently possible or desirable" (Klimsa et al., 2006, p. 4).

Typically, youth "usually have a small circle of friends with whom they communicate in an always-on mode via mobile phones and IM" and use social networking sites for looser connections (Ito et al., 2010). Short messaging is a new communication tool for youth, essentially replacing the family telephone, passing notes in class, and writing on the bathroom wall (Ito et al., 2010; Pitfield, 2005), while social networking sites provide a new public place to hang out (boyd, 2007).

The work of Kasesniemi and Rautiainen (2002), Ling (2004), and Ling (2007) provides the foundation for accepted norms and understanding of young people and their relationship with mobile phones, in particular the use of short messaging, and provides the foundation for my work on youth and short messaging.

Kasesniemi and Rautiainen's (2002), *Mobile Culture of Children and Teenagers in Finland,* is a comprehensive study that collected over 8,000 text messages and interviewed 1,000 youth. The study also included field work and informal exchanges with youth informing the researchers of changing trends in text messaging. This study "treat[ed] teenagers and adults involved in the research as *informants,* who are experts about their own lives, rather than passive *subjects* or *respondents"* (p.173). My study also approaches youth as "experts about their own lives" as I am interested in understanding their perspectives and experiences in regards to short messaging.

Kasesniemi and Rautiainen (2002) go on to provide a thorough overview and understanding of user practices and norms. Youth exchange messages with each other and despite the limited content of a message (160 characters), messaging is a common and popular form of communication. A text message "finds its way to times and places where a call would be impossible or at least unsuitable" (Kasesniemi & Rautiainen, 2002, p. 171). Teens will often use text messaging to say things they would not say in person, especially when it comes to conflict with a friend or romantic partner. Young people often adopt a text messaging personality and are much braver in their messages than in person (p. 182).

While teens have developed their own text messaging language with each other they are willing and able to adapt their content depending on the audience. They will often send more

formal messages to parents and other adults. Text messaging is used primarily to have conversations, share thoughts and ideas, and tell stories to friends, while correspondence with family and parents is often about coordinating plans or letting parents know where they are.

Short messaging amongst teenagers has created its own culture as "text messaging culture is a collective experience that expresses adolescents' identification with other teenagers" (p. 177). Teenagers in Finland not only send messages, but collect messages to reflect on and reminiscence about later, send chain messages which often have adult content and test boundaries, as well as collectively read and compose messages.

Ling (2004) examines what it is about mobile phones and text messaging that appeals to so many different types of youth. Mobile phones are a way to coordinate activities, as well as provide a sense of safety. They enable youth to engage in rebellious activities, such as receiving a call when they shouldn't (in class, at night) or sharing suggestive photos (p. 86). For many youth they are also a "fashion accessory" and a status symbol (p.85). Ling (2004) argues that " . . . it is possible to suggest that the adoption of the mobile phone is not just the action of an individual, but rather, of individuals aligning themselves with the peer culture in which they participate (Fine 1987, p. 133)" (p. 85).

Mobile phones and text messaging have changed the way youth make plans. They no longer need to plan their activities in advance, but instead can make and change plans at the last minute. This is relevant for a youth serving organization that is trying to engage youth in their programs. Inviting them to an event the week before might not be enough, they may require follow up in the form of a text message on the day of and the hours leading to the event.

Kasesniemi and Rautiainen (2002) argued that the mobile phone was as much about content as about function, Ling (2004) suggests that it is also about status. Your popularity can be measured by how many people are in your address book and the number of messages you send and receive in a day. The type of phone you own is also important and suggests acceptance and belonging in your peer group. It is not enough to own a mobile phone that receives calls and sends messages it should be a certain kind (p. 108). The youth in Ling's (2004) study also developed their own language and texting norms within their peer group, such as the types of messages to send and expected response times. Following the rules of texting is a requirement for participation in the peer group. It is often thought that young people have a texting language, but this language is not universal and changes from country to country and group to group.

Mobile phones are also a way for adolescents to develop their social network and to create shared experiences with their peers: "The messages [they exchange] serve to tie the group together through the development of a common history or narrative" (Ling, 2004, p. 111). The phones transcend geographic boundaries and also create a new sense of privacy. Youth are no longer limited to having conversations on the family telephone or meeting in public places; "the mobile phone has given teens a way in which to participate in peer culture almost where ever and when ever they wish" (Ling, 2007, p. 6).

How does short messaging compare to social media?

boyd's (2007) *Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life* provides a comprehensive overview of young people's attitudes towards social networking sites. Although the work focuses primarily on MySpace, the findings can also be applied to other sites, in particular Facebook. Compared to the private nature of short

messaging, social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook are virtual public places. Youth use these spaces to develop their identities by creating a profile, sharing pictures, updates, planning events, and maintaining contact with friends. Young people want to be where their friends are and that is the main motivation for joining and participating in social networking sites. The majority of their online friends are people they know offline (boyd, 2007). Although there is much concern in the media about safety and predators on social networking sites, the majority of youth are not interested in meeting strangers. In fact, "social media allow teens to extend their interactions beyond physical boundaries. Conversations that begin in person do not end when friends are separated" (boyd, 2010, p. 80).

Social media and short messaging are just two of many different communication tools used by young people and one does not replace the other, and as such, "youth complement private communication through messaging and mobile phones with social media that support broader peer publics" (boyd, 2010, p. 80).

Civic engagement.

While the literature on youth and short messaging describes young people as using short messaging primarily for personal communication, there is evidence that mobile phones have been used to elicit large scale civic action. According to Rheingold (2003), people use short messaging to create what he refers to as "smart mobs." These are groups of people that have used short messaging to circumvent traditional communications systems in order to overthrow governments and organize political rallies. Within minutes a simple text message can mobilize groups bringing people together and engaging them in their communities.

In order to engage young people with the use of short messaging it will be necessary to find a balance between their need for privacy and a public call to action. Lasica (2008) describes successful mobile civic engagement campaigns as those that act:

• as a recruitment tool for new members;

• as a tool to spur existing constituencies to take specific actions;

• as a reliable and trusted tool for people to gather information about an issue or subject. (p. 36)

In addition to this, according to Fine (2006) social media tools are simple to use and inexpensive. It is not their capabilities that ignite social change, but their usability and ability to reach and mobilize many. (p. xvi).

The literature on user practices and norms establishes what young people are using their phones for, how they communicate with their peers, and their families. It also examines the role of the mobile phone and text messaging and its role in youth culture, the social network of adolescents, and as a tool of "emancipation" (Castells, 2004; Ling, 2007). However, outside of civic engagement, there is not a lot of indication as to how a youth serving organization or adults outside the family could use this tool to encourage youth to participate in positive activities. Corporations are interested in how to market their products to youth through their mobile phones and as a result some work has been done in this area.

Marketing

Marketing is defined as the opportunity to promote your product with consumers, in particular young people. They represent a targeted demographic that are believed to have a significant amount of disposable income.

Youth are opinion leaders and many look to them to dictate and adopt the latest trends. As a result, advertisers are keen to market their products to young people. Given their mass adoption of mobile phones, marketers are exploring ways to advertise to youth through short messaging. Socializing and having fun are important for young people and interactive technologies, such as social networking sites and mobile phones, complement this desire (Arthur, Sherman, Appel & Moore, 2006). Further to this, Arthur, Sherman, Appel & Moore (2006) have identified five youth values when it comes to marketing, they are:

1. the opportunity to express their identities

2. social interaction

3. immediacy and constant entertainment

4. discovery, and

5. the ability to create and record (p. 38)

It is important to keep these values in mind when designing campaigns for young people. Keep your campaign simple and give your audience what they want (Haste, 2005). In addition to this, campaigns should be created and developed with a comprehensive understanding of a youth audience.

The benefits of marketing through short messaging are that it is "easy, personable, and measurable," yet you need to ensure that you are sending the right kinds of messages and that youth have the opportunity to opt in and to opt out at anytime (Grant & O'Donohue, 2007; Haste, 2005). Many youth are bothered by the possibility of receiving unsolicited text messages and do not like the idea of missing a text from a friend (due to storage limitations), because of receiving a message from an advertiser (Grant & O'Donohue, 2007). More modern phones may

not present these technical limitations. Because youth are susceptible to trends they are likely to opt out often, therefore it is important to be constantly recruiting new youth to receive messages (Haste, 2005).

All of these marketing elements apply when recruiting young people to participate in after school programs. It would be important to design a campaign based on their interests and needs. When marketing to young people through their mobile phones you need to ensure that you are engaging in "safe and ethical communication and interaction" (Haste, 2005, p. 61). It is also important to decide where to find your audience whether through a database, a text-in campaign, or starting with a collection of phone numbers from already existing members (Haste, 2005). Involving youth in the design and implementation of the campaign will also be important for success.

Campaign Pilots

Campaign pilots are defined as research projects that have conducted studies to explore the use of text messaging as a tool for communicating with youth. These campaigns have been reported on in Academic Journals.

Although no work has been done on specifically recruiting youth into after school programs, there have been a number of pilots that use text messaging to communicate with youth about a variety of issues from sexual health to university recruitment. A review of the following campaigns helps to outline several key elements when using text messaging to communicate with youth outside of their peer group:

- *Patients engagement with "Sweet Talk" - A Text Messaging Support System for Young People with Diabetes*

- *Text Messaging: The Newest Recruitment Innovation*

- *Text Messaging as a Means to Lowering Barriers to Help Seeking in Students with Depression*

- *SEXINFO: A Sexual Health Text Messaging Service for San Francisco Youth.*

- *Do U Smoke After Txt? Results of a Randomised Trial of Smoking Cessation Using Mobile Phone Text Messaging*

As was discussed in the marketing literature, choosing to participate or opting in is important to young people. They do not want to receive unsolicited messages (Franklin, Greene, Wallace, Greene & Pagliari, 2008; Fratt, 2006; Joyce & Weibelzahl, 2006; Levine, McCright, Dobkin, Woodruff & Klausner, 2008; Rodgers et al., 2005). They also do not want to receive too many messages, " . . . turning the cellphone into an e-mail inbox is a mistake" (Fratt, 2006, p. 90). It is important to be strategic about the messages being sent and cognizant of the amount of contact you are making.

Young people prefer messages of a personal nature. The Sweet Talk campaign used passive correspondence to send preset messages to youth about diabetes, however some participants responded to these messages and " . . . valued the opportunity to engage in [a] reciprocal community" (Franklin, Greene, Wallace, Greene & Pagliari, 2008, para. 26).

Text messaging provides a private communications channel for discussing subjects that many young people will often not discuss in person. For instance, diabetes patients were more likely to ask embarrassing questions that they would not ask their doctor (Franklin, Greene, Wallace, Greene & Pagliari, 2008); youth in San Francisco with previously undetected STIs and pregnancy concerns received information and referrals to clinics through the SEX INFO project

(Levine, McCright, Dobkin, Woodruff & Klausner, 2008); and youth who were previously

unwilling to identify themselves as depressed sought help through text messaging (Joyce &

Weibelzahl, 2006).

