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## Use of Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) as a Method of Process Evaluation: Maximizing Limited Resources of Nonprofit Organizations

Young Im  
*Loyola University Chicago*

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

USE OF YOUTH PROGRAM QUALITY ASSESSMENT (YPQA)  
AS A METHOD OF PROCESS EVALUATION:  
MAXIMIZING LIMITED RESOURCES OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

PROGRAM IN RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

BY  
YOUNG IM  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS  
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## ABSTRACT

Past literature shows the progression of different phases of evaluation practice in nonprofit organizations. Pressure of outcome or impact evaluation started the beginning of the 21st century. The attempt to manage the weight of conducting outcome evaluation has raised many complications, inhibiting the nonprofit organization's ability to learn and understand the proper role of evaluation and what it can provide to assist in improving programs. It, therefore, has led to a gap in which nonprofits miss what happens during implementation, a crucial part of process evaluation. Among nonprofit organizations in the areas of youth development and after-school programs, various types of models and frameworks have been proposed to understand how the program is doing. This study focused on whether the use of Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA), within the Youth Program Quality Improvement (YPQI) framework, could be used as a method of process evaluation. Qualitative data collection with three program supervisors took place at After School Matters (ASM). Based on the results, research showed some signs of process evaluation taking place as an integral part of program supervisor's job responsibility.

THESIS

USE OF YOUTH PROGRAM QUALITY ASSESSMENT (YPQA) AS A METHOD OF  
PROCESS EVALUATION: MAXIMIZING LIMITED RESOURCES OF NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATIONS

**Introduction**

Nonprofit organizations have undergone different phases of evaluation practice (Liket, Rey-Garcia, & Maas, 2014). Although various types of evaluation have been emphasized in nonprofits, proper utilization and understanding of evaluation are continually lacking. Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there has been a shift in the nonprofit world of evaluation to focus on how effective and impactful the organizations and programs are through the use of outcome or impact evaluation. Therefore, nonprofits have been attempting to manage the weight of performing outcome evaluation to convey the impact of their programs (Liket et al., 2014; Carman & Fredericks, 2008).

As a result, the pressures have led many nonprofit organizations “to think about evaluation...as a resource drain and distraction [and] as an external, promotional tool” (Carman & Fredericks, 2008, p. 51). Their perception of resource drain and distraction was reported due to lack of training, their view of outcomes and evaluation as a mere fad, and issues on capacity. The understanding of evaluation as a promotional tool seemed to emerge from funding purposes, report writing, and promote programs (Carman & Fredericks, 2008). Although evaluation can be used for promotional reasons, its purpose



is “to *provide useful empirical evidence about public entities* (such as programs, products, performance) *in decision-making contexts*” (Trochim, 1998, p. 248; emphasis in original). Fournier (2005) emphasized “conclusions [made] about the state of affairs, value, merit, worth, significance, or quality of program, product, person, policy, proposal, or plan” (p. 139) through the use of evaluation.

Although there are some nonprofits that understand the value of evaluation “as a strategic management tool” (Carman & Fredericks, 2008, p. 51) to make informed decisions for program improvement, “very few organizations have the luxury of having separate funding, dedicated staff, or external evaluators for data collection and data analysis” (Carman & Fredericks, 2008, p. 66). Some nonprofits may genuinely make an effort to partake in evaluation activities, but their limited resources and lack of training often lead them to think of evaluation “as a resource drain and distraction” (Carman & Fredericks, 2008, p. 51). Furthermore, although many nonprofit organizations have been focusing on outcome measurement and evaluation (Carman, 2004; Carman & Millesen, 2004; Coghlan, 1998; Vinson & Hatry, 2001), nonprofit organizations continually struggle to witness improvements in their programs from these endeavors. They also struggle to integrate their evaluation efforts into their decision-making process (Liket, Rey-Garcia, & Maas, 2014). The pressure of conducting and overemphasizing outcome evaluation has raised many complications which inhibit the nonprofit’s ability to learn and understand the proper role of evaluation and its benefits.

Consequently, the failure to properly use evaluation has created a gap, as nonprofits miss what happens during implementation, a crucial part of process evaluation (Liket, Rey-Garcia, & Maas, 2014). Domitrovich and Greenberg (2008) define process

evaluation as “gathering [of] data to assess the delivery of programs” (p. 195). The authors believe, “before measuring outcomes, a comprehensive evaluation should specify the program components that are supposed to be implemented and identify which ones are actually delivered” (Domitrovich & Greenberg, 2008, p. 195). Therefore, without process evaluation, results of outcome evaluation alone theoretically cannot be linked to the program and its model (Law & Shek, 2011).

Through process evaluation, nonprofit organizations would be able to better understand whether key components of the program contributed to a positive outcome; if so, which components played major roles during the implementation process to generate that outcome. Moreover, if there were inconsistencies in the way the program was implemented, practitioners would then be able to identify the elements of the program that need to be implemented correctly (Chen, 1994). Process evaluation includes components such as program adherence, implementation process, intended dosage, macro-level implication, and process-outcome linkage (Scheirer, 1994). It is not a simple task. Rather, it requires time and effort to generate quality data (Flynn, Hanks, & Bowers, 2003). In order to manage the common roadblocks of the weight of limited resources (Liket, Rey-Garcia, & Maas, 2014) and of the unlikelihood of receiving separate funding for evaluation activities (Imagine Canada, 2005), it is vital to present an economical evaluation tool to equip nonprofits. Although the lack of resources does limit the options for effective process evaluation, it is a barrier that can be overcome.

An important aspect of mending the gap is understanding how it is necessary for evaluation to be an essential part of planning and managing programs so that it becomes a standard practice during the decision making process (Fetterman, 2001). Various types of

models have been proposed to understand how the program is doing. One of the frameworks that have been proposed to nonprofit organizations is Youth Program Quality Improvement (YPQI), which this study focuses on. Within this framework, Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) takes place to analyze whether a program is adhering to the YPQA elements or categories. Even though YPQI does not explicitly discuss process evaluation, continuous quality improvement (CQI), which “enables an organization to be proactive rather than reactive by relying on a continuous evaluation of processes and outcomes” (Chovil, 2010, p. 22), is an essential part of the YPQI framework.

Moreover, CQI brings in stakeholders to develop a system of “continuous feedback” in which “data is systematically collected and guides the changes or interventions which are re-assessed for improvement” (Chovil, 2010, p. 22). It promotes the continual collection and utilization of data throughout the process of implementation to make improvements based on the comparison between the actual and intended results (Lorch & Pollak, 2014). CQI and process evaluation both look into creating a culture of systematic changes to understand the quality of the program through continuous collection of data in relation to implementation and ultimately outcome. Therefore, evaluation practice is innately included in the model.

Once evaluation becomes a routine practice of program management, evaluators could take on the role of guiding higher-level work and maximize their capacity as an overseer. Nonprofit organizations logically would be practicing process evaluation since the documentation and analysis of the implementation of program elements would be done on a regular basis. This study is largely interested in how process evaluation gets

facilitated through the use of YPQA within the YPQI framework as a way to maximize limited resources. Focusing specifically on the case of this study, the research question is: How does the use of youth quality program assessment (YPQA) help facilitate process evaluation through evaluation coaching as a way to maximize limited resources?

## **Literature Review**

### **Funding, Evaluation Practice, and Nonprofit Organization**

In the recent past, Salamon (2003) noted how nonprofits have undergone various types of challenges. More specifically, they faced difficulties in the areas of funding, competition, effectiveness, legitimacy, and human resources. From the late 1940s to the late 1970s, government funding of nonprofits was promising. “This widespread pattern of government support to nonprofit organizations suffered a severe shock, however, in the early 1980s” (Salamon, 2003, p. 17). Although the fiscal burden was appeased in the 1990s, the deficit reemerged in 2002, which left 43 states with a budget shortage. Although a rise of private and for-profit giving took place as a result, of the total, excluding religious giving, it dropped from 18% in 1977 to 12% in 1997. Even “after adjusting for inflation, private giving actually declined in 2001, even with the September 11 boost” (Salamon, 2003, p. 21).

