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Editor's Comments:

The Fall Issue offers a variety of Feature Articles, Program Articles and Research & Evaluation Strategies. Highlights include a variety of afterschool program management articles including an examination of Neighborhood Youth Centers and the introduction of new systems to classify out-of-school time job responsibilities.

Readers will also be introduced to the use of Person Digital Assistants (PDAs) for survey administration.

Manuscripts for the Spring and Summer Issues are now being accepted. This includes:

- **Feature Articles** ~ informational, explanatory, or critical analysis and interpretation of major trends or comprehensive reviews. Include clear implications for youth development practice and programming.
- **Program Articles** ~ discuss programs and outcomes or describe promising programs and pilot projects that have clear implications for youth development research, practice and programming.
- **Research and Evaluation Strategies** ~ describe innovative methodologies and strategies in the collection and analysis of quantitative or qualitative research and evaluation data.
- **Resource Reviews** ~ present analyses of materials, such as books, curricula or videos.

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Feature Articles

Opportunities Matter: Exploring Youth's Perspectives on Their Long-Term Participation in an Urban 4-H Youth Development Program

[Article 090403FA001]

Ferrari, Theresa M.; Lekies, Kristi S.; Arnett, Nate

This article highlights a study which explored youths' perspectives on their long-term involvement at Adventure Central, a comprehensive 4-H youth development program based at an urban park facility. We conducted four focus groups with 16 youth between the ages of 12 and 16 who had participated in the program between three and seven years. The youth experienced a wide range of opportunities including nature-related activities, jobs at park facilities, and travel. They spoke positively of their experiences and described how they benefited from their participation. Novelty, challenge, and leadership were key features of these opportunities. The youth noted the connection between learning and fun. In the process, they learned new skills, such as teamwork and public speaking, and developed personal qualities, such as responsibility, that helped them as they were growing up, transferred to other settings, and would benefit them in the future. Findings from this study suggest some clear implications for youth development professionals.

Afterschool Programs in America: Origins, Growth, Popularity, and Politics

[Article 090403FA002]

Mahoney, Joseph L.; Parente, Maria E.; Zigler, Edward F.

This article discusses the historical and recent growth of afterschool program (ASPs) in the U.S. Particular attention is given to the recent history of social and political influences that have led to growth and current popularity of ASPs. The article begins by reviewing changes in schooling and the labor force that created a supervision gap between the school day of children and work day of parents. This gap contributed to the need for afterschool child care. Next, influences leading to a growing recognition of the significance of school-age childcare for working families and their children, including research on the potential risks of self care and benefits of well-designed ASPs, are described. These discussions are contextualized alongside decades of social and political action and debate over the development of and funding for ASPs in America. Several key factors likely to affect after-school programming in the near future are discussed.

The Virginia Abstinence Education Initiative Evaluation Structure: A Lesson in How to Successfully Overcome the Challenges of Multi-Site Program Evaluation

[Article 090403FA003]

Lewis, Allen; Brubaker, Sarah Jane; Karph Ariane S.; Ambrose, Brian

This discussion provides an overview of the evaluation process of the Virginia Abstinence Education Initiative (VAEI). It details the basic principles that premise the evaluation structure. The evaluation structure utilized by the VAEI is an intentional one, designed to provide the most

rigorous approach possible in order to have maximum confidence in the quality of the data produced by this statewide, multi-year effort. The authors argue that this type of informed approach grounded in a high degree of evaluation rigor can help to overcome the challenges typically associated with multi-site program evaluation.

A New System of Classifying Out-of-School Time Job Responsibilities

[Article 090403FA004]

Buher Kane, Jennifer; Peter, Nancy

Out-of-school time (OST) is a burgeoning field with both research and policy implications. Efforts to improve professional development for OST staff members are of particular interest, as funding streams increasingly target interventions which promote positive changes in student outcomes. Professional development evaluation in particular is hindered by a lack of consistency among job titles and responsibilities across OST organizations. This mixed-method study utilizes original data to explore underlying patterns of job responsibilities within the field and offers a new classification system based on exploratory factor analyses. The classification includes five categories, each with a unique combination of common job responsibilities to assist survey respondents in choosing the appropriate category: upper-level administration, mid-level administration, direct-service, capacity-building, and "other." Results suggest this new system is user-friendly to both respondents and researchers, and will garner more accurate and comparative information for future OST research and application.

Neighborhood Youth Centers and Families as Supportive Environments for Youth in High Risk Urban Settings [Article 090403FA005]

Sabatelli, Ronald M.; Anderson, Stephen A.; Britner, Preston A.; Liefeld, Julie A.

This article highlights a study which examined the relationship between contextual assets within the lives of urban, poor, minority youth, and youth adjustment. The assets studied were family support and supportive involvement in neighborhood youth centers. The results indicated that higher levels of family support and youth center involvement were associated with better youth outcomes. An absence of significant interaction effects indicated that strong involvement and support in one setting did not compensate for a low level of support or involvement in the other setting. Family support was found to be the most significant predictor of youth adjustment.

Educator Perceptions of Conflict Interactions Among Young Children in Inner-city Elementary and Middle Schools [Article 090403FA006]

Wilburn, Victor R.; Huff, Jonathan; Belay, Getinet

This study investigated the perceptions of educational professionals regarding the rising issue of aggressive and disruptive behaviors among young children in inner-city schools. A convenient sample of 14 professionals were selected and interviewed from educators in an inner-city located in the northeast region of Ohio. Evidence of this investigation suggests that young children's aggressive behaviors are increasing in both occurrence and complexity. While these behaviors are perceived to be a function of certain environmental exposures, a case can be made for the effectiveness in conflict management and life skill application in young children as many children seem to display more problems in collective and social settings.