While the majority of campaigns were based on opting in to receive information on a

specific topic, Joyce and Weibelzahl (2006) imbedded information about depression into regular

updates on student life, such as study tips or money management (para. 1). This was a less

intrusive way to engage students who were possibly suffering from depression, although it did

present some ethical considerations in that they could be misleading students.

All the campaigns reviewed were developed and administered by adults with adults as the

senders and youth as the recipients of messages. The Sweet Talk campaign discouraged the

development of "unmoderated peer to peer networks" for fear of the sharing of "health-harming

practices and text bullying" (Franklin, Greene, Wallace, Greene & Pagliari, 2008, para. 5).

Overall, mass text messaging campaigns are ineffective and more of an annoyance to

youth than an effective tool. It is imperative to personalize information and to ensure that there

are channels for reciprocity. There also need to be contingencies for opting in and opting out of a

campaign. In addition to this, youth respond to the use of text messaging for receiving and

sharing potentially embarrassing information. Text messaging is a tool to be integrated into a

larger communications plan (Fratt, 2006) and should be approached as its own technology with

its own rules of use, as opposed to a replacement for e-mail, voice calls, or social media.

Youth Development and Engagement

While the literature on user practices, marketing, and campaign pilots helps to establish

young people's relationship with short messaging and how it might be used in a campaign, the

literature on youth development and engagement provides additional insight to effectively recruiting and working with youth.

For the purpose of this study youth development is defined as a philosophy in youth programming that focuses on fostering and developing life and leadership skills in youth that will help them to become successful adults (Hamilton, Hamilton & Pittman, 2004). Youth engagement is the ability to involve youth in positive community based activities that focus on their development.

According to London, Zimmerman, and Erbstein (2003), youth are frequently "developed through a set of controlled activities rather than as active participants in real-world experiences and projects" (p. 34). However, successful youth engagement depends on active involvement and participation from youth. Furthermore, youth development programs should focus on:

Positive approach and universality, or the goal of all youth thriving; the importance of healthy relationships and challenging activities that endure and change over time; and engaging youth people as participants, not merely recipients. (Hamilton, Hamilton & Pittman, 2004, p. 6)

While all of these principles are important, the most significant factor in successful youth development and engagement is the development of strong partnerships between youth and adults. (Arthur, Dolenc & Wells, 2008; Jones & Perkins, 2006; Kress, 2004; London, Zimmerman & Erbstein, 2003; Scheve, Perkins & Mincemoyer, 2006; Zeldin, Camino & Mook 2005). Youth need to be involved in the processes and decisions that affect them. This is essential to their development, but also to their ongoing support of and participation in a project. For example, involving youth in the development of a short messaging campaign will have a positive

impact on their willingness to participate in the implementation (Powers & Tiffany, 2006). It will also provide an opportunity for them to influence and engage their peers.

However, young people should not be left to make all decisions and should receive guidance and strong adult support. There are situations where it is more appropriate for adults to make and support decisions or for older youth to work on behalf of younger children and youth (Hamilton, Hamilton, & Pittman, 2004). At the beginning of a youth driven project, youth and adults need to work together and agree upon clear guidelines around decision making and roles and responsibilities. Without clear guidelines, adult leaders can lose credibility and youth can feel as though their opinions are not respected which can result in the failure of the project (Zeldin, Camino & Mook, 2005).

Conclusion/Deficiencies in the Existing Literature

There is no question that short messaging is a popular communications tool for today's youth. They enjoy the private nature of mobile phones and the ability to be in constant contact with their friends. They also communicate with their parents by phone, mostly through voice calls and formal, practical text messages arranging picks ups or letting them know where they are. Keeping in touch with parents is often a condition of having a mobile phone. Phones are not just about communication, but can also be about status, fashion, and peer group acceptance. It is not enough to own a phone, it needs to be a certain kind and have certain features. It is also important to know and use the accepted texting norms of your peer group. Text messaging does not have a universal language or etiquette.

Young people are willing to participate in targeted campaigns, but they need to be youth savvy, entertaining, personalized, and offer opportunities for two way communication. The

ability to opt in and out of receiving text messages and to not be inundated with too many

messages is equally important.

Short messaging differs from social media in that short messaging is a private behavior

while social networking sites provide an alternate public space. Youth may use these sites to

maintain relationships with a larger group of friends, while exchanging messages with a smaller

group of close friends. These communications tools are complementary, but by no means

interchangeable.

In order to effectively engage youth in community programs or initiatives it is important

that the programs are respectful, youth friendly, have adult support, and provide opportunities for

youth decision making. In particular, partnerships between youth and adults that have mutually

agreed upon roles and responsibilities will lead to positive youth development and engagement.

While the literature establishes that short messaging is a valuable tool for communicating

with youth there are some deficiencies in the current research that my study will attempt to

address. As a result of the more recent uptake of mobile phones and short messaging by North

American youth, the majority of literature focuses on youth in Asia and Europe (Castells, 2004).

Although the literature does not apply specifically to Canadian youth "cross-cultural similarities

in mobile phone usage are partially an outcome of the similarities in the institutionalized status

of youth" (Ito & Okabe, 2005, p. 5), and as such, much can be inferred from this literature about

the attitudes and perceptions of Canadian youth. This literature provides a foundation, as well as

a deficiency for my study. My work will contribute to a Canadian perspective on short messaging

and youth by interviewing Canadian youth about their experiences and perceptions around short

messaging.

The literature provides an understanding of how youth communicate with each other, but offers minimal insight into how youth serving organizations can use short messaging to communicate with youth. Marketing literature and campaign pilots lend some understanding to youth preferences for correspondence and the literature on youth development and engagement provides insight into working with youth in general. Short messaging has also been used to elicit large scale civic action. I will address this deficiency by working with youth to generate campaign ideas for recruiting their peers into after school programs. It will also be important to explore what they perceive as the differences between being contacted through short messaging as opposed to social media.

Although the literature on user practices and norms is drawn from youth perspectives, the marketing literature and campaign pilots are focused on adult views around engaging youth. I am interested not only in the experience of youth, but also their ideas for developing a campaign to recruit their peers. Their voice is critical in establishing whether or not short messaging is an appropriate tool for recruiting young people to participate in after school programs as they have real experience using short messaging to communicate with their peers. While I believe that short messaging will be an effective tool it is possible the young people will disagree. They may not want to be contacted by their organization or they might prefer Facebook. In addition to this, involving them in the early stage of campaign development "enhances the likelihood that findings will be useful, owned, and acted upon . . ." (Powers & Tiffany, 2006, p.2). This will be important for the successful incorporation of short messaging into a communications strategy for youth.

This is an engaging and ever evolving area of study that will continue to grow. Mobile phones and short messaging do not seem to be a passing trend and with the introduction of new smartphone technologies and other ongoing developments youth will continue to modify their practices and lead the way in the adoption and use of this technology.

Methodology

This is an exploratory study designed to answer the research question: How can youth serving organizations use short messaging effectively to recruit young people to participate in their programs?

Borrowing from Ito et al (2010) this research takes a "sociology-of-youth-and-childhood" approach. They define this as "tak[ing] youth seriously as actors in their own social worlds and look[ing] at childhood as a socially constructed, historically variable and contested category" (p. 7). This combined with a social constructivist worldview sees youth as individuals with their own views, beliefs, feelings, and perspectives. Giving them the primary voice in the project will help to capture a more accurate representation of their experience.