Consequently, for-profit organizations entered different areas that used to be the heart of nonprofit work, such as welfare support. Competition among nonprofit organizations, then, rose, which led to both increased accountability and unique challenges in the area of effectiveness (Salamon, 2003):

The resulting ‘accountability environment’ in which nonprofits are having to operate will doubtlessly produce many positive results. But it also increases the pressures on hard-pressed nonprofit managers to demonstrate progress in ways

that neither they nor anyone else may be able to accomplish...What is more, accountability expectations often fail to acknowledge the multiple stakeholders whose accountability demands nonprofits must accommodate. (p. 25)

Accountability standards cannot be set and met alone, but transformation needs to take place as an organization for nonprofits to move forward in their evaluation practice. Due to this trend of accountability in practice, many nonprofit organizations have been focusing on and managing the pressure of outcome measurement and evaluation (Carman, 2004; Carman & Millesen, 2004; Coghlan, 1998; Vinson & Hatry, 2001). Many funders paradoxically have not provided sufficient amount of funding to nonprofit organizations specifically for evaluation (Imagine Canada, 2005). Additionally, Newcomer (2008) found evidence that managers in nonprofit organizations often struggled to meet the rising demand to fulfill the evaluation requirements from funders due to lack of capacity and limited resources. Although there has been an increase in evaluation expectations and standards, nonprofits have not experienced increase in program improvement (Liket, Rey-Garcia, & Maas, 2014).

A study done by Carman and Fredericks (2008) found, “just over half of the survey respondents (55%) reported they regularly conducted formal evaluations of their programs on a regular basis. Forty-six percent reported using a performance measurement on a regular basis” (p. 57). Although there has been a greater demand for nonprofit organizations to be more complete and accurate in their evaluation activities (Murphy & Mitchell, 2007), nonprofits have struggled to fulfill this request because of their lack of time, funding, and personnel. They have also struggled due to limitations in evaluation capacity skills such as knowledge, design, collection and utilization of evaluation (Carman & Fredericks, 2010; Carman & Millesen, 2005; Liket, Rey-Garcia, & Mass,

2014; Newcomer, 2004). Carman and Fredericks (2010) added that nonprofits most likely also “struggle with bigger capacity issues, such as maintaining adequate staff and surviving within competitive funding environments” (p. 99). Given the struggle that many nonprofits face, researchers are continually interested in understanding evaluation capacity building in nonprofit organizations (Carman & Fredericks, 2010).

### **Defining Process Evaluation**

Domitrovich and Greenberg (2008) define process evaluation as “gathering [of] data to assess the delivery of programs” (p. 195). Stufflebeam (2000) sees it as a continuing system of understanding of the process of implementation according to the planned design of the program. An important part of process evaluation is working with and giving feedback to staff members about the level of intended implementation that is taking place “to help staff identify implementation problems and to make needed corrections in the activities or the plan” (Stufflebeam, 2000, p. 294). Process evaluation consists of ongoing assessment and documentation of the identified activities of the program. During process evaluation, the evaluation activities allow stakeholders to understand whether implementation takes place according to intended design and plan of the program. This, then, allows evidence-based omissions, alterations, and continuations of elements to take place through the understanding of not only successes and failures in implementation but also strengths and weaknesses of the program (Law & Shek, 2011; Stufflebeam, 2000).

Patton (2008) identifies the concept of process use, which “refers to...individual changes in thinking attitudes, and behavior, and program or organizational changes in procedures and culture that occur among those involved in evaluation as a result of the

learning that occurs during the evaluation process” (Patton, 2008, p. 155). Process use is compared to the idea of meditation in which there is a practice of reflection involved.

Patton believes that transformation in evaluative thinking needs to take place on an individual level and on an organizational level. He proposed six main elements of process use:

- (1) infusing evaluative thinking into an organization’s culture;
- (2) enhancing shared understandings;
- (3) supporting and reinforcing the program through intervention-oriented evaluation;
- (4) instrumentation effects (what gets measured gets done);
- (5) increasing participants’ engagement, sense of ownership, and self-determination (participatory and empowerment evaluation);
- and (6) program or organizational development. (2008, p. 157)

These elements look more into changing the culture of evaluation within the organization. If evaluation thinking gets infused into the culture of the organization, it will change the way individuals think, reflect and behave within the organization. On the other hand, Scheirer (1994) simply defines it as “the use of empirical data to assess the delivery of programs” (p. 40) and asks three main questions when thinking about process evaluation:

- (1) What is the program *intended* to be? (methods to develop and specify program components);
- (2) what is *delivered*, in reality? (methods for measuring program implementation);
- and (3) why are there gaps between program plans and program delivery? (assessing influences on the variability of implementation). (p. 40)

She outlines more of the specific elements of understanding whether process evaluation is taking place. Law and Shek (2011) break down Scheirer’s framework into five specific components: “program adherence, implementation process, intended dosage, macro-level implication, and process-outcome linkage” (p. 540). When participants and activities are being accounted for on a day-to-day basis, the organization will gain an accurate connection between program delivery or implementation and the outcome.

Many researchers have defined the difference between process evaluation and outcome evaluation. For example, Scriven (1991) defines formative evaluation as “...evaluation designed, done, and intended to support process of improvement” (p. 20). This can be seen as the definition of process evaluation (Chen, 1996). Summative evaluation (Scriven, 1991) serves to examine the worth of the program, in which this description conveys the essence of the definition of outcome evaluation (Chen, 1996).

Chen (1996) further explores Scriven’s definition (1991) of process and outcome evaluation. Within those two categories of program process and program outcome, his “comprehensive framework....consists of four basic types of evaluation: process-improvement evaluation, process-assessment evaluation, outcome-improvement evaluation, and outcome-assessment evaluation” (Chen, 1996, p. 123). Process-improvement and process-assessment evaluation methods together show us not only the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation process in relation to making program improvements and assisting with the decision-making process, but also the level of success of the implementation process. On the other hand, the combination of outcome-improvement and outcome-assessment evaluation methods serves to examine the strengths and weaknesses of program components in relation to determining the accomplishment of program goals, and “to provide an overall judgment of a program in terms of its merit or worth” (Chen, 1996, p. 125).

### **Case for Process Evaluation**

As various definitions of process evaluation and outcome evaluation have been presented, scholars have continually debated over which type of evaluation is ideal (Chen, 1996). Despite this contention, past literature presents a strong case for a deep



connection between process evaluation and outcome evaluation (Chen, 1996; Kwong et al., 2009; Law & Shek, 2011; Scheirer, 2011; Stufflebeam, 2000).

Process-assessment evaluation could, with caution, be used as a preview or early warning system of an outcome-assessment evaluation...Implementation failure foreshadows program failure. On the other hand, if a process-assessment evaluation finds that a program has been implemented successfully, this does not guarantee that the program would be deemed effective by an outcome-assessment evaluation...An outcome-assessment evaluation of the program is still needed to assess whether the program has succeeded or failed. (Chen, 1996, p. 127)

Understanding the roles of different types of evaluation is a significant step for an accurate understanding of a program. Without the fulfillment of both process and outcome evaluation activities, it is likely that nonprofits will lack a complete understanding of the implementation of program elements and the value and impact of the program.

Nonprofit organizations continue to struggle to make improvements in their programs despite their outcome evaluation efforts (Liket, Rey-Garcia, & Maas, 2014). What are they doing wrong? In this study, one of the main reasons behind making a case for process evaluation is for nonprofit organizations to steer away from the “black box” approach, which frequently happens because of lack of resources or pressure from funders (Carman, 2004; Carman & Millesen, 2004; Coghlan, 1998; McLaughlin, 1987; Vinson & Hatry, 2001). Rogers (2000) defined black box evaluation as a method that analyzes program outcomes without examining the implementation process.