Questions asked in interviews and the overall approach are strongly influenced by the literature. The literature helps to frame youth views towards short messaging, but also to identify deficiencies that will be addressed by my study. From the literature and data a series of themes will emerge which will lead to theory. The use of theory as derived from these themes will help to better understand the data. While many qualitative studies use theory at the beginning or as a theoretical lens, "distinct from this theoretical orientation are studies in which theory (or some other broad explanation) becomes the end point" (Cresswell, 2010, p. 62). This approach is further outlined in the following figure adapted from Cresswell (2010):
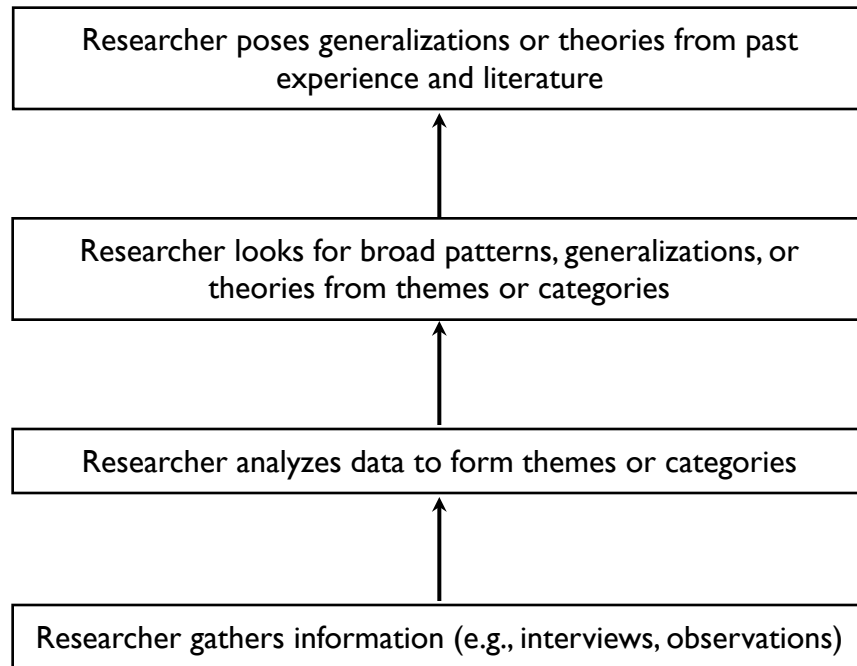
```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Researcher poses generalizations or theories    │
│          from past experience and literature     │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        ▲
                        │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Researcher looks for broad patterns,            │
│  generalizations, or theories from themes or     │
│  categories                                      │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        ▲
                        │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Researcher analyzes data to form themes or      │
│  categories                                      │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        ▲
                        │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Researcher gathers information (e.g.,           │
│  interviews, observations)                       │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Figure 1 (p.63)

Descriptions of the Sources of Data

The study was conducted by holding a workshop about short messaging for six members of a youth leadership group, ages 16 - 19. The workshop gave participants an opportunity to develop and test a simple short messaging service (Frontline SMS), using this experience as a basis for follow up discussion about the use of short messaging as part of a coordinated youth engagement strategy. Individual interviews were conducted after the workshop with five of the youth participants, as well as one of the adult leaders who supervised the workshop. The bulk of the data comes from the individual interviews.

The workshop began with a formal presentation (Appendix A) demonstrating the uses of Frontline SMS (FLSMS) and examples with keywords and short codes, as well as examples of how other non-profit groups have used short messaging to engage youth. The formal presentation was followed by an interactive activity where youth worked in pairs to exchange a message with

auto reply using FLSMS on computers in the lab and then to brainstorm their own ideas for how

it can be used (Appendix B).

The brainstorming activity was based on the following scenario:

> Your organization is looking for ways to recruit youth to participate in their after school
>
> programs. Young people always seem to be texting. Could they use text messaging to
>
> encourage young people to join their after school programs? What would this look like?

This was followed by a group discussion (interview) to debrief the activity. Each group was

asked to summarize and share what they discussed. Questions in the group interview were:

1. Describe your campaign

2. How does the organization currently communicate with you?

3. Do you think short messaging would work as a communications tool for your organization?

   Why? Why not?

4. What about other social media like Twitter or Facebook?

5. What type of information, if any, would you like to receive through short messaging?

6. Would you forward short messages from your organization/program to your friends?

   The individual interviews revisited and expanded on the same questions from the group

interview. Additional questions asked were:

1. What type of information would you not like to receive?

2. What do you currently use short messaging for?

3. Do you like the idea of communicating with adults through text?

4. Do you think it is important for youth to be involved in designing and implementing

campaigns?

   Interviews were conversational in nature and the questions provided a foundation for

dialogue about short messaging and its possible applications for the organization, the organization's current practices, as well as their general perceptions about youth, short messaging, and social media.

Construction of Data Collection Techniques/Instrumentation

The workshop and interviews were recorded with a microphone and laptop. Data was transcribed by the researcher for analysis. Field notes were also taken after the workshop.

Description of the Sample of Participants

Setting.

The research took place at a local youth serving organization in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. The organization provides services for over 40,000 children, youth, and families each year ranging from after school programs to homeless shelters for youth. Services are provided throughout the city of Calgary, primarily for families that are economically or socially marginalized.

The workshop and interviews took place during regularly scheduled program time. They were held at the participating youth organization in an environment that the participants were familiar with. This created a level of comfort for the youth enabling them to relax and focus on the task at hand without creating any additional anxiety about participating in the research.

Participants.

Youth, 16 - 19, who are members of the organization's leadership group. They are long term members and youth leaders in the organization who have a good knowledge and understanding of available programs and services. In addition, most of the youth are involved in at least one other program and/or have younger siblings who are also members which further enhances their understanding. Their role and commitment to the organization make them valuable informants

for the study. Six youth participated in the workshop (3 female and 3 male) and five (3 female and 2 male) were interviewed individually at a later date. One male adult leader who observed the workshop was also interviewed.

Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected with the informed consent of the participants. Consent forms were signed by participants who are over 18, as well as those who are under 18 with emancipation status enabling them to act as their own guardian. Youth under 18 had consent forms signed by their parent or legal guardian. They also received a letter of informed consent outlining the study and details for participation (Appendix C). Files are stored on the researcher's laptop and are password protected. The names and ages of the interviewees were stated on the recording, but were changed in the transcription to ensure the anonymity of the participants. Data was collected solely by the researcher and will only be used for the purposes of this project. Field notes and reflections were made directly following the workshop.

Researcher's Role

From helping young people to find jobs to teaching overseas, working with and behalf of youth has been an ongoing theme in my life and career. In 2006 - 2007, I was seconded part-time to the United Way of Calgary's Children's Initiative to coordinate the True Youth Campaign. True Youth was a social marketing campaign that challenged stereotypes and perceptions of young people by attempting to change the way media report on them. My role was to manage a group of youth and to assist them in the implementation of the campaign. I took away many things from this project, but the greatest learning for me was the difference between communicating with and engaging youth as compared to adults.

The youth and I spent every Thursday night together for a year. At the meetings they would promise to complete assigned tasks and to e-mail me their work. When we were not meeting, our main form of communication was e-mail. I was good at sending them e-mails, but they were not good at responding to them or completing their promised work. This led me to believe that they were no longer interested in the campaign, yet the next time I saw or spoke to them they assured me that this was not the case.

One of our projects was to hold a contest for local youth to create a public service announcement for our campaign. I thought we could promote the contest the way I would normally promote an event– a mailer, a poster, on-line boards, a news release, a media sponsorship. When I mentioned these things to the youth they agreed that that could work, but they were not convinced.

We then began to discuss how they found out about things that were happening in their community and how they normally shared information. After our discussion we decided to still use my traditional methods to promote the contest, but to also try some new ways like You Tube videos, texting, blogging, and creating Facebook groups and MySpace pages. For the first time in the campaign the youth took a task and ran with it. Around the same time I stopped e-mailing them and started sending them messages on Facebook. I began getting responses, updates, and work was being completed on time. I had learned firsthand that in order to engage youth it is necessary to use their preferred communications tools.

My previous experience working with youth, in particular the True Youth Campaign, led me to this project. I believe in the value of positive adult role models in young people's lives and have seen firsthand the impact of participating in after school programs and I wanted to look at how more kids could get involved and stay involved.

Researcher's bias.

As the former Communications Manager for the partnering organization for this study I have some preconceived notions about what the organization should or should not be doing in regards to communicating with youth. This bias will be addressed by maintaining distance and looking at multiple perspectives. My experience working with youth and as a professional communicator are an asset to this study.

Ethical considerations.

This study was conducted in compliance with the University of Alberta's ethical standards. As youth are considered a marginalized group special considerations have been made in order to ensure their anonymity, such as not using their names or revealing the name of the partnering organization. Youth participated in the study voluntarily and were given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at anytime during the data collection process.

Methods of Analysis

The method of analysis borrows from McCracken's (1988) five stages of analysis and Cresswell's (2010) research tip for analyzing data (p. 186). These combined approaches will help to generate themes for analysis from the literature and to draw conclusions about the data in the larger context of the literature and research question. McCracken's (1988) five stages, as applied for the purposes of this study, are summarized as follows:

Stage 1: General reading of transcripts with no connection to larger meaning.

Stage 2: More purposeful reading, linking and making connections to the literature

Stage 3: Further refinement.

Stage 4: Observations were further developed on their own and now in relation to other

observations. Refinement of emergent themes.

Stage 5: "Time of judgment" (p. 46). Review of conclusions from stage 4 and

development of theses from themes.

Cresswell's (2010) research tip provides further guidance for identifying themes and

generalizations. [He] encourages researchers to analyze their data for material that can address

the following:

- Codes on topics that readers would expect to find, based on the past literature and

  common sense

- Codes that are surprising and were not anticipated at the beginning of the study

- Codes that are unusual, and that are, in and of themselves, of conceptual interest to

  readers . . .

- Codes that address a larger theoretical perspective in the research (p. 186 - 187)

Findings

Analyzing the interviews according to McCracken's (1988) and Cresswell's (2010)

guidelines enabled me to derive themes from the data. The themes led to a theoretical context

which helped to further explore, conceptualize, and summarize the findings.

Setting the Context

Setting the context is an important element of the findings in that it establishes the

environment and approach in which the data was collected (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.

110).

Based on my previous experience with youth and the literature it was critical that the workshop be youth friendly and interactive. The workshop was conducted on an evening in November, 2010. I was using their program space and had set up my presentation in the front, with three workstations around the room complete with laptops and mobile phones for their group activity. Youth began to arrive and consent forms were collected. Some youth were not interested in the workshop and left the room to work on art projects. Six youth and two leaders remained. I was nervous, I had forgotten what a tough audience young people can be. Before starting, one participant took a moment to inform me that cell phones cause brain cancer, but she was going to stay to hear what I had to say.

As I began, the room became quiet as they listened to what I had to say about myself, my project, and short messaging. They were skeptical. Then I then told them about Frontline SMS - you could feel the energy in the room change as I played a video about a young person using short messaging for emergency medical response in a remote African village. I told them stories about how people had used Frontline during the floods in Pakistan to coordinate relief efforts and decrease the spread of dysentery. Then I told them that the local work they were doing as leaders in their organization was as meaningful and interesting as the stories that they had just heard. After this, I presented them with a challenge, in a small group use Frontline SMS to come up with a campaign idea for your organization to recruit young people into your programs.

Despite several technical issues they successfully sent messages back and forth between their groups and brainstormed campaign ideas. The group activity was followed by a discussion about short messaging, social media, and their campaign ideas. This set the context for individual interviews.

The interviews were also held in their program space and because of the rapport we had developed during the workshop were relaxed and conversational in nature. The individual interviews were a safe place where youth could share their ideas without judgment from their peers. As mentioned before, the findings are primarily based on the recordings of these interviews.

Deriving Themes from the Literature and Data

The literature on user practices and norms, marketing, and campaign pilots provided a foundation for understanding young people's relationships with mobile phones and short messaging, as well as an initial framework for how a youth serving organization might structure a campaign to recruit participants to their programs. The data from the interviews further supports the literature and provides additional insight for engaging youth and developing a coordinated communications strategy. The attached table (Appendix D) provides a comprehensive outline developed between the literature and the data. McCracken's Five Stages along with Cresswell's coding research tip helped to develop the following themes:

• Short Messaging, One of Many Tools

• Effective Short Messaging for Youth

• Developing a Short Messaging Campaign

Short messaging, one of many tools.

According to Fratt (2006), text messaging is a tool to be integrated into a larger communications plan and should be approached as its own technology with its own rules of use, as opposed to a replacement for e-mail, voice calls, or social media. While young people

predominantly use short messaging, it does not replace other forms of communication. According to one young person:

> Yeah, not just text messaging. I think that it is a good part to say initiate more communication in the future and its something that might like get noticed by more youth. Like, oh, I got this text about this organization, I want to join this and then like you can get a number to call, and then you can set up a meeting with this person. (Girl, 19)

According to the interviews, the most effective ways to communicate with youth, in no particular order, were through text messaging, voice calls, Facebook, and in person. In fact, the majority of text messages, Facebook activity, and voice calls were to arrange in person meetings.

Young people also provided insight as to when these various communications methods were preferable. Voice calls were for making more detailed plans or for communicating with parents who do not text. Facebook and text messaging were for sharing quick messages, updates, or coordinating meetings. They were also good methods for checking in with others. Facebook was also used for keeping up with friends.

Text messaging was the most frequently used and popular form of communication as it was accessible anytime and anywhere,

> I believe, like I think texting would be better because people do have their phones on them all the time but people also do check their Facebook, probably not as often . . ." (Girl, 18)

Communications tools can be used independently or in conjunction with one another. As was indicated in the literature review, social media and short messaging are complementary tools. Facebook could be combined with short messaging to recruit young people into programs.

For example, Facebook is a good place to post general information about an upcoming event while short messaging can be used for pre-event follow up. Short messaging can also be used for correspondence of a personal and private nature, while Facebook can be used to share more general public information. It is also a way for youth see what their friends are doing. One youth describes how Facebook can be used:

> Um, oh yeah, cause like I said like a lot of people go on Facebook too, so a lot of kids, a lot of teens, adults go on Facebook send them things and be like hey [our organization] we got great programs and offers and stuff like that. (Boy, 17)

Not all youth have access to mobile phones or are on Facebook, but using a combination of these tools will hopefully reach most young people. This possibility is described by an adult program leader:

> I think Facebook and text message if you want to get the vast majority it would be those two just because if they, if a youth doesn't have a cell phone for whatever reason they have access to a computer and Facebook like it's the big one . . . but I'd say between Facebook and text messaging you can hit somewhere between 95 and 100.

> Twitter is not a popular communications tool for youth. All the youth interviewed indicated that they had tried Twitter, but did not like it because it was confusing and most importantly their friends were not there. They were not interested in "following" strangers or celebrities. For them, social media was not about meeting new people, but keeping up with already existing friends.

[Twitter] It's just so boring. I don't know what to do, it's like I tried it one time and it was just so boring, you just go around and add people you want to follow and you don't really want to follow. (Girl, 17)

More traditional methods like newsletters are not important to youth, but youth believe they should be maintained for their parents and parents of young children. Text messaging is an excellent tool for communicating with youth, but not with everyone. One young person commented about text messaging saying that " . . .for youth I think it would be great but for like youth parents they would probably still have to use newsletters" (Girl, 18).

Overall, text messaging is frequently used by youth and is their preferred method of communication, however it cannot replace voice calls, Facebook, or face to face interaction. It is just one of many ways that youth like to communicate.

Effective short messaging for youth.

The literature and data both provided clear insight into what types of messages youth like and do not like to receive. It is important to send the right kinds of messages and that youth have the opportunity to opt in and to opt out at anytime (Grant & O'Donohue, 2007; Haste, 2005). Youth indicated that they would like to receive text messages from their after school program about volunteer opportunities, events, and free tickets for concerts and sporting events. Text messaging is also a good way to check in with their leaders and peers. This is described in the following:

Yeah, like, tickets for this or like this is where this fundraiser is going on this is how you can get involved and that's the kind of stuff that I am personally interested in and that I would want to because I feel like I'm always missing out . . . (Girl, 19)

Most importantly messages need to pertain to them. They do not necessarily need to be personalized, but they do need to be of interest. They also valued the opportunity to reply to a text message with a question, as compared to one way communication like a flyer. They are not interested in receiving mass texts or forwarding general information to friends. They would only forward messages that they thought would be of interest to a friend.

Young people were not interested in receiving spam or large volumes of information. It was also important that they sign up to receive messages and have the option to opt out of receiving information at any time. One young person described why it was important for him to opt in to receiving messages:

Um, probably sign up cause if you received random messages, some like me, if I receive random messages, if I don't know the number, I just leave it until they tell me who they are and then I'll text them back, but other than that I don't really text any random numbers. (Boy, 18)

Short messaging also provides opportunities to reach youth when they would not otherwise be available, for example during the daytime when minutes are expensive. It is also a good way to coordinate and remind young people about last minute events. An adult program leader described how he uses text messaging in his program to communicate with youth:

Like I would never call a kid cause they'll text me back way faster just because he's got his cellphone on him and if he's sitting in class he'll text me and if he's sitting at home he'll text me just because daytime minutes are expensive they usually won't answer their phones.

He then went on to say that:

I still think that I could use like the SMS for like my programs and I was talking to a few

other coordinators about it who run more aiming at youth rather than kids, so they run

pretty successful Friday night, Saturday night drop ins and they thought it was a great

idea. Like send it on Friday afternoons, send it on Saturday, right cause Saturdays are

usually slower, cause usually Fridays they come right after school. They don't go home

and they come and I think on Saturdays they just kind of forget, so sending a message on

Saturday . . .

In addition to the content and volume of messages being sent it is also important to be aware of

when a short message would be more appropriate than another form of communication.

As was established in the review of Campaign Pilots in the literature, youth value the

private nature of short messaging. They would prefer to share personal messages with a youth

organization through short messaging, as opposed to broadcasting in front of their peers, whether

in an in person public space or an on-line public space like Facebook. One youth described the

importance of this:

Um, I think so, like, cause it is the personal, and other people don't know what

you're texting and if you had questions about this workshop text in your question to this

number, kids are more likely to want to text in their question and have like just the

questions and not like who said them or sent them and then it's more comfortable. (Girl,

18)

This is an important consideration when working with young people. They often feel judged or

threatened by their peers and private forms of communication may serve to engage youth who

would not otherwise participate.

According to Kasesniemi & Rautiainen (2002), teens will often use text messaging to say things they would not say in person, especially when it comes to conflict with a friend or romantic partner. Young people often adopt a text messaging personality and are much braver in their messages than in person (p. 182), yet according to the young people interviewed this is not the case. They have witnessed others behave this way, but for them they are who they are whether through short messaging or in person. One young person was concerned that a lot of young girls were exploiting themselves through text messaging and should focus more on in person relationships. Another interviewee described how she uses short messaging, as opposed to in person. For her, a combination of communications methods are essential for a successful relationship.

> You just know when you text them that that's when they're available to talk, so I don't think it's changed my relationships in that way cause just like with, even with boyfriends I still would see them, I still would talk to them and I text in the same way that I would say talk, so I don't feel like I would say anything that I wouldn't say in normal life. I feel like also with texting I can think about what I want to say before I say something stupid, because I tend to say and then think. (Girl, 19)

When using short messaging with youth it is important to encourage them to be open and honest in their messages.

Effective text messaging campaigns for a youth serving organization should provide relevant information that is interesting to the recipient, be targeted, provide opportunities to opt in and opt out and not send mass amounts of general information. They should also respect young people's privacy, as well as their tendencies to develop different levels of relationships

through short messaging. Ultimately messages would lead young people to already existing

programs as opposed to running a program through text messaging alone. Text messaging is not

a stand alone tool, but a connector and information provider.

Developing a short messaging campaign.

Although the research question focuses on recruiting youth into programs, the campaigns

that were developed by the youth focused mostly on engaging already existing members.

Campaign ideas focused on specific programs or events and were not large scale agency

initiatives. Campaign ideas were:

- Use text messaging to let kids know about drop in programs or special events happening at

    the organization. If you miss one week you might not find out about something you're

    interested in. In addition to this, text messaging could be used to gather input for activities

    that could be done during drop in times.

- Use text messaging to provide information on available programs. People could text in

    their age and receive a message about suitable programs.

- Promote programs. Have a poster and have youth text in a code to receive more

    information.

According to the literature on youth development and engagement young people need to

be involved in the processes and decisions that affect them. This is essential to their

development, but also to their ongoing support of and participation in a project. It is also

necessary to establish strong partnerships between youth and adults. The young people

interviewed agreed that an important element in developing successful campaigns for youth is to

involve them in their creation and dissemination. They understand what types of messages work,

how long they should be, and have influence on their peers. An 18 year old boy who was

interviewed explained that oftentimes a 40 year old trying to convince a kid to come out and play

basketball can just seem weird, but if an 18 year old is trying to convince a 15 year old to come

out a play basketball they have more credibility. Although, he does go on to say that there are

some cool adults who understand how to talk to kids. Another interviewee describes the benefits

of receiving a message from another young person as opposed to an adult:

> I think I would say respond to like, um, if someone was doing a fundraiser or was trying
>
> to raise awareness about something I think I would respond to somebody say my own age
>
> and be more interested in getting involved via the text message than as opposed to say an
>
> adult was like this is what we're hosting for children (Girl, 19).

Although I had envisioned using text messaging to create large scale campaigns the small

campaigns developed by the youth could be very effective as they are targeted and personalized.

Informal text messaging is already taking place in the programs as youth leaders use it to contact

their members. More organized messaging campaigns using software like Frontline SMS could

decrease staff time spent texting one on one and increase program participation. Youth and their

adult leaders will need to work together to develop campaigns that are mutually beneficial for

both the youth and the organization.

Establishing a Theoretical Context

Establishing a theoretical context provides a framework for further understanding of the

findings. According to Punch (2005) using theory at the end of a study "is an inductive process

of building from the data to broad themes to a generalized model or theory" (Cresswell, 2010, p.

63). The broad themes in this study have led to theory based on the concepts of "the medium is

the message" (McLuhan, 1964), fourteen characteristics of new media (Logan, 2010), and promise, tool, bargain (Shirky, 2008). Applying this theory serves as a way to summarize the key findings for this study, as well as identify communications strategies for how youth serving organizations can use short messaging to recruit youth into their programs.

Medium is the message and the fourteen characteristics of new media.