Before considering the examination of program outcomes, it is vital for nonprofits to have a complete understanding of which elements of the program have been implemented and carried out (Domitrovich & Greenberg, 2008; Flynn, Hanks, & Bowers, 2003). This is mainly so that nonprofit organizations can make a clear distinction

between failure in program and failure in implementation (Harachi et al., 1999). “Many programs, while well designed, fail because their elements are not properly implemented....Evaluation of poorly or partially implemented programs leads to misleading findings in outcome evaluation” (Flynn et al., 2003, p. 126). Outcome evaluation results alone cannot be linked to the program and its model without process evaluation. Therefore, nonprofit organizations must recognize outcome results alone do not portray complete and possibly accurate understandings of the program.

### **Nonprofit Program Frameworks/Models**

Yohalem, Wilson-Ahlstrom, Fischer, and Shinn (2009) state, “With the after-school and youth development fields expanding and maturing over the past several years, program quality assessment has emerged as a central theme. This interest...is shared by practitioners, policy makers and researchers in the youth-serving sector” (p. 6). Part of the focus is at the policy level in which nonprofits are attempting to show where in their programs the resources are being used. More and more quality assessment materials are requested as part of the grants and proposals nonprofits apply for (Yohalem et al., 2009). Another important aspect is at the practice level in which nonprofit organizations are “looking for tools that help concretize what effective practice looks like and allow practitioners to assess, reflect on and improve their programs” (Yohalem et al., 2009, p. 6).

As interest in program quality assessment has continued to grow, various tools and models have been developed by foundations, institutions, and centers, such as National Institute on Out-of-School Time, Policy Studies Associates, and David P. Weikart Center. Every one of them have a different focus because it is unrealistic for

every after-school and youth development field to fit into a single tool or model.

Moreover, the purposes of these tools vary: while some focus on program improvement or monitoring and accreditation, others focus on research and evaluation (Yohalem et al., 2009). Nonprofit organizations would look into what models and tools best fit their purpose and target population before making a decision.

Assessing Afterschool Program Practices (APT) was developed by National Institute on Out-of-School Time and Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education. It was “designed to help practitioners examine and improve what they do in their program to support young people’s learning and development” (Yohalem et al., 2009, p. 20). The model consists of two measurement tools: observation tool (APT-O) and questionnaire tool (APT-Q). They serve slightly different purposes; APT-O looks into the program process that is observable, and APT-Q targets areas that are not easily spotted through observation, such staff reflection and organizational policy. APT targets elementary and middle schoolers. Another known model is called Out-of-School Time Observation Tool (OST), created by Policy Studies Associates, Inc. It was “developed...with the goal of collecting consistent and objective data about the quality of activities through observation...[in order to] document and rate the quality of interactions between youth and adults and among youth, staff teaching processes and activity content and structures” (Yohalem et al., 2009, p. 22). It’s designed to work with after-school programs for grade K-12. The structure of OST revolves around detailed documentation of specific activities according to the model.

## **Methods**

This research project uses the case study design. Case study is defined as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system,....[which is] a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). Therefore, when the topic of interest has an actual or theoretical end to the number of people who can be part of the study, the phenomenon is considered as a case (Merriam, 2009). Stake (2005) viewed case study as more of “a choice of what is to be studied” (p. 443), in which “what” is a bounded system, rather than a choice of methodology. Along with the “case” itself, another important element of a case study is “issues,” which are conceptual structures that focus on the complex and contextual nature of the phenomenon (Stake, 1995). Whether the case or the issue is more important depends on whether it is an intrinsic or instrumental study. While an intrinsic case study focuses on “a particular case itself” (Merriam, 2009, p. 48) and considers the case as the most important component (Stake, 1995), an instrumental case study “is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization. The case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else” (Stake, 2005, p. 437). A collective case study can be seen as multiple instrumental cases being chosen to be examined (Stake, 1995).

Case study is an appropriate method for this study for a few reasons. Firstly, as Stake (1995) emphasizes, case study places an integral role and importance on context. I do not want “to nullify context in order to find the most general and pervasive explanatory relationships.... [because this study will] treat the uniqueness of individual cases and contexts as important to understanding [the issue]” (Stake, 1995, p. 39). Context allows researchers to acknowledge the complexity of issue or issues to be studied

(Stake, 1995). I used a nonprofit organization as the context in which I will examine the issue – facilitation of process evaluation through the use of YPQA – through a bounded case. Thus, this case study can be described as “not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied” (Stake, 2000, p. 435) because its focus was not on which method will be used to study the case but on what case will be studied to understand the issue. My primary interest is not, while important when pertinent to the context, to generalize.

Secondly, “a case study is both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry” (Stake, 2000, p. 436). I was most interested in describing how process evaluation was facilitated through the use of YPQA within the YPQI framework as a way to maximize nonprofit organization’s resources. Then, my examination of this process produced a case record or report (Stenhouse, 1984), which will inform future readers. I examined a couple of cases that can be used as instruments to understand the issue at hand in this case study. As previously described, Stake (1995) calls this an instrumental case, which “start[s] and end[s] with issues dominant” (p. 16). Finally, Stake notes that “Protection of respondents is not fully covered by...[university’s protection of human subject regulations], so the researcher has an obligation to think through the ethics of the situation” (p. 58). This research would not be suitable for manipulation. It would have been considered unethical by staff members to offer YPQA training to some and not to others because YPQA is embedded in the YPQI framework. Training was offered to all staff members, and those who are willing and able to participate will be part of this case study.

### **Case Selection**

After School Matters (ASM) is a nonprofit organization located at the heart of Chicago. Its target population is Chicago public high school teens. ASM serves teens from all different areas of the City of Chicago in five content areas (art, communication, technology, science, and sports) and annually offers around 20,000 opportunities. The programs are divided into four regions: North, South, West, and the Loop. In FY 2013, 13,955 teens participated in one or more programs at ASM. Most of ASM's funding came from the following in FY 2013: 58% from the government grants and support, 20% as in-kind contributions, 11% from individual contributions and foundation grants, and 11% from special events.

Through the work of the evaluation team at AMS, which consists of three staff members – Jill Young (Director of Research and Evaluation), Eboni Prince-Currie (Evaluation Specialist), and Amanda Lambie (Research and Evaluation Analyst), ASM continues to strive to produce complete and accurate evaluation work. Nevertheless, although ASM has three staff members focusing on evaluation, it – just like many other nonprofits today (Carman & Fredericks, 2010) – struggles to maintain its evaluation activities. Similar to previous literature (Carman & Fredericks, 2010; Carman & Millesen, 2005; Liket, Rey-Garcia, & Mass, 2014; Newcomer, 2004), reasons are due to the following: 1) limited funding for evaluation, 2) lack of resources (i.e., time and personnel), 3) lack of evaluation capacity skills such as knowledge, design, collection and utilization of evaluation among program specialists and instructors of the programs in those five content areas, and 4) pressure of outcome evaluation from funders.

Although it has been a slower process due to lack of funding and resources, ASM has made efforts to address lack of evaluation capacity skills among program staff.

Through the work of the evaluation team, ASM comparatively has a level of evaluation capacity in place. In order to assess and improve the current state of the quality of the program, ASM has chosen Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI) framework, which is a continuous quality improvement cycle for youth programs and was developed by the Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality. This process is grounded in the belief that program staff are key to ensuring that young people's needs are met and learning is encouraged, creating spaces where youth can thrive. ASM adopted parts of the YPQI model several years ago in partnership with other agencies, such as the Department of Family Support Services and the Chicago Park District. After understanding more of the model, ASM came to recognize how the tool within the model targets the right age group, serves several purposes, has strong technical properties, and is transferrable to all types of programming, leading to fully implement the model.

Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) is an essential part of the YPQI framework and an “instrument designed to evaluate the quality of youth programs and identify staff training needs” (Smith et al., 2013, p. 6). YPQA is the tool that program supervisors and external assessors, who undergo training, use to understand whether the following core objectives or domains are being fulfilled: 1) safe environment: “physical safety, emotional safety, and inclusive practices”; 2) supportive environment: “supportive environment through welcoming, conflict resolution, active learning, encouragement, and skill-building”; 3) interaction: “interaction through cooperative learning and leadership opportunities”; and 4) engagement: “higher order engagement through choice, planning, and reflective” (Smith et al., 2013, p. 6). The assessment is done through the observation of the program sessions and documented through scoring and written notes. Once the

assessment takes place, the results are discussed during coaching sessions where program staff meet to discuss how to make improvements based on the YPQA results.

YPQI framework consists of three elements: assess, plan, and improve.

Assessment involves gathering valuable data about the quality of programs, setting a baseline, and identifying staff training needs. The planning stage examines data to understand strengths and improvement areas and to develop effective action plans. Then, it will lead to the improvement stage where it focuses on implementing improvement plans. This study looks into the planning stage through conducting interviews and observations. As previously described, YPQA contains information on how well ASM programs fulfilled the YPQI elements during the program implementation process. Therefore, because this study is specifically interested in how elements of process evaluation was taking place throughout the use of YPQA, this study primarily focuses on the planning stage with assessment data as baseline. During this process, it is important to note how soft and personal skills are used to plan for the next step. For example, trainings for the utilization of assessment data emphasize the importance of creating a trusting and supportive environment for instructors to understand their programs with a critical lens. While components of the improvement stage are important parts of process evaluation, it could not be a part of this study because of time limitations and involvement of additional staff members outside of program staffs.

Understanding the elements of YPQI, it is an appropriate framework to examine for this case study because of its emphasis on continuous quality improvement (CQI), which is a significant component of process evaluation. “CQI involves the use of assessment, feedback, and application of information as a way to improve



services...[and] enables an organization to be proactive rather than reactive by relying on a continuous evaluation of processes and outcomes” (Chovil, 2009, p. 22). It promotes the continual collection and utilization of data throughout the process of implementation to make improvements based on the comparison between of the actual and intended results (Lorch & Pollak, 2014). Those elements that highlight CQI are in line with what process evaluation represents – a continuing system of understanding of the process of implementation according to the planned design of the program (Stufflebeam, 2000).

As participation criteria in the study, the cases consist of program specialists who have undergone training for YPQI. The program specialists also must demonstrate understanding and support of the YPQI framework. Through this case study, ASM hopes to build a case to understand and incorporate YPQI into all of the program specialists’ roles. Based on those qualifications, three program specialists were identified to participate in this case study. Throughout this process, program specialists act as vessels in which I learn about the issue of how the facilitation of process evaluation through the use of YPQA takes place at ASM.

### **Process Evaluation Frameworks**

One of the two frameworks being used has been developed by Patton (2008) – process use. Patton describes it as “individual changes in thinking, attitudes, and behavior, and program or organizational changes in procedures and culture that occur among those involved in evaluation as a result of the learning that occurs during the evaluation process” (Patton, 2008, p. 155). This practice involves going through a transformation in evaluative thinking within the organization, in which “things are happening to people and changes are taking place in program and organizations as

evaluation takes place” (Patton, 2008, p. 156). Rather than just looking at the results, the thinking process and the inclusion of stakeholders of the conduct of evaluation is important. Patton explored six main components of process use: (1) infusing evaluative thinking into an organization’s culture; (2) enhancing shared understandings; (3) supporting and reinforcing the program through the intervention-oriented evaluation; (4) instrumentation effects...;(5) increasing participants’ engagement, sense of ownership, and self-determination...; and (6) program or organizational development.

Another framework that this study used has been outlined by Scherier (1994), who defined process evaluation as “the use of empirical data to assess the delivery of programs” (p. 40). The three main questions Scherier (1994) asked consist of program’s intended use and purpose, program delivery and implementation “in reality...[and] *gaps* between program plans and program delivery” (p. 40). The author focused on the specific function of process evaluation in discovering and elucidating “on what *is* the intended program” (2008, p. 44) and what has been actually implemented. Law and Shek (2011) summarized Scherier’s work and outlined five essential components: “program adherence, implementation process, intended dosage, macro-level implication, and process-outcome linkage” (p. 540).

### **Researcher Role and Relationships**

I worked alongside the Evaluation Specialist and the Director of Research and Evaluation, who are internal evaluators, responsible for ensuring the successful implementation of the YPQI process at ASM. Program specialists and instructors are responsible for carrying out the process of assessment, coaching, and program improvement. Therefore, program specialists, instructors, Evaluation Specialist, and

Director of Research and Evaluation share a vested interest in the successful implementation of YPQI. The coaches, made up of program specialists, were not be supervised, nor any of the program staff or instructors. The Evaluation Specialist was in charge of YPQI training and facilitation working groups which consist of feedback sessions. The Director of Research and Evaluation was not be directly involved with this case study but served as a resource to answer any questions and concerns. I was in charge of data collection and analysis.

Stake (1995) provides an overview of several different types of roles case study researchers may play. In this particular case study, case researcher had a role of an interpreter. Stake says in this role, the case researcher, “recognizes and substantiates new meanings...an agent of interpretation, new knowledge, but also illusion” (Stake, 1995, p. 97). Through my partnership, my role as a researcher has been to identify and interpret ways of using YPQA data as a tool to facilitate process evaluation and share this illumination with the organization so that program staff could continually learn what it means to integrate evaluation into their roles (Andrews, 2004; Ensminger et al., 2015).

## **Results**

### **Overview**

First, I utilized the Youth Program Quality Improvement (YPQI) framework to conduct qualitative analysis in order to understand whether program specialists followed the process it requires. Secondly, reasons for the use of and similarities between the Patton’s process use and Scheirer’s process evaluation framework are explained through data. Lastly, individual breakdown of each of the two frameworks are narrated in order to understand if and how process evaluation took place at ASM through the use of YPQI.

Among various frameworks related to process evaluation, Patton (2008) and Scheirer (1994) were utilized due to the similarities and differences between the two frameworks. While Patton (2008) mainly looks into the transformational process in evaluative thinking within the organization (e.g., organizational development, capacity-building), Scheirer (1994) is more so, but not limited to, interested in the micro-level or implementation-related process of the program. The difference in major focus would allow me to analyze my data in its entirety. However, there are also similarities in certain areas of the elements identified in each of the two. Patton's process use (2008), more specifically enhancing shared understanding component, points out the importance of the voice of stakeholders and the value in different experiences. Similarly, one of the elements of Scheirer's framework of process evaluation is macro-level implication, which includes examples "such as importance of engagement of different community stakeholders, client needs, assessment of the environment, and challenges of the programs for a particular context" (Law & Shek, 2011, p. 540).

### **Youth Program Quality Improvement (YPQI)**

Out of the three components of YPQI – assess, plan, and improve – one is represented in this study: plan. Therefore, the main focus was to identify and verify whether the necessary steps were taken so that the connection could be made between the use of YPQA results and practice of process evaluation at After School Matters (ASM). During the planning stage, the goal was described as but not limited to "focus[ing] on increasing scores for low-scoring scales or items, work[ing] on structural/organizational improvements to increase scores, set[ting] up a mechanism for individuals to be supported in improving items, [and] set[ting] focused targets for improvement" (Smith et

al., 2013, p.39). The overarching stated goal was to develop a practice of continuous quality improvement.

One of the main parts of planning was to identify goals based on the YPQA results. During my observation of a coaching meeting, Amy said that there were elements that could be improved, based on her observation of the program on two separate occasions. The instructor agreed. She continued to probe why the instructors believed some of the areas were not working. Based on that conversation, they generated a set of improvement plans. She said, "it's...about giving instructors the tools and...having a discussion to kind of elicit what's working and what's not."

Moreover, Mark talked about his experience with some of the instructors who do not come from a teaching, but a professional, background.

He may be a professional photographer, but he or she may not have kind of the background with teaching youth or knowing how to do warm up games or ice breakers....Some people would just know the technical aspect of it. Having these coaching sessions, I think, can help improve that type of stuff. I know, for example, I have a guy that he teaches very much the technical side of things. He doesn't really do any ice breakers....With the YPQA coaching process, I can give him stuff tips or even some booklets with some different ice breakers.

He was able to identify the absence of ice breakers, which is a listed element in YPQA, and work with the instructors to create an improvement plan.

As identification of goals lead to the development of improvement plans, supervisors are not trained to simply give the instructors bullet points; it is rather a process of collaboration.