The "medium is the message" is perhaps one of McLuhan's most well known and often misunderstood statements. Logan (2010) helps to unpack McLuhan's ideas around media, as well as establish a context for understanding new media. While McLuhan's statement has been interpreted in many different ways the one that will be adopted in this case is that "the medium has an effect independent of its content" (Logan, 2010, p. 353). Although the primary focus is on the medium, McLuhan is not completely dismissive of the content. This is much the same in the interviews with the youth, the content plays an important role in the type of and volume of messages they would like to send and receive, however it really is about the medium. Overall, young people would be content to receive information from youth serving organizations in a variety of formats, such as Facebook, in person, or a voice call. Their preference for short messaging is rooted in the characteristics of the medium itself, such as ease of accessibility. This can be further explored by applying the applicable characteristics from Logan (2010).

1. Two-way communication

Short messaging provides the opportunity to have a two way conversation. This was important to the young people interviewed as they valued the opportunity to ask questions and to interact with the program contacting them.

2. Ease of access to and dissemination of information

Ease of access is essential to young people when providing them with information about available programs. Short messages are easy to send and receive as they have their phones on them all the time. It is also a simple way to disseminate information. Youth indicated that if they felt the message was relevant they would pass it on to friends. Short messaging and the mobile phone make this as easy as the click of a button or the touch of a screen. In minutes, information can be disseminated to large groups of people.

3. Continuous Learning

According to Logan (2010), "mass media provide a steady stream of information but the user is passive and because they cannot interact with the medium or the information it mediates very little learning can take place" (p. 54). The ability to interact with the medium is important to the youth interviewed. One young person described the difference between interacting with a flyer, as opposed to short messaging:

> . . . at least you'd be able to kind of reply with questions. It could answer certain questions that you had, so that would help in the communicating aspect of it rather than just having a flyer and being like just reading it and just having that instead of having more to go with if that makes sense. (Girl, 18)

The ability to interact promotes cognitive development and enables young people to control the type of information they receive, as well as when they access it.

4. Creation of community.

Short messaging provides young people with the ability to keep in touch with their peers as well as other participants in their after school program. This creates a community of users who keep each other informed of what is happening within their program. In addition to this, they

would also value the opportunity to receive messages informing them of upcoming events or volunteer opportunities, in turn expanding their community and linking them to ". . . an environment for learning, knowledge creation and sharing the development of new ideas and projects" (Logan, 2010, p. 56).

5. Portability and time flexibility (time shifting), which provide their users with freedom over space and time;

Short messaging is an ideal tool for communicating with young people, because they have their phones with them all the time. This is a benefit over other mediums, such as Facebook as young people do not always have access to the Internet or have smartphones. Similarly with voice calls you need to be at home to receive a call or a message. Short messaging reduces barriers of time and space and enables anytime, anywhere access.

4. The closing of the gap between (or the convergence of) producers and consumers of media;

Youth believe there is a benefit to creating their own content in order to recruit their peers to participate in after school programs. The simplicity of short messaging enables youth to create their own content, as opposed to relying on adults to create more complex and expensive mediums such as newsletters or websites. This, in turn, increases the available audience and the ability to reach them.

Promise, tool, bargain.

It is clear from the findings that the characteristics of the medium of short messaging are as important as the message. Expanding on this, Shirky (2008) argues that "there is no recipe for the successful use of social tools. Instead, every working system is a mix of social and technological factors" (p. 261). He goes on to say that although there is no recipe there are rules

(promise, tool, bargain) that can be applied to the use of social tools for group formation and can determine the success or failure of your initiative. In this case "groups" are youth programs and the "social tool" is short messaging. Applying Shirky's (2008) rules will help to further conceptualize how youth serving organizations can use short messaging effectively to recruit young people to participate in their programs.

       Promise.

       The promise is what the potential group can offer to its users, it is "the essential piece, the thing that convinces a potential user to become an actual user" (Shirky, 2008, p. 261). The promise has to be compelling enough for youth to want to give up their free time or another activity to participate in programs. There can be multiple levels of promises which will evolve overtime. For example, at the recruitment phase the promise is often personal and then once a group has been established the promise will evolve into a group promise (Shirky, 2008). For the purpose of this study, the promise would be a personal one about receiving information from a youth serving organization through short messaging. The development of a group promise based on participating in an after school program is beyond the scope of this study, but should be addressed in a larger communications strategy.

       Based on the findings, the promise should focus on the benefits of receiving short messages, such as learning about upcoming events and volunteer opportunities, receiving free tickets, as well as opportunities to ask private questions and to engage in dialogue with a group leader. Also encouraging young people to join their friends is a potential promise as they are often influenced by the activities and actions of their friends.

Tool.

Once the promise is established it is necessary to determine "which tools will best help people approach the promise together" (Shirky, 2008, p. 261). The tool could be any social tool, such as user groups, blogs, Facebook, short messaging or Twitter. Choosing a tool might seem simple, but not all tools are suitable for all groups (Shirky, 2008). As was previously mentioned, short messaging is an effective tool and preferred method of communication for young people, yet they also open to other forms of communication, such as voice calls, Facebook, and in person contact.

Short messaging is desirable because of its accessibility, the possibility of reaching young people at times when you would not otherwise reach them, opportunities for last minute messages, and the personal and private nature of the communication.

Combining short messaging with Facebook would reach most youth, as well as provide the opportunity to develop a combination of private and public messages. Facebook would also enable others to see what their friends are doing and might compel them to opt in to receive text messages.

Bargain.

The bargain is the key factor for determining the success or failure of a group. Working with youth to establish the "rules of the road" will ensure that a short messaging campaign is successful and lead to their participation in programs. However, the bargain is not always easy to establish. According to Shirky (2008):

The bargain is the most complex aspect of a functioning group, in part because it is the least explicit aspect and in part because it is the one the users have the biggest hand in creating, which means it can't be completely determined in advance. (p. 270)

Although a bargain cannot be completely determined in advance, based on the literature on youth development and engagement and the interviews with youth, elements of a bargain for a short messaging campaign might include:

- Opportunities for youth to participate in the development and implementation of the campaign;

- Youth and adult partnerships with clear guidelines for working together;

- Opportunity to opt in and out of receiving messages;

- Personalized and timely information about upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, free tickets, and sports;

- No spam; and

- The ability to ask questions and receive a response.

Although these elements could influence the bargain, the bargain needs to be simply stated as "it can't be instantiated as a set of contractual rules, because users don't read the fine print . . . Instead the bargain has to be part of the lived experience of interaction" (Shirky, 2008, p. 273). Understanding young people's preferences for group participation is a good place to start for creating a bargain that represents the interests of the youth as well as the organization.

Applying the rules of promise, tool, bargain demonstrates that in recruiting young people to participate in programs it is important that there is a clear commitment to them, that the right tool is being used to reach them, and that they have a role and voice in determining what they

can expect from you and what you can expect from them. The promise, tool, and bargain will change as young people begin to send and receive messages and as program participation increases.

Discussion/Conclusions

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore ways in which adolescents might use short messaging as part of a coordinated communications strategy with after school programs in order to recruit their peers to participate in these programs. Overall, the research showed that short messaging is a popular communications tool amongst young people and has the potential to recruit them to participate in after school programs, however it was clear it is not a replacement for other forms of communication. It is one of many tools that can be incorporated into a larger communications strategy for youth. Using short messaging and Facebook together would enable the organization to reach the majority of youth. Applying Logan's (2010) characteristics of new media demonstrated that while the content of a message is important to youth, the medium also plays a role in how youth receive and process information. Understanding which medium to use and when is essential for successful communication with young people.

Applying Shirky's (2008) rules and determining the right combination of promise, tool, bargain will ensure the successful implementation of a short messaging campaign. This is not a simple process and will evolve overtime as participation increases.

Answering the research question.

How can youth serving organizations use short messaging effectively to recruit young people to participate in their programs?

The key learnings, as well as measures and indicators derived from these learnings, demonstrate how youth serving organizations can use short messaging effectively to recruit young people to participate in their programs.

Key Learnings.

1. When is Short Messaging an Appropriate Tool?

Applying Logan's (2010) characteristics of new media established that, for youth, the medium is as important as the message. Their preference for short messaging is rooted in the characteristics of the medium itself, such as ease of accessibility or sharing timely information. It is important to understand when different mediums are appropriate for communicating with young people. Although your message might be of interest, using the right medium is critical for engaging young people and receiving a response.

According to the findings, the preferred methods of communication were short messaging, voice calls, Facebook, in person, and newsletters. Each medium has its own set of characteristics that make it preferable for different types of communication. For example, youth prefer to use newsletters to communicate with their parents and Facebook for things like making simple plans or sharing public information. The following table further outlines their communication preferences.

	MEDIUM				
COMMUNICATIONS PREFERENCE	**Short Messaging**	**Voice calls**	**Facebook**	**In Person**	**Newsletters**
Seeing if a phone call is possible	X				
Making simple plans	X		X		

COMMUNICATIONS PREFERENCE	MEDIUM				
	Short Messaging	**Voice calls**	**Facebook**	**In Person**	**Newsletters**
Sharing/receiving information	X	X	X	X	
Sharing timely information	X				
Checking in	X	X	X	X	
Making, discussing detailed plans		X		X	
Making contact when other coms. forms are not available, i.e. in class, out of house	X				
Private communication	X	X			
Public Communication			X	X	
Info about events, volunteer opportunities, meeting times	X	X	X	X	
Communicating with parents		X			X
Sharing quick updates	X		X		
Checking what friends are doing	X		X		
Making plans	X	X	X	X	
Catching up/interacting with friends	X	X	X	X	
Attending and participating in programs				X	

Table 1

2. Know Your Audience

Not only do messages need to be sent with the right medium, but they should also be of interest to the recipient. This is a key element of the promise, in particular the initial personal promise made to youth in order to engage them in a short messaging campaign. Ensuring that they understand that their short messaging preferences are recognized will encourage them to participate.

Large scale, generalized messages do not appeal to young people. Because many youth pay per message they are not interested in receiving or replying to messages that are not of interest to them. They also want to be able to reply and receive a response if they have a question. They want to receive information about free tickets, upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, and program updates. The message does have to be personalized, but it does need to be relevant. Youth value the opportunity to opt in and out of receiving messages. They also do not like to receive messages from unknown numbers.

Youth also value the private nature of short messaging. Short messaging is an ideal tool for confidential correspondence and to discuss difficult issues. Young people are more likely to respond to one on one correspondence of a personal nature, rather than a public broadcast.
In summary,

- Ensure content is of interest to recipient,

- Enable two-way communication,

- Provide opportunities to opt in and out,

- Manage the volume of messages, no spam, and

- Use short messaging for private communication.

3. Developing a Campaign - Engaging Existing Members

While young people see the benefits of using short messaging to recruit new youth into programs, it is more so a tool for engaging already existing participants. Young people lead busy lives and often feel as though they are missing out on opportunities to participate in programs. Short messaging would be a simple way to inform and remind youth of upcoming events. It is also a way to promote ongoing communication in an already existing group, for example updating those who missed meetings or providing an outlet for informal communication outside of regular meeting times.

Campaigns targeted to specific programs or activities would be more successful than a large scale, agency wide campaign. One example was using short messaging to increase attendance for a drop in program. This would be a good place to start and to learn more about how to use short messaging to recruit youth into programs.