We're not just suppose to tell them. So part of it is, we have them self-identify...."Hey, we need to come up with three improvement goals together."...They came up with two of them, and then...I added this third one about the high quality performances.

Understanding that improvement plan is an important part of the planning stage, program supervisors create dialogues with the instructors in order for them to join in on the process of continuous quality improvement. Mark stated:

A lot of times...[the instructors think]...“What did I do wrong?”....So I...[make sure to say] “This isn't about anything you did wrong. This is so to try to work with you to come up with a game plan. There are some areas that we can give you some tips on and feedback on that can help you in the program.”

It was evident that program supervisors worked very hard to tread the line of giving feedback lightly because they wanted to make sure the instructors understand the purpose of YPQA – continuous quality improvement. John talked about his process of explaining why YPQA is taking place. “I make sure that they know that they're falling short, but that there's always room to improve. It's kind of like our continuous improvement cycle for the programs” (John). This builds an understanding behind the importance of the improvement plan. Most importantly, instructors, who are the program implementers, have a true comprehension of how their programs need to make changes and progress in certain areas.

### **Scheirer's Process Evaluation Framework**

Scheirer (1994) outlined five components that are essential to the process evaluation practice: program adherence, implementation process, intended dosage, macro-level implication, and process-outcome linkage (Law & Shek, 2011). Out of the five, three components were found to be relevant for the interview and observation data: program adherence, implementation process, and macro-level implication. Although there were some implications of intended dosage and process-outcome linkage taking place, not enough coding took place for them to be identified as significant findings.

**Program adherence.** Firstly, based on the structure of the YPQI framework and the utilization of YPQA, all of the program supervisors have mentioned “whether the program is being delivered as intended according to the original program design” (Law & Shek, 2011, p. 540). Given that the program design in the context of this study is the YPQA requirements, program supervisors often stated how they are trying to work with the instructors to ensure those elements are being met during the program sessions. “Just trying to make sure there is a structure to the program so talking about whether the instructors are starting the program with ice breakers and then also as the program is going through it, at the end of the program doing some reflection” (Mark). Program specialists tried to make sure that there is a flow in the program where there is a beginning, middle, and an end every time, in which it starts with an ice breaker and ends with a reflection. Mark gave an example where he picked programs “that [he] know[s] are not doing certain ice breakers [for evaluation coaching]. They're just going right into the program.” Those instructors were seen as not adhering to the program design. Therefore, Mark chose those programs to go through coaching as part of the YPQI framework in order to address the element (i.e. ice breakers) of YPQA that is not taking place.

Program supervisors also mentioned the complexity of following certain elements of YPQA for some due to the nature of the program’s content. Based on the observation, it was evident that program specialists were attempting to understand the complication of adhering to YPQA but still emphasized the importance of following YPQA.

He...explained how to adapt certain elements of the program based on what the class has prepared (e.g. rehearsal) so that the elements of the program are still part of the class but the order or the structure may be a little bit different. He then

reiterates some of the goals that they are trying to achieve (e.g. how to formally incorporate reflection in their program). (Field notes, John)

After acknowledging the complexity, John came back to address the improvement goals. As generating and following up with the improvement goals are part of the YPQI model, the importance of focusing on them has been evident in all of the program specialists. Because the improvement goals were created based on what components of YPQA were not being fulfilled, the structure of the conversation often were framed as a topic of program adherence.

**Implementation process.** Secondly, the results of this study show a lot of implementation process because observations of the programs are central to the YPQI framework. YPQA takes place and are filled out by program supervisors and external assessors during those observation sessions of specific programs. “I can find things that are working and not working in their program...Maybe it could be a one-time thing that I saw [that wasn't going right] - maybe it doesn't happen all the time - so it can open up some dialogue” (Amy). Another key concept to understand is that program specialists and external assessors do not simply randomly decide to observe certain parts of the program. There are structured observation sessions in which they are looking for whether YPQA elements are evident in the programs.

So I feel like the format that we have now gives me the time to plan to really sit with the program for a certain periods of time and really go through the curriculum. Before...if it was not a deep dive program that I'm comfortable with, maybe I'm popping in for quick visits - like 30 minutes. And it's possible to miss things. (Amy)

This program specialist realized through the use of YPQA she is able look for specific parts of the program that are relevant to how the program is being implemented. She



understands that it can often look like the program is going well, but she could have missed important missing pieces. She continued to state how it is even more significant for the new instructors of the program.

We come out and see programs on multiple occasions but for this particular program, this one being a new instructor. I want to spend more time....I want to be able to see the whole program and get a sense of how he's implementing programming and how he's interacting with the youth and what their experience is...to be able to...[see] the program in entirety. (Amy)

There is a deep understanding of the purpose of observing the programs that she is supervising. She specifically mentions how she wants “to get a sense of how he’s implementing programming” as a way to evaluate the totality of the program. The fruit of the fulfillment of implementation process was also apparent during my observation of the coaching sessions. During one of my observations of the coaching meeting, John talked to his instructor about the specific results, including specific examples of what he saw happening during the instructor’s program. He affirmed by saying that the YPQA elements fit with what he also observed during his time visiting programs and fulfilling YPQA reports.

Moreover, another important component of implementation process is understanding the context in which program is taking place. Law & Shek (2011) state that context can include “background knowledge, such as the program implementer’s familiarity with the program receivers and the program implementer’s program preparation” (p. 540). Program specialists mentioned the importance of instructor’s ability to prepare for the program. Through coaching meeting sessions, program supervisors were able to gain understanding of how the instructors, who are program implementers, are preparing for the program.

[The instructors] have multiple jobs [because this is part-time work]...They really don't have much prep time to prepare for the programs. That has been an issue with some people I know...Usually the thriving programs are the ones really using their prep time. Getting their curriculum ready for the next day and getting to the program site early and making sure the room is set up. (Mark)

Program supervisors are aware of the instructors' situation as part-time workers.

Although preparation is essential to the YPQI framework, supervisors saw that instructors get interrupted due to their other part-time work outside of After School Matters. Mark stated his dilemma in attempting to manage this complex situation, showing his knowledge of the context in which programs are being run.

Another example of context program supervisors made note of was “the program implementer’s familiarity with the program receivers” (Law & Shek, 2011, p. 540). John talked about the importance of going through the entire set of program cycles – Fall, Spring, and Summer program sessions – in order to fully understand the youth from their target population, who are program receivers. Each program session goes through different set of variables that supervisors and instructors need to be aware of. John stated:

[The instructors] needed to go through the whole program cycle to even feel like they know the whole process...All three are very different...[For example] spring has some retention problems - warm weather starting or at the beginning, it gets dark so early after school. Parents are concerned about them getting home. Sports conflicting activities.

Although the program supervisors were aware of the differences outside of YPQI, they were able to delve more into how those variations influence each program through YPQA and coaching sessions. Program supervisors set a precedent by preparing the instructors to face differences between every program cycle. These types of conversations continue as they go through the whole set of year-long program cycles. Program supervisors and

instructors undergo a pattern of discussing the YPQA results together and having follow-up meetings about the context in which programs were being implemented.

**Macro-level implication.** Lastly, macro-level implications reveal findings, “such as importance of engagement of different community stakeholders, client needs, assessment of the environment, and challenges of the programs for a particular context” (Law & Shek, 2011, p. 540). Throughout the the times that I’ve observed and interviewed program supervisors, there was a consistent theme of the importance of being in good relationship with the partnerships they have created with the outside schools and organizations. The programs take place in various locations that are often held at those facilities. Some of the partnerships lasted about 8 years. For these partnerships to maintain, liasons play one of the major roles. Liasons have been hired by the partnering facilities in order to work with ASM to help manage the programs mostly for administrative tasks. Mark talked about the importance of liasons:

He's worked with a lot of the same programs for 5, 6 or 7 years now. [The instructors] know what to expect from him, and he also knows what to expect from them if you have someone who's really on top of it and does a great job. And then it varies, there are some people who aren't really on top of it.... I would usually talk with the liasons....The campus liasons are the ones that are there pretty much everyday. They have a lot of good feedback too. I know some people use them as much. Some program staff might not get their feedback. [But for me,] they're able to kind of tell me that there's this and that.

Although not all, many of the liasons played an essential role of the maintenance of the program.

While the role of liasons did not get administered because of the YPQI framework, the importance of their role and their insight was brought up during the coaching session. For example, during one of the coaching meetings I observed, a liason

for that particular partnering facility sat in with the instructors and program supervisor, John. During the meeting, she participated during the conversation around YPQA results. One of the macro-level implication findings showed that liasons play a role as “community” stakeholders and the importance of including their perspectives.

Furthermore, another macro-level implication was found in the context of the environment in which a program takes place. Mark talked about a scenario where technical programs, such as photoshop class, have had situations where their programs didn’t take place in their designated room at a partnering facility:

You're doing photoshop and all of a sudden you're in the hallway. That can really throw you off....A lot of times we don't have control over it....A school [can say,] "We have a local school council today and we're going to be here today.

One of the YPQA requires the programs to accomplish a safe environment for the program receivers. Under one of the categories - safe environment - accommodating environment delves into whether the program spaces are apt for the types of programs being offered to the target population. Therefore, during the assessment and the planning phase of the YPQI model, program supervisors specifically look into how the environment of the class is fitting. Another example is during a coaching meeting, Mark brought up the unfortunate situation of one of the partnering facilities lack of funding leading to an unbalanced stairwell. “While the organization recognizes some of these issues, due to funds, it’s more complicated to get some of these issues resolved” (Mark).

### **Patton’s Process Use Framework**

Patton (2008) outlined six components that are essential to the process evaluation practice: “infusing evaluative thinking into the organizational culture, enhancing shared understandings, supporting and reinforcing the program intervention, instrumentation

effects and reactivity, increasing engagement, self-determination and ownership, program and organizational development” (pp. 158-159). Out of the six, three components were found to be relevant for the interview and observation data: enhancing shared understandings, supporting/reinforcing the program intervention, and instrumentation effects and reactivity. Although there were some implications of the other three components, not enough significant coding took place.

**Enhancing shared understanding.** Through coaching meetings, program supervisors were able to manage “staff meetings or the program’s plan of work around evaluation issues and explicit outcomes” (Patton, 2008, p. 158), which is one of the ways to enhance shared understanding. Program supervisors and instructors both had an understanding of why these coaching meetings, which can also be seen as “staff meetings” (2008), were necessary. John prepared for these meetings around “evaluation issues and explicit outcomes” (2008), based on the YPQA results.

20 minutes into the meeting, he centered the conversation on the YPQA results. He started by mentioning what they did really well. Along with the scores they received, he mentioned some of the comments that justify the scores....They went over the results together....As they went through categories with lower scores, the conversation was centered on trying to understand why the score was lower. Part of the conversation was on how the assessor might have not seen it because the format of the class might have been a little bit different because it is performance-based class. The other part of the conversation was around why the assessor didn’t see what the instructors believe they do. One of the examples that came up was on mentoring.

During my observation of the coaching session, it was clear that John was using the results as the backbone of their conversation on improvement. However, it was not a meeting where results were considered to be black and white. There was a focus on

opening up a dialogue for the purpose of creating an understanding around why the outcomes came to be a certain way.

Moreover, John's coaching meeting exemplified what it meant to give "voice to different perspectives and valuing diverse experiences" (Patton, 2008, p. 158). Although program supervisors play the role as an "evaluator" and oversee the programs, they understand the value of listening to the instructors and insights they bring to the table. Supervisors recognize not everything can be seen entirely through observation and not everything can fit perfectly into the YPQA categories. Another source of different perspectives come from the liasons. As liasons take on the role of an agent between the partnering facilities/schools and After School Matters (ASM), some of the program supervisors include their insights when evaluating the implementation of the program.

I would usually talk with the liasons too. The campus liasons are the ones that are there pretty much everyday. They have a lot of good feedback too. I know some people don't use them as much. [But for me] they're able to kind of tell me that there's this and that....Out of the programs that I coached, none of them really had attendance issues. Attendance went really well. Sometimes go ahead and see whether attendance is struggling. I would kind of average daily attendance is from city span, which is a tool that we use. But that's kind of what I went off of - my prior site visit forms - Prior visits and then also some feedbacks from the liasons if they had anything about the programs....They are the main point person for After School Matter programs that are running in schools. So if the instructors have any issues with getting into a room or anything like that, the liasons help with that....The main part is [if] the school principal has an issue or something like that they can go directly to that person and find out what's going on. So they wear many hats. They kind of are there for the whole programs too - to see how the programs are running or the instructors need any help. (Mark)

Although program supervisors are not talking with liasons as part of the YPQI model, they unofficially play a role due to how closely they work with the instructors, as well as taking care of attendance and other important administrative tasks. Also, their inputs are important during coaching meetings because liasons see many things that program

supervisors do not get to see, nor have the time to see. In some instances, liasons are brought into the coaching meetings as well. One of John's meeting I observed was accompanied by a liason for that facility. She was very involved in the process of going over the YPQA results, and her perspectives were valued by John. It was clear that program supervisors were creating a conversation-oriented atmosphere to increase the understanding of the results based on evaluation (YPQA) and attempting include different voices to enhance shared understanding.

**Instrumentation effects and reactivity.** The instrumentation effects and reactivity element is focused on the process of collecting data (e.g., interview) and how it allows participants to have a frank conversation around results and be able to reflect for the purpose of achieving desired program goals. Although coaching meetings are not set up to be an interview process, those sessions are designed to support the instructors and to give them space to reflect on the YPQA results. John said, "Those are the five programs that had specific things that we needed to work on, and I wanted to use this process to achieve those goals." He was referring to the five programs he decided to work closely with through the use of YPQA so that "what gets measured gets done so resources and staff efforts are aligned with performance measures and evaluation priorities" (Patton, 2008, p. 159). For example, Mark recalled his coaching meeting with one of his instructors:

This program that we're going to see, I went for a visit last week. And after the program, we ended up talking for about 30 minutes. "How do you think it's going? What do you want to work on? Are there any [problems]?" Just talked about the whole process. And then I came back yesterday....She was expecting me. She had already implemented so many things we talked about from the previous week. For the third time, we are meeting in a week. She made tremendous progress.

During their coaching meeting, they were able to outline what is not being done and how it can be done. Then, adjustments were made to be “aligned with performance measures” (p. 159). The program supervisor asked questions that dove more into the root of the problem instead of the surface-level issues. Also, because the YPQI model encourages conversations targeting the issues instead of merely answers being given, the instructor, who is the participant, “learn[ed] from and [were] affected by evaluation...interviews” (p. 159).

Patton (2008) talks about certain emotions that may be evoked throughout the process as the participants are “affected by evaluation...interviews” (p. 159). Mark said, “Well, if it's me saying, ‘You need to work on this,’ they might get a little more defensive. But if I let them bring it up themselves, they're not going to be defensive when they first work on it.” Mark performed as an interviewer who tried to “take a nonjudgmental stance and communicate neutrality so that the person being interviewed feels comfortable saying what they really think and feel” (Patton, 2008, p. 169). Alongside learning, the practice of reflection is also inherently rooted in Patton’s framework, who described it as “using interview protocols to enhance reflection” (p. 159), which is also part of the YPQI model. Mark also said, “I need to remind myself to stop keep talking, but really try to get them to talk. The main strategy is to get them to reflect.” Mark purposely used his position to give instructors a trusted space so that they would come to a point of objectivity about their programs. Although being defensive may their first reaction, I saw that instructors, through proper channels (e.g., reflection), came to an understanding of the YPQA results and share their insights based on their



understanding, leading to creating improvement plans in order achieve desired program outcomes.

**Supporting/reinforcing program intervention.** Another type of process use that was evident was supporting and reinforcing program intervention, specifically “building evaluation into program delivery processes in such a way that desired program outcomes are achieved in part through the effects of data collection” (Patton, 2008, p. 158). Knowing that the YPQI framework exists for the purpose of continuous quality improvement, program supervisors used YPQA to collect data and to understand its results to improve in areas that have not yet reached its desired outcomes.