Although young people did not think you could run a program strictly through short messaging, it is a good way to develop a community of users who interact through text messaging with the end goal of in person program delivery.

4. Involve Youth in the Development of Your Campaign

Young people have the most comprehensive understanding of their medium and message preferences, as well as those of their peers. An essential part of creating the right bargain and, in turn, a successful campaign will be to involve youth in the development and dissemination of a short messaging campaign. This will establish credibility amongst their peers and is a key aspect of engaging young people in programs. It is clear from the findings that youth would be more responsive if they received a message from their peers, as opposed to an adult. It is important for

them to know that others have already endorsed the program and are actively participating. However, they do not mind exchanging messages with adults once a relationship has been established.

While it is important to involve youth in the development and implementation of the campaign they should not do this in isolation. Strong adult support will ensure that the campaign is respectful of all young people as well as the mission, vision, and values of the organization. For working partnerships between youth and adults to be successful, youth and their leaders need to work together to establish and agree on clear guidelines, roles, and responsibilities for their project. This is another element of the bargain. Approach a short messaging campaign as a learning opportunity and a chance to try something new. Short messaging is not an expensive way to communicate and as a result allows for lots of trial and error.

Measures and indicators.

The key learnings can be further synthesized into measures and indicators in order to evaluate the success of a campaign. Although the study did not focus on evaluation, the findings point to some possible measures and indicators for a short messaging campaign.

It was clear that with the support of adult leaders, young people need to be actively involved in the development and implementation of a short messaging campaign. In addition to this, the campaign ideas generated by youth indicated that campaigns would not be agency wide, but should focus on specific events or programs. Understanding these preferences helps to establish inputs for a short messaging campaign. The inputs, in no particular order, would be:

- Adult leaders (program staff, volunteers) to provide support and guidance for young people.

- Youth to develop messages and ideas for campaigns based on their personal knowledge of teen short messaging preferences.
- Campaign plans and ideas for short messaging campaigns to recruit youth to participate in sports, events, receive free tickets, or volunteer opportunities.
- Development of messages to send to young people through short messaging in order to recruit them to participate in programs.

As these will be new campaigns, evaluating the process indicators or activities involved in developing and implementing the campaign (Weiss, 1998, p. 130) will be as important as the measures of these activities. Process indicators (outputs) based on measuring the inputs are:

- How many of the developed messages are sent and to how many people?
- How many of the campaign ideas and plans are implemented?
- How many programs are promoted?

Young people indicated that they would like to receive information about events (tickets, sports, etc.) and volunteer opportunities. Based on this it will be necessary to record:

- How many events are promoted?
- How many event reminders?
- How many volunteer opportunities are promoted?

Measuring the success of a campaign will involve comparing activities prior to and after the campaign. For example, if you were to use short messaging to promote a teen drop in night you could record how many attendees you had before using short messaging and then how many attended after receiving a short message.

Youth value the opportunity to opt in and out of receiving information, so it will be necessary to measure how many youth opt in and out of a particular campaign. For example, if a large number of youth are opting out and not responding you might be sending the wrong kind of information or making the wrong promise. Also in the early stages of implementation a large number of youth might opt in to receiving messages, but it might take longer for them to physically participate in a program. Although physical participation is the end goal early success could be measured by contacts and interactions made through short messaging.

Young people also indicated that short messaging is a good tool for checking in with friends, other group members, and leaders. Measuring the volume of this informal correspondence will help to further establish the benefits of using short messaging as an effective tool for communicating with youth.

The measures and indicators discussed above are summarized in the following table:

Inputs (Campaign Development)	Process Indicators (outputs)	Measures
Adult leaders (staff, volunteers)	# of messages sent	Pre, post # of overall program participants
Youth	# of campaigns implemented	Pre, post # of event attendees
Campaign plans	# of programs promoted	Pre, post # of volunteers
Messages developed	# of events promoted	# of replies, messages received
	# of event reminders	# of youth who opt in and opt out of receiving messages
	# of volunteer opportunities promoted	Volume of general correspondence (meeting updates, checking in etc)

Table 2

Study Deficiencies

As with any study there are several weaknesses and validity issues to be considered:

1. The number of participants

As was outlined in the methodology section there was a total of seven participants in the study with an emphasis on individual interviews with five youth and one adult leader. Due to the scope of the project this sample size is appropriate, yet could be considered small for deriving generalizations about the subject area.

2. Interviewer's experience

Because of the comfort levels established with the youth and the researcher's limited experience with interviews there were times when I may have nodded too enthusiastically and/or over explained questions.

3. Technical difficulties

The recording from the workshop was corrupted and unusable. Given this, findings from the workshop are based on field notes taken after the workshop.

Directions for Future Research

This study has contributed to our understanding of youth and short messaging by uncovering how a youth serving organization could effectively use short messaging in order to recruit youth to participate in after school programs. It revealed young people's communications preferences and how an organization could best communicate with them, as well as the types of messages they would like to receive. It also provides insight into working with youth and the importance of involving them in the development and dissemination of a campaign. In addition

to this, the study adds a youth perspective to existing work on marketing and campaign pilots and a Canadian one to the literature on youth and short messaging.

While this study demonstrates how a youth serving organization could use short messaging to recruit youth, it will still be important to implement and test its recommendations. A more long term study could use a participatory/action research approach and work with the young people from this study to implement and test short messaging campaigns. Following up and involving youth with the actual implementation and testing of campaign ideas would provide an enhanced understanding of how youth serving organizations can use short messaging to recruit youth to participate in their programs. This study could serve as the consultation phase for such an action research project.

References

Arthur, D., Sherman, C., Appel, D., & Moore, L. (2006). Why young consumers adopt
interactive technologies. *Young Consumers: Insight and Ideas for Responsible Marketers*,
7(3), 33-38.

Arnold, M., Dolenc, B., & Wells, E. (2008). Youth Community Engagement: A Recipe for
Success. Journal of Community Engagement & Scholarship, 1(1), 58-65.

boyd, d. (2010). Friendship. In Mizuko Ito et al. (Eds.) *Hanging out, Messing Around, and
Geeking Out: Living and Learning with New Media* (pp. 79-84). Cambridge: MIT Press.

boyd, d. (2007). Why youth (heart) social network sites: The role of networked publics in
teenage social life. In David Buckingham (Ed.), *MacArthur Foundation Series on
Digital Learning: Youth, Identity, and Digital Learning Media Volume* (pp. 119 – 142).
Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Castells, M., Fernandez-Ardevol, M., Qiu, J. L., and Sey, A. (2004, 8-9 Oct. 2004). *The Mobile
Communication Society: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of available Evidence on the Social
Uses of Wireless Communication Technology*. Paper presented at the International
Workshop on Wireless Communication Policies and Prospects: A Global Perspective,
University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

Clandinin, D.J. and Connelly, M.C. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in
qualitative research.* San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Cresswell, J.W. (2009). *Research design: Mixed methods approaches.* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks,
CA: Sage Publications.

Fine, A.H. (2006). *Momentum: Igniting social change in the connected age*. San Francisco, CA:
John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Fratt, L. (2006). Text messaging: The newest recruitment innovation. *University Business, 9*(5), 89-90.

Grant, I., & O'Donohue, S. (2007). Why young consumers are not open to mobile marketing communication. *International Journal of Advertising, 26*(2), 223-246.

Franklin, V., Greene, A., Waller, A., Greene, S., & Pagliari, C. (2008). Patients' engagement with "Sweet Talk"–a text messaging support system for young people with diabetes. *Journal of Medical Internet Research, 10*(2). Retrieved from http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2483928/

Hamilton, S.F., Hamilton, M.A., & Pittman, K. (2004). Principles for Youth Development. In S.F. Hamilton & M.A. Hamilton (Eds.), *The Youth Development Handbook: Coming of Age in American Communities* (pp. 3- 22). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.

Haste, H. (2005). Joined-up texting: mobile phones and young people. *Young Consumers, 6*(3), 56-67.

Helve, H. & Bynner, J. (2007). *Youth and social capital*. London, UK: the Tufnell Press.

Ito, M. & Okabe, D. (2005). Intimate connections: Contextualizing Japanese youth and mobile messaging. In R. Harper, L. Palen & A. Taylor (Eds.), *The inside text: Social, cultural, and design perspectives on SMS* (pp. 127-146). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.

Ito et el. (2010). *Hanging out, messing around, geeking out: Living and learning with new media*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Jones, K.R. & Perkins, D.F. (2006). Community-based youth programs: Youth and adult perceptions of their relationships within community based youth programs. *Youth and Society 38*(90), 90 - 109.

Kasesniemi, E.L. & Rautiainen, P. (2002). Mobile culture of children and teenagers in Finland. In James E. Katz and Mark Aakhus (Eds.) *Perpetual contact: Mobile communication, private talk, public performance* (pp. 170-192). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Klimsa et al. (2006). *Generation SMS*. Retrieved from http://wcms1.rz.tu-ilmenau.de/fakmn/ fileadmin/template/ifmk/fachgebiete/Kommunikationswissenschaft/publikation/2006/ Diskussionsbeitrag_Generation_SMS.pdf

Kress, C. (2004). *The essential elements of 4- H Youth Development: Distillation to four elements*. Washington, DC: CSREES/USDA.

Lasica, J.D. (2008). *Civic engagement on the move: How mobile media can serve the public good.* Washington, D.C.: The Aspen Institute. Retrieved from http:/ www.aspeninstitute.org/policy-work/communications-society/papers-interest/civic-engagement-move-how-mobile-media-can-serve-

Lenhart, A., Purcell, K., Smith, A., & Zickuhr, K. (2010, Feb. 3). Social media and young adults. *Pew Internet and American Life Project.* Retrieved from http://www.pewinternet.org/ Reports/2010/Social-Media-and-Young-Adults.aspx

Lenhart, Ling, Campbell & Purcell. (2010, Apr. 20). Teens and mobile Phones. *Pew Internet and American Life Project*. Retrieved from http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Teens-and-Mobile-Phones.aspx?r=1

Levine, D., McCright, J., Dobkin, L., Woodruff, A. J., & Klausner, J. D. (2008). SEXINFO: A sexual health text messaging service for San Francisco youth. *American Journal of Public Health, 98*(3), 393-395.

Ling, R. (2007). Children, youth, and mobile communication. *Journal of Children and Media, 1*(1), 60-67.

Ling, R. (2004). *The mobile connection: The cell phone's impact on society.* San Francisco, CA: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers.

Logan, R.K. (2010). *Understanding new media: Extending Marshall McLuhan*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.

London, J.K., Zimmerman, K., & Erbstein, N. (2003). Youth-led research and evaluation: Tools for youth, organizational and community development. *New Directions for Evaluation 2003*(98), 33-46.

McCracken, G. (1988). *The long interview: Qualitative research methods series 13.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding media.* New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Pitfield, Kate (2005). *The social shaping of text messaging in North American youth culture.* M.A. dissertation, Concordia University (Canada), Canada. Retrieved May 27, 2010, from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text.(Publication No. AAT MR04315).

Powers, J.L. & Tiffany, J.S. (2006). Engaging youth in participatory research and evaluation. *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice, November*(Suppl)*,* S79–S87.

Rheingold, H. (2003). *Smart mobs: The next social revolution*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing.

Rodgers, A., Corbett, T., Bramley, D., Riddell, T., Wills, M., Lin, R.B., & Jones, M. (2005). Do u smoke after txt? Results of a randomised trial of smoking cessation using mobile phone text messaging. *Tob Control 14*(4), 255-261.

Scheve, J., Perkins, D., & Mincemoyer, C. (2006). Collaborative teams for youth engagement. *Journal of Community Practice*, 14(1/2), 219-234.

Shirky, C. (2008). *Here comes everybody: The power of organizing without organizations*. New York, NY: Penguin Press.

Stald, G. (2007). Mobile identity: Youth, identity, and mobile communication media. In David Buckingham (Ed.), *MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Learning: Youth, Identity, and Digital Learning Media Volume* (pp. 143-164). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Taylor A.S. & Vincent, J. (2005). An SMS history. In Lynn Hamill and Amparo Lasen (Eds.), *Mobile world: Past, present and future* (pp. 75-92). Surrey, UK: Springer.

Weiss, C. (1998). *Evaluation*. (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

William Joseph (2006). *Strategic Communications Plan*.