Through YPQ sessions, we got a better understanding of how to work with youth over time. So helping instructors - or sitting with them - explaining the pyramid, for instance, or even letting them know where ASM falls or where our challenges are on that pyramid. It's helpful as well...being able to use that to say this is what's happening in your program that's doing really well, but these are the area that I think we can grow. (Amy)

The pyramid consists of four different levels: safe environment, supportive environment, interaction, and engagement. Every level consists of different elements that show how well that level has been achieved by the program. Conducting YPQA allows supervisors to understand to what degree those levels are being fulfilled by the programs and what areas they are lacking. Amy summarized her time with the instructors as a time to review the results of program delivery and to discuss about areas that need improvement. It's designed for the purpose of not only “monitoring their own progress” but also “specifying and monitoring outcomes as integral to working with program participants” (2008, p. 158).

John talked about his time before the implementation of the YPQI. “Before, it was... maybe I'm popping in for quick visits - like 30 minutes. And it's possible to miss things, and it's possible to come in at a time and everything looks great. Everyone looks happy” (John). Although John did make visits to observe the programs while they were running, there was no structure or evaluative thinking process when observing them. He recognized that it could lead to not catching what elements of the program are not being met when “everything looks great” (John). He continued to say:

So I think having this process of deep dive coaching, having the meetings and following up with observations, I get to absorb more of what the program is all about. Rather than the quick look at the RP and the weekly plans, I'm really kind of going through each thing with them. (John)

There is an understanding of what it means to support the program through data collection. John showed an aspect of wanting to build evaluation as a part of their program implementation process in order “to get them to that program that's the top of the line and performs every semester” (John). ASM have built assessment and coaching meetings into their agenda every year, in which the program delivery will be tracked through collection of YPQA.

### **Discussion**

Through the incorporation of the Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI) framework, some level of process evaluation took place at After School Matters (ASM). While process evaluation was not exclusively outlined, research show similarities between the concept of process evaluation and that of continuous quality improvement (CQI). YPQI mentions the incorporation of CQI, which involves “the use of assessment, feedback, and application of information as a way to improve services...[and] enables an

organization to be proactive rather than reactive by relying on a continuous evaluation of processes and outcomes” (Chovil, 2009, p. 22). Through the utilization of Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA), program supervisors were able to track which elements of YPQA were being fulfilled by the programs. This documentation process was the basis for a set of coaching meetings, which was vital to understand the assessment results.

Patton’s process use and Scheirer’s process evaluation frameworks were selected to look into if and how process evaluation may be taking place through YPQA. Although the results did not show the complete fulfillment of either of the two frameworks, there was evidence of some of the elements of the frameworks being done at ASM through YPQA. The assessment and coaching sessions allowed ASM to do some of the micro-level process evaluation, specifically relating to the implementation process, program adherence, supporting program intervention, and discussion of program goals. However, the results didn’t show much indication of the concept of program dosage taking place. Although elements under four main domains of YPQA are scored on a scale from one to five, the main focus of the coaching meeting sessions was not geared toward how much of or to what level certain elements were being practiced. The conversation in those meetings focused more on if certain elements occurred during program sessions and if not how the program can improve in fulfilling them.

Another important concept that was not clearly found was process-outcome linkage. Because the study only looked into the second stage of the YPQI framework, the results did not show much sign of program supervisors making explicit connections between process and outcome evaluations. Nevertheless, some of the supervisors shared deep understanding of how necessary it is to practice continuous quality improvement in

order for programs to grow. Although there was no clear evidence of the practice of linking the results of the implementation process to program goal outcomes, it is important to note there was some minute level of program-outcome linkage taking place for minor identified issues that were quickly corrected during the planning stage. There was also some level of understanding among program supervisors the connection between process and outcome. Further research can be done to elaborate on what activities take place to make this linkage.

Overall, the results showed more emphasis on whether specific YPQA elements were being implemented during the program sessions rather than transformation of evaluative thinking within the organization. However, some level of macro-level process evaluation was found to take place at ASM. Program supervisors showed great level of shared understanding, in which they desired to have a discussion around delving into the assessment results. Rather than supervisors laying down the law to the instructors, the environment was set for both parties to learn and understand what the assessment results meant and why there are inconsistencies between actual program practice and YPQA. Throughout the process of coaching sessions, the pattern of shared understanding became a relatively standard practice between the program supervisor and the instructor.

Moreover, the importance of learning from different stakeholders was mainly found through the presentation of liasons. Some of the program supervisors mentioned the crucial role liasons play in relation to the implementation of the program. Although liasons do not necessarily play a major role during the program sessions, they, in many cases, function as the middlemen between program supervisors and instructors. YPQA does not exclusively record the work of liasons, but their work may indirectly impact

certain parts of the assessment results. Some of the program supervisors recognized this and shared their understanding of the value in making their voice an important part of the informal assessment of the program, along with the formal assessment results.

### **Limitations and Further Research**

Due to the nature of the timeline of the study, I was only able to look into the planning stage of the YPQI framework. Because it was not a longitudinal study, the results of the study have limited understanding on if and how process evaluation took place throughout the rest of the stages. More information on how process evaluation carried out to the improvement of the YPQI framework would have been beneficial to understand how process evaluation results get linked with outcome evaluation. Moreover, it is important to note differences in expertise and background of program supervisors that may have influenced how process evaluation takes place during coaching meeting sessions. Some of the supervisors may have more knowledge on the evaluation practice. Therefore, their previous understanding of evaluation, rather than or in addition to the YPQI training, may have impacted the results in relation to process evaluation.

### **Conclusion**

Although outcome evaluation has been getting noticed by nonprofit organizations, process evaluation has not yet been credited for its importance. The link between process and outcome evaluation is a vital concept that must be understood accurately.

Understanding limited resources many nonprofits face, this study was able to look into how implementing youth program quality framework, specifically Youth Program Quality Intervention, also allowed After School Matters to perform process evaluation through collaborating with the program staff. Though there are limitations given this

research was not a longitudinal study, the results showed how the continuous quality improvement focus of YPQI developed some level of process evaluation practice. Further research could elaborate on whether there is a connection between this practice of process evaluation and program outcome.

APPENDIX A

PROGRAM SPECIALIST CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH FORM

**Project Title:** Evaluation Coaching as a Method of Process Evaluation: Maximizing Limited Resources of Nonprofit Organizations

**Researcher:** Young (Hannah) Im

**Faculty Sponsor:** Leanne Kallemeyn

**Introduction:**

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Young (Hannah) Im, graduate student of Research Methodology, for a thesis under the supervision of Leanne Kallemeyn in the Department of Education at Loyola University of Chicago. You are being asked to participate because you have demonstrated understanding and support of YPQI framework, undergone evaluation coaching training, and capacity to take on evaluation coaching.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to understand how you as a program staff member at After School Matters provide evaluation coaching to instructors as part of the Youth Program Quality Intervention framework. Specifically, this study will provide understanding around which evaluation coaching strategies you use with instructors, how those strategies vary depending on the content area of the instructor, how implementation of program is taking place, and how instructors respond to the evaluation coaching.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to do the activity or activities listed below:

- Participate in two interviews. Interviews will be scheduled for 30 minutes to an hour during the workday. The first interview will be scheduled in July and second interview in August. You will be asked questions about how you prepare for your evaluation coaching meetings with instructors. You will also be asked to reflect on the coaching meetings you conduct with instructors.
- Participate in two observations. You will be asked to allow a researcher to accompany you to evaluation coaching meetings. The researcher will observe program staff and instructor interactions, as well as the physical space of the room and will take notes.
- The audiotapes from the interview session will be transcribed into a document, and the tapes will be erased.

**Risks/Benefits:**

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. You may or may not benefit from participating in this



project. You may benefit from having the chance to think critically about the how you provide evaluation coaching to instructors and the role of coaching in the YPQI process. The results of this research project will expand on currently available research related to evaluation coaching in the Youth Program Quality Intervention process.