Zeldin, S., Camino, L. & Mook, C. (2005). The adoption of innovation in youth organizations: Creating the conditions for youth-adult partnerships. *Journal of Community Psychology* *33*(1), 121-135.

Appendix A

KEYSTONE RESEARCH PROJECT

DY wn2 hng ot aftr skool?:

Engaging Youth through Text Messaging

Erin Ryan-Walsh, Student Researcher, University of Alberta MACT Program

Icebreaker

Rules of the Road

What is this all about?

- Organizations, like yours, often use traditional ways of communicating, such as newsletters and they often talk to parents

- Exploring new ways to communicate directly with young people, in particular text messaging

- Interested in your perspective

Exploring the Question

How can youth serving organizations use short messaging in order to recruit young people (15 - 19) to participate in their programs?

How has it been used by others?

- Health projects, such as advice for kids about diabetes, sexual health advice, or prenatal care

- Used to mobilize thousands of people for civic action

- Mentorship

FLSMS Projects

After the floods in Pakistan, organizations are using FLSMS to send messages to people about topics such as:
- prevention of malaria,
- water purification methods,
- mother and child health during the fasting month of Ramadan,
- child protection issues,
- treating snake bites, and
- setting up durable shelters and fire safety in camps.

FLSMS Projects

Text Messages Save Lives

Appendix B

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY - GROUP 1

Supplies

- One laptop connected to Sony Ericsson phone running FLSMS
- Nokia 5130 to receive and respond to message from other group
- Pens and paper

Objectives

- Work in FLSMS to create a contact, keyword, auto reply, and to send a message
- Receive a message from another group and reply with a keyword
- Use FLSMS to develop a mini texting campaign for ██████████████ to recruit youth into their programs

Directions

Create a contact

1. Select the <Contacts> tab in FLSMS

2. Select <New Contact>

3. Complete <Contact Details> with the information below:

Name: Group 2
Mobile Number: 780-934-2256
All other information can be left blank.

Select <Save>
4. Highlight <All Contacts>. Contact should appear in <Contacts in All Contacts> List

Create keyword with auto reply

1. Select the <Keywords> tab in FLSMS

2. Select <New>
3. Type in a new keyword. Something simple. Don't worry about the description.
4. Check that the keyword is now appearing in the list of keywords on the left hand side of the screen.
5. Highlight your keyword

6. On the right-hand side of the screen check the box for <Send this message as an auto reply>

7. Enter a message (This is the message that will be sent back to your recipient when they respond with the keyword).

Send your message

1. Select <Home> tab
2. Select <Select Contact> button
3. Highlight your contact name

4. Enter your message. Ask the recipient to respond with the keyword.

5. Select <Send>

Check your message status and response

1. Select <Messages> tab in FLSMS
2. Select your keyword

Receiving a Message

1. Check the Nokia phone for a message from another group
2. Respond with their keyword
3. See what happens

Developing a Campaign

Using FLSMS, try coming up with an idea for a simple text message campaign that might encourage other young people to be a part of ▄▄▄▄▄▄▄▄▄▄▄. Be creative!

Please be prepared to share your idea with the rest of the group, and, if possible, demonstrate your idea in FLSMS.

Use this section to write down your ideas.

Appendix C

October 25, 2010

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Erin Ryan-Walsh and I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta. As a member of ███████, your child has been asked to participate in a study exploring whether or not text messaging is a good way for ███████████████████████ ██████ to recruit youth into their programs. As you probably know, young people today are avid users of text messaging and we are trying to find out if this is a good way for youth serving organizations like █████ to recruit youth into their programs. This study will help me to complete the requirements of a Masters Degree in Communications and Technology, but will also help █████ to find different ways to communicate with kids.

With your consent, your child will participate in a workshop held during their regularly scheduled meeting time on November 8, 2010. Participation in this workshop is voluntary and any youth who do not participate will not be penalized in any way and participation is not required to continue as a member of ███████. We ask only that they not attend ████████ on the evening of the workshop. Alternate arrangements can be made with the ████████ Leader.

My research supervisor, Dr. Gordon Gow, and I will conduct a workshop on Frontline SMS (FLSMS), text messaging software, how it works and what it might be able to do for █████. After this presentation youth will be separated into groups to discuss the possibility of using FLSMS to recruit their peers to ██████. After this, we will meet as a group where they will share their thoughts and ideas.

An audio recording of the workshop and interview will be made.

I will be conducting this research in compliance with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/ gfcpolicymanual/policymanualsection66.cfm.

Transcripts from the research will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the researchers residence. These transcripts will be destroyed after five years. All computer files will be encrypted.

As a potential participant in this study your child has the right to:

- Not participate
- To withdraw at any time before or during the workshop, however data collected during the group discussion cannot be withdrawn.
- To privacy, anonymity and confidentiality
- To safeguards for security of data

- To disclosure of the presence of any apparent or actual conflict of interest on the part of the researcher(s).
- To an electronic copy of a report of the research findings. Please inform your ▮▮▮▮▮▮ Leader if you are interested in receiving a copy of the final research.

Data collected from this research will be used to complete the final project for the MACT program. It may also be used for research articles, presentations, and communications strategies for youth serving organizations such as ▮▮▮▮. Data for all uses will be handled in compliance with the Standards.

"The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, Augustana and Campus Saint Jean Research Ethics Board (EEASJ REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEASJ REB c/o (780) 492-2614."

In the case of any concerns, complaints or consequences please contact:

Researcher: Erin Ryan-Walsh, 403-245-2170, ryanwals@ualberta.ca
Supervisor: Dr. Gordon Gow, 780-492-6111, gordon.gow@ualberta.ca

Please sign and return one copy of the consent form to ▮▮▮▮ and keep the other for your records.

Sincerely,

Erin Ryan-Walsh

CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

I,_____,
                                                                          (guardian)

consent to having _____involved in the █████████

█████████ research project for the purpose of exploring ways in which
adolescents might use short messaging as part of a coordinated communications
strategy with after school programs, such as █████████████████████████████,
in order to recruit their peers to participate in these programs.

By signing this consent I am expressing awareness of and agreement to the following:

   1   Participation in the research is completely voluntary;
   2   Continuation of services is not dependent on participation;
   3   Any identifying information/data gathered will be kept strictly confidential;
   4   If applicable, any honorariums and financial incentives will be discussed and
       agreed upon prior to the commencement of participation.

This consent expires 12 months from the date of signing.

Signed:

_____   _____
Youth Assent   Guardian Consent

_____   _____
Agency Representative   Date

November 9, 2010

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Erin Ryan-Walsh and I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta. With your consent, your child participated in a text messaging workshop during their regularly scheduled ███████meeting time. As a follow up to this workshop, I would like to conduct individual interviews in order to gather their perceptions about text messaging and its possible uses for ████████████████████████. Interviews would take place during their regularly scheduled meeting time on December 13, 2010.

Participation in these interviews is voluntary and any youth who do not participate will not be penalized in any way and participation is not required to continue as a member of ███████.

An audio recording of the interview will be made.

I will be conducting this research in compliance with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/gfcpolicymanual/policymanualsection66.cfm.

Transcripts from the research will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the researchers residence. These transcripts will be destroyed after five years. All computer files will be encrypted.

As a potential participant in this study your child has the right to:

- Not participate
- To withdraw at any time before or during the workshop, however data collected during the group discussion cannot be withdrawn.
- To privacy, anonymity and confidentiality
- To safeguards for security of data
- To disclosure of the presence of any apparent or actual conflict of interest on the part of the researcher(s).
- To an electronic copy of a report of the research findings. Please inform your ██████ Leader if you are interested in receiving a copy of the final research.

Data collected from this research will be used to complete the final project for the MACT program. It may also be used for research articles, presentations, and communications strategies for youth serving organizations such as █████ Data for all uses will be handled in compliance with the Standards.

"The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, Augustana and Campus Saint Jean Research Ethics Board (EEASJ REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions

regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEASJ REB c/o (780) 492-2614."

In the case of any concerns, complaints or consequences please contact:

Researcher: Erin Ryan-Walsh, 403-245-2170, ryanwals@ualberta.ca
Supervisor: Dr. Gordon Gow, 780-492-6111, gordon.gow@ualberta.ca

Please sign and return one copy of the consent form to ████ and keep the other for your records.

Sincerely,

Erin Ryan-Walsh

CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

I,_____,
(guardian)

consent to having _____involved in the ▮▮▮▮▮▮
(young person)

▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ research project (one on one interview) for the purpose of exploring ways in which adolescents might use short messaging as part of a coordinated communications strategy with after school programs, such as ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ in order to recruit their peers to participate in these programs.

By signing this consent I am expressing awareness of and agreement to the following:

1   Participation in the research is completely voluntary;
2   Continuation of services is not dependent on participation;
3   Any identifying information/data gathered will be kept strictly confidential;
4   If applicable, any honorariums and financial incentives will be discussed and agreed upon prior to the commencement of participation.

This consent expires 12 months from the date of signing.

Signed:

_____   _____
Youth Assent   Guardian Consent

_____   _____
Agency Representative   Date

November 16, 2010

Dear ▮▮▮▮▮▮ Leader,

As a follow up to the texting workshop held with ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮on November 8, 2010, I would like to conduct an interview with you to gather your perceptions about text messaging and its possible uses for ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Participation in these interviews is voluntary and is not a requirement of your employment with ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

An audio recording of the interview will be made.

I will be conducting this research in compliance with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/gfcpolicymanual/policymanualsection66.cfm.

Transcripts from the research will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the researchers residence. These transcripts will be destroyed after five years. All computer files will be encrypted.

As a potential participant in this study you have the right to:

- Not participate
- To withdraw at any time before or during the interview
- To privacy, anonymity and confidentiality
- To safeguards for security of data
- To disclosure of the presence of any apparent or actual conflict of interest on the part of the researcher(s).
- To an electronic copy of a report of the research findings. Please contact me if you are interested in receiving a copy of the final research.

Data collected from this research will be used to complete the final project for the MACT program. It may also be used for research articles, presentations, and communications strategies for youth serving organizations such as ▮▮▮▮. Data for all uses will be handled in compliance with the Standards.

"The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, Augustana and Campus Saint Jean Research Ethics Board (EEASJ REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEASJ REB c/o (780) 492-2614."

In the case of any concerns, complaints or consequences please contact:

Researcher: Erin Ryan-Walsh, 403-245-2170, ryanwals@ualberta.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Gordon Gow, 780-492-6111, gordon.gow@ualberta.ca

Please sign and return one copy of the consent form to ▮▮▮▮ and keep the other for your records.

Sincerely,

Erin Ryan-Walsh

CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

I,_____,

consent to being involved in the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ research project (one on one interview) for the purpose of exploring ways in which adolescents might use short messaging as part of a coordinated communications strategy with after school programs, such as ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ in order to recruit their peers to participate in these programs.

By signing this consent I am expressing awareness of and agreement to the following:

      •Participation in the research is completely voluntary;
      •Any identifying information/data gathered will be kept strictly confidential;

This consent expires 12 months from the date of signing.

Signed:

_____   _____
Consenting Party   Date

Appendix D

Literature (User Practices and Norms)	Interviews (User Practices and Norms)
While text messaging is popular, voice calls remain a common way for youth to communicate, in particular with their parents (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell & Purcell, 2010).	•I don't mind that, like I'd even text my parents if they had text messaging. I prefer it over calling just cause I am a youth. (Youth Interview One) •Like if I'm planning something I wouldn't want to just wait for somebody's text you know I would want to be able to call them and I would want to be able to meet with them and talk in person and brainstorm. (Youth Interview Three) •Um, not really, I would rather have them call so I could talk to them in person instead of texting (Youth Interview Four) •Um, not really, I usually just call my Mom whenever I need to talk to her she usually calls me, um brothers, friends they all text cause we have all free texting so . . . (Youth Interview Four)
Short messaging is the preferred communication method for sharing private messages with close friends, sharing interesting tidbits of information, making connections, and arranging `face to face meetings (Castells, 2004; Ito et al., 2010; Kasesniemi & Rautiainen, 2002; Klimsa et al., 2006; Ling 2007; Ling, 2004; Stald, 2007).	•Sometimes, it's like, just seeing how their day is going, making plans after work or whatever they're doing, even I'll ask my brothers if they're home for dinner or if their like um be here tonight at [our program] or whatever (Youth Interview One) •Yeah, I use it more than probably I talk on my phone, just like I'll be in class, which you probably shouldn't be texting in class, but this is where I need to meet or I'll text somebody to go pick something up for me that I won't be there in time to pick up or um text for free movies which I do all the time because I love going to movies so it's like that kind of stuff . . . (Youth Interview Three) •Text my brother, sister, friends (Youth Interview Five)
It is also "a way to discreetly ask others if communication is currently possible or desirable" (Klimsa et al., 2006, p. 4).	•It's not that I don't talk on my phone I just prefer to initiate a conversation with a text message because then like if you call somebody and their busy or their not home and you just ring, ring, ring on the phone for five minutes, you just wasted say that amount of time or you can just text them, go on with your business, you don't have to be like waiting for them to call you. (Youth Interview Three)

A text message "finds its way to times and places where a call would be impossible or at least unsuitable" (Kasesniemi & Rautiainen, 2002, p. 171).	•Like I would never call a kid cause they'll text me back way faster just because he's got his cellphone on him and if he's sitting in class he'll text me and if he's sitting at home he'll text me just because daytime minutes are expensive they usually won't answer their phones. (Adult Interview One)
Teens will often use text messaging to say things they would not say in person, especially when it comes to conflict with a friend or romantic partner. Young people often adopt a text messaging personality and are much braver in their messages than in person (p. 182).	•It's young girls exploiting themselves because they feel more comfortable, because you said there was a space, a big space, it's really just destroying young people because they're putting their sexual through text messaging, you know, and it's not helping. (Youth Interview Two) •You just know when you text them that that's when they're available to talk, so I don't think it's changed my relationships in that way cause just like with, even with boyfriends I still would see them, I still would talk to them and I text in the same way that I would say talk so I don't feel like I would say anything that I wouldn't say in normal life. I feel like also with texting I can think about what I want to say before I say something stupid, because I tend to say and then think. (Youth Interview Three)

Mobile phones and text messaging have changed the way youth make plans. They no longer need to plan their activities in advance, but instead can make and change plans at the last minute.	•Well for my programs, it would be like updates so kind of like what's happening that night. I think just because it's an instant messaging tool it would have to be like if something was happening Friday night you would send something Friday afternoon, Friday mid day kind of thing, kind of like an instant thing for them to see, it wouldn't be get a text message on Monday about Friday cause they'd forget about it, so just say those instant updates that will remind them, like say reminders like for programs. (Adult Interview One) •I still think that I could use like the SMS for like my programs and I was talking to a few other coordinators about it who run more aiming at youth rather than kids, so they run pretty successful Friday night Saturday night drop ins and they thought it was a great idea. Like send it on Friday afternoons, send it on Saturday, right cause Saturdays are usually slower, cause usually Fridays they come right after school. They don't go home and they come and I think on Saturdays they just kind of forget so sending a message on Saturday (Adult Interview One)

Young people want to be where their friends are and that is the main motivation for joining and participating in social networking sites. The majority of their online friends are people they know offline (boyd, 2007).	•Yeah, like on Facebook, I don't have anybody on my Facebook that I don't know well and if I haven't talked to that person for more than say two years I just delete them because unless there like family or something like that but it's kind of more like to see what's going on in my friend's lives. (Youth Interview Three) •Well, I don't really, well not a lot of people I know have Twitter, so it's more so like there's no point in it cause no one's going to be reading what I say anyway and I don't have it on my phone or I don't really go to it on the website at all so it's not like I can read it all the time. (Youth Interview One) •[Twitter] It's just so boring. I don't know what to do, it's like I tried it one time and it was just so boring, you just go around and add people you want to follow and you don't really want to follow. (Youth Interview Two) •I don't know I tried making a Twitter account and it was just not a very usable interface, I don't know, I didn't know what to do and I'm like I don't who else is on Twitter, it was I don't know. Not as many people I know are on Twitter, so it's harder to kind of let's start up Twitter. (Youth Interview Three)

Social media and short messaging are just two of many different communication tools used by young people and one does not replace the other	•I believe, like I think texting would be better because people do have their phones on them all the time but people also do check their Facebook, probably not as often, but . . . (Youth Interview One) •Yeah, you know sometimes, yes the majority is events going on, but sometimes my key worker will reach me on Facebook and be like "Hey [name], how's it going? I haven't heard from you for a few days. That's a great . . . I check my Facebook everyday. (Youth Interview Two) •Um, oh yeah, cause like I said like a lot of people go on Facebook too, so a lot of kids, a lot of teens, adults go on Facebook send them things and be like hey [our organization] we got great programs and offers and stuff like that. (Youth Interview Four) •I think they work together, because one time our leader sent us a message saying this is when we can meet so it's, I think text messaging and Facebook, it's the same direction and stuff (Youth Interview Five) •I think Facebook and text message if you want to get the vast majority it would be those two just because if they, if a youth doesn't have a cell phone for whatever reason they have access to a computer and Facebook like it's the big one, so like Twitter, yes and no, some use it and some don't, but I'd say between Facebook and text messaging you can hit somewhere between 95 and 100 (Adult Interview One)

Literature (Marketing)	Interviews (Marketing)
You need to ensure that you are sending the right kinds of messages and that youth have the opportunity to opt in and to opt out at anytime (Grant & O'Donohue, 2007; Haste, 2005).	•Right now, like free events, that's it. (Youth Interview Two) •Yeah opt in, you wouldn't want to just be getting it all the time, because that's just annoying, that's just spam, right so . . . (Youth Interview Three) •Yeah like tickets for this or like this is where this fundraiser is going on this is how you can get involved and that's the kind of stuff that I am personally interested in and that I would want to because I feel like I'm always missing out, (Youth Interview Three) •For sure, I don't think that anybody wants to get spam messages that they don't want right. I think it's generally important, I would think to everybody, not to want to talk to people they don't know or get information about things they're not interested in and they're just gonna deleted it anyways and who knows if they have a text messaging plan and they're getting charged for stuff that they don't want and it's all that so it's kind of . . . it should be voluntary which I find that a lot of like even text messaging offers through companies are voluntary like (Youth Interview Three) •Um probably sign up cause if you received random messages some like me if I receive random messages, if I don't know the number, I just leave it until they tell me who they are and then I'll text them back but other than that I don't really text any random numbers. (Youth Interview Four)

Literature (Campaign Pilots)	Interviews (Campaign Pilots)
Young people prefer messages of a personal nature.	•Hmm, probably programs that they think I would be interested in, like if they had different categories like sports and like all their youth or whatever who like sports they could put into that category and send them a text. (Youth Interview One) •For me, yeah, just cause it just seems more like junk mail if it's not personalized. (Youth Interview Three) •Uh, not personalized, but of they had a program for like floor hockey, which they do, and they send it out to say 50 teens and then see how many of those teens are interested and then they come and if their interested they come in and play. If they're not then they don't answer it or they say "not interested" or something like that. (Youth Interview Four)

•Mass text messaging campaigns are ineffective and more of an annoyance to youth than an effective tool. •It is important to be strategic about the messages being sent and cognizant of the amount of contact you are making.	•Spam, like just like I don't know, I just really don't want to just be a computer sending random things, you know (Youth Interview Two) •I think I would say respond to like um if someone was doing a fundraiser or was trying to raise awareness about something I think I would respond to somebody say my own age and be more interested in getting involved via the text message than as opposed to say an adult was like this is what we're hosting for children. (Youth Interview Three) •[About receiving a general message] Um, probably not, cause noone's going to take them time, like if they received a text being like check out the website for local programs or something like that and then they go on their going to look at that and be like ah I'll do it later and they're just going to leave it. If you get a text message saying hey do you wanna, are you interested in playing floor hockey or something like that, it's different. (Youth Interview Four) •Depends, um like I mean like some of the leaders are pretty cool like the [program] I'm at so they know how to talk to teens and stuff. Other, not so much, so others not so much, but I mean it wouldn't hurt to have teens talking to other teens about it like cause like that's what opened and it's all like talking to another teen um that teen might not be interested cause this guy's like 40 and he's asking him to come join the basketball team or something compared to someone who's 18 talking to someone who's 15 or even someone who's under the age of 18 talking to a teen can be like "Hey, [this organization] they have an awesome basketball program, are you interested?" and if they are they'll come out and . . . (Youth Interview Four) •[What wouldn't work] Um, like our mission statement and values getting. Sending like the boring stuff almost. (Adult Interview One)

	• I think as long as they didn't feel like they were getting spammed they wouldn't mind. I think that goes for almost everyone like I wouldn't mind getting a text message from like a business if I had asked that business to send me updates. (Adult Interview One) •Absolutely, especially a group like [ours] or even a drop in group, just kind of get their feedback and on what they like and dislike about receiving text messages, like if they want it to be 20 words or if they want it to be 5, "Get here on Friday." (Adult Interview One) •
Text messaging is a tool to be integrated into a larger communications plan (Fratt, 2006) and should be approached as its own technology with its own rules of use, as opposed to a replacement for e-mail, voice calls, or social media.	•But for youth I think it would be great but for like youth parents they would probably still have to use newsletters. (Youth Interview One) •I believe, like I think texting would be better because people do have their phones on them all the time but people also do check their Facebook, probably not as often, but . . . (Youth Interview One) •I think, the really, only benefit is, um, sending maybe sending some messages out to youth and saying we have an event going on but I don't think they should like take advantage of it and use it for everything because I think that face to face contact with that youth is that big thing that they need to keep on doing. (Youth Interview Two) •Yeah, not just text messaging. I think that it is a good part to say initiate more communication in the future and its something that might like get noticed by more youth. Like oh I got this text about this organization, I want to join this and then like you can get a number to call, and then you can set up a meeting with this person. (Youth Interview Three) • Um, yeah, for sure, they can definitely use it with like phone calls and like still put out flyers and stuff like that and still put out schedules and things like that. Still host events, but definitely text messaging would be something that, text messaging or even Facebook would be something that they should definitely look into. (Youth Interview Four)

" . . . valued the opportunity to engage in [a] reciprocal community" (Franklin, Greene, Wallace, Greene & Pagliari, 2008, para. 26).	•It could answer certain questions that you had, so that would help in the communicating aspect of it rather than just having a flyer and being like just reading it and just having that instead of having more to go with if that makes sense. (Youth Interview One) •
Text messaging provides a private communications channel for discussing subjects that many young people will often not discuss in person.	•Um, I think so, like, cause it is the personal, and other people don't know what your texting and if you had questions about this workshop text in your question to this number, kids are more likely to want to text in their question and have like just the questions and not like who said them or sent them and then it's more comfortable. (Youth Interview One) •Yeah, cause it could be used, you could even have like one other person suggested like a helpline or whatever or like you can text in information and you have a question about this and it's more anonymous that way, cause if you sign up for a group that's really kind of more revealing and you don't want anyone to know you're part of that group then your on Facebook you know. (Youth Interview Three)