**Confidentiality:**

- Your name will be kept confidential in any external reports of the study and a pseudonym will be used.
- Your name will be confidential in internal reports unless told otherwise by the participant.
- All instructor names will be kept confidential in the summary of the study and pseudonyms will be used for all participants, both internally and externally.
- All notes and collected data will be stored on a password-protected computer or in a locked file cabinet. No one besides the researcher will have access to the raw data collected during the study.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. Your decision to participate will not affect your employment status at After School Matters.

**Contacts and Questions:**

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact Young (Hannah) Im at [yim@luc.edu](mailto:yim@luc.edu) or the faculty sponsor, Leanne Kallemeyn, at [lkallemeyn@luc.edu](mailto:lkallemeyn@luc.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

**Statement of Consent:**

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

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**Participant's Signature**

**Date**

---

**Researcher's Signature**

**Date**

APPENDIX B

INSTRUCTOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH FORM

**Project Title:** Evaluation Coaching as a Method of Process Evaluation: Maximizing Limited Resources of Nonprofit Organizations

**Researcher:** Young (Hannah) Im

**Faculty Sponsor:** Leanne Kallemeyn

**Introduction:**

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Young (Hannah) Im, graduate student of Research Methodology, for a thesis under the supervision of Leanne Kallemeyn in the Department of Education at Loyola University of Chicago. You are being asked to participate because your After School Matters program specialist is participating in the study and plans to conduct evaluation coaching with you. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to understand how a program staff member at After School Matters provides evaluation coaching to instructors like you as part of the Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI) framework. Specifically, this study will provide understanding around which evaluation coaching strategies your program specialist uses with instructors, how those strategies vary depending on the content area of the instructor, how implementation of program takes place, and how instructors respond to the evaluation coaching.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to do the activity or activities listed below:

- Participate in one observation. You will be asked to allow a researcher to observe you and your program specialist during an evaluation coaching meeting. The researcher will observe program staff and instructor interactions, as well as the physical space of the room and will take notes.

**Risks/Benefits:**

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. You may or may not benefit from participating in this project. You may benefit from having the chance to think critically about the quality of your program and improvement based on the YPQI framework. The results of this research project will expand on currently available research related to evaluation coaching in the YPQI process.

**Confidentiality:**

- All instructor names will be kept confidential in the summary of the study and pseudonyms will be used for all participants.
- All notes and collected data will be stored on a password-protected computer or in a locked file cabinet. No one besides the researchers will have access to the raw data collected during the study.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. Your decision to participate will not affect your employment status at After School Matters.

**Contacts and Questions:**

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact Young (Hannah) Im at [yim@luc.edu](mailto:yim@luc.edu) or the faculty sponsor, Leanne Kallemeyn, at [lkallemeyn@luc.edu](mailto:lkallemeyn@luc.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

**Statement of Consent:**

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

---

**Participant's Signature**

**Date**

---

**Researcher's Signature**

**Date**

APPENDIX C

EVALUATION COACHING SESSION OBSERVATION GUIDE

<b>Observer:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Time:</b>
<b>Instructor Alias:</b>	<b>Content Area:</b>
<b>Years at ASM:</b>	<b>Years Instructing:</b>

**Goal:** To understand how a program specialist at After School Matters provides evaluation coaching to instructors. Specifically, this study will provide understanding around how evaluation is being taught and learned, how the instructors are being challenged and supported to develop ways of thinking and achieving evaluation practice goals, how guidance and empowerment is taking place, and how they integrate evaluation into their roles.

**Social Setting:** Describe how people are positioned in the space. Note the environment of the meeting (e.g. supportive, power struggle) Where does the program specialist (coach) sit? Where does the instructor (coachee) sit?

**Interactions:** Describe how the program specialist interacts with the instructor. Note how the program specialist communicates to the instructor. How does the program specialist create a constructive and supportive environment? How does the instructor respond to the coach? Note instructors' attitudes when receiving coaching and feedback and the general tone of the coaching session.

**Activities:** Describe the content of the evaluation coaching session. Note how both program specialist and instructor are integrating evaluation into their roles. What are the program objectives? Describe the program specialist's understanding of achieving those objectives based on YQPA. Note how the importance of process data are or are not being emphasized. How is the program specialist teaching, supporting, and challenging instructor's ways of thinking and achieving evaluation basics/process/practice goals based on YPQA? Describe how the program specialist is empowering the instructor to develop understanding, skills, and results. How is or is not transformation taking place?

APPENDIX D  
PROGRAM SPECIALIST INTERVIEW PROTOCOL  
INTERVIEW ONE

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Tell me about the evaluation coaching training session you went through.
  - a. What is the purpose of this coaching plan?
  - b. What is your understanding of the responsibility that you have as an evaluation coach?
  - c. Do you feel equipped as an evaluation coach?
2. Tell me about your expectations.
  - a. In what ways do you feel like this coaching relationship will be beneficial to understanding program implementation?
  - b. How do you expect instructors to respond to the evaluation coaching session?
    - i. What factors, if any, influence how an instructor might respond to the evaluation coaching session?
    - ii. How will your relationship with the instructor influence the progress and format of the evaluation coaching session?
3. How will you prepare for your meetings with the instructors?
  - a. How will your instructors respond to this coaching relationship and meetings?
  - b. How will you communicate the purpose of the meetings?
4. Do you have any additional comments?



APPENDIX E  
PROGRAM SPECIALIST INTERVIEW PROTOCOL  
INTERVIEW TWO

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Reflect on your evaluation coaching sessions.
  - a. Successes?
  - b. Challenges?
  - c. Tell me about the coaching sessions you had.
    - i. What coaching strategies did you use?
    - ii. Did you need to make any adjustments to the coaching sessions? If so, what?
  - d. When you schedule the evaluation coaching session with instructors, how did you describe the purpose of the session to the instructors?
    - i. What factors, if any, influence how you communicate the purpose of the session to a particular instructor (e.g. content area, how long the instructor has been with the organization, etc.)?
    - ii. What was your relationship like during the coaching session?
2. How did you prepare for your evaluation coaching sessions with instructors?
  - a. What materials did you use (e.g. YPQI tools from the Weikart Center, ASM coaching process handout, etc.)?
  - b. What data did you review (e.g., Youth Program Quality Assessment)?
3. What materials and/or data did you use during your evaluation coaching session to facilitate discussion?
  - a. What do you examine to understand the program elements are getting implemented accordingly?
4. Did you learn whether the program elements were being properly implemented by your instructors?
  - a. If yes, how so? If no, have you taken action to correct it?
  - b. What is your understanding of process and outcome evaluation?
    - i. How will these coaching sessions facilitate process evaluation?
    - ii. How will these coaching sessions assist outcome evaluation?
5. How did you and your instructors determine:
  - a. Improvement goals?
  - b. Improvement plans?
6. What materials and/or data were most helpful during your evaluation coaching session?
  - a. Why were they helpful?
  - b. What additional tools and/or data would have been helpful?
7. We are planning a training on evaluation coaching for program staff. What recommendations do you have for this training?
  - a. Topics to discuss?
  - b. Format of delivery (e.g. evaluation coaching shadowing)?
  - c. What other resources do you recommend?

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## VITA

Young Im graduated from Olivet Nazarene University with Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Bachelor of Arts in Sociology. Her focus, since then, has been understanding how evaluation has been and is taking place in nonprofit organizations. In 2012, Young Im started her graduate program in Research Methodology with a specific purpose of how to improve the work of evaluation in efficiency and effectiveness in nonprofit organizations. During this time, she also worked for nonprofits in the areas of evaluation and research for various nonprofits, ranging from the areas of informal education, scholarship program for students from low-income families, and social-emotional learning in public schools. Her thesis involved partnering with a nonprofit organization, After School Matters, that focuses on providing quality after school programs in the city of Chicago. Understanding the gap in evaluation in nonprofits, she focused on conducting process evaluation through maximizing limited resources in nonprofit organizations. Young Im is currently working as an Evaluation Coordinator at City Year New York, looking into low-performing students who are at-risk of graduating from high school.