Program Articles

Positive Youth Development through Civic Engagement [Article 090403PA001]

Parker, Jennifer S.; Bauknight, Laura

As part of the 175th anniversary celebration of Spartanburg, South Carolina, three local foundations and the United Way agreed to fund a youth leadership project. A University of South Carolina Upstate (USC Upstate) faculty member with expertise in youth development and the coordinator of the Spartanburg Youth Council agreed to develop the project and serve as

the project directors. We developed a youth philanthropy project with expected outcomes of positive development, increased awareness of community issues, and greater civic engagement for the youth. A group of eighteen teens participated in the yearlong project. Interactive workshops on topics such as community goals, grant writing, writing the request for proposals and reviewing grants were conducted. At the culmination of the project, the young philanthropists awarded grants totaling \$12,000 to eight youth serving organizations. The teens reported many positive developmental experiences and greater awareness of community needs and increased responsibility to their community.

Project H.O.P.E.: Effective University Engagement with Community Afterschool Programs [Article 090403PA002]

Jentleson, Barbara; Henderson, Elizabeth; Johnson, Denice M.

Implemented in 2002 by the Duke-Durham Neighborhood Partnership, Project H.O.P.E. has improved the quantity and quality of afterschool programs for the youth of Durham, NC. Project H.O.P.E. provides tutoring programs, enrichment resources, and evaluation support to non-profit community partner organizations located in the low income Durham neighborhoods surrounding Duke University. Duke University undergraduates who provide tutoring services to the Durham youth in the afterschool programs gain from valuable reciprocal service learning experiences. Project H.O.P.E. is an effective model of the mutual benefits that can be gained from effective university and community engagement in the service of at-risk students.

Research and Evaluation Strategies

Methodological Note: On Using Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) for Survey Administration in the Study of Youth Development [Article 090403RS001]

Abo-Zena, Mona M.; Warren, Amy Eva Alberts; Issac, Sonia S.; Du, Dan; Phelps, Erin; Lerner, Richard M.; Roeser, Robert W.

Applied developmental scientists face the challenge of identifying research methods that enable the efficient collection of data from youth of diverse social backgrounds (e.g., ethnic, racial, religious, economic) and varying levels cognitive-linguistic and attentional skills. In addition, because access to youth during school time is often limited by educators' desire to preserve instructional time, finding methodologies to collect data from youth that are highly efficient, and also those that are feasible in less structured settings, are needed. This article outlines some of the benefits and limitations of using a voice-enhanced survey delivered on a personal digital assistants (PDA) as a method of gathering data from diverse youth in both, in and out-of-school contexts.

Resource Review

Coaching the Camp Coach: Leadership Development for Small Organizations [Article 090403RR001]

Hedrick, Jason; Homan, Greg

Coaching is an important component of successful professional growth for leaders within any organization. However, organizations with limited resources may have challenges providing such coaching opportunities. This can be especially true for small business, non profit organizations and summer camps. "Coaching the Camp Coach; Leadership Development for Small Organizations" by Shelton, M. (2003) provides a framework, both in theory and practice, for camp leaders to improve interpersonal and intrapersonal skills through self evaluation. Accompanying the book is a CD-ROM that has multiple worksheets to be used in conjunction with the text.

Opportunities Matter: Exploring Youth's Perspectives on Their Long-Term Participation in an Urban 4-H Youth Development Program

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Opportunities Matter: Exploring Youth's Perspectives on Their Long-Term Participation in an Urban 4-H Youth Development Program

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Abstract: This article highlights a study which explored youths' perspectives on their long-term involvement at Adventure Central, a comprehensive 4-H youth development program based at an urban park facility. We conducted four focus groups with 16 youth between the ages of 12 and 16 who had participated in the program between three and seven years. The youth experienced a wide range of opportunities including nature-related activities, jobs at park facilities, and travel. They spoke positively of their experiences and described how they benefited from their participation. Novelty, challenge, and leadership were key features of these opportunities. The youth noted the connection between learning and fun. In the process, they learned new skills, such as teamwork and public speaking, and developed personal qualities, such as responsibility, that helped them as they were growing up, transferred to other settings, and would benefit them in the future. Findings from this study suggest some clear implications for youth development professionals.

Introduction

Programs for Adolescents

Within the youth development field, interest is growing in programs that address the needs of middle school and high school youth (Barr, Birmingham, Fornal, Klein, & Piha, 2006; Hall, Israel, & Shortt, 2004; Harris, 2008; Miller, 2003; Pittman, Yohalem, Wilson-Ahlstrom, & Ferber, 2003; Wynn, 2003; Yohalem, Wilson-Ahlstrom, & Pittman, 2005). Youth development professionals recognize that adolescence is a time of major developmental changes, and they are able to intentionally address these changes through their program offerings (Walker, Marczak, Blyth, & Borden 2005; Walker, 2006). During this time, adolescents are also expected to acquire a range of skills that will help them to make a successful transition to adulthood (Zarrett & Eccles, 2006).

Programs for this age group must respond to their changing interests (Chaskin & Baker, 2006) and developmental tasks to be a good fit (Eccles et al., 1993; Walker, 2006). Researchers suggest that older youth may desire different program offerings and different patterns of participation than younger youth. (Harris, 2008; Herrera & Arbretton, 2003; Marczak, Dworkin, Skuza & Beyers, 2006; Vandell et al., 2006). Youth programs are characterized by voluntary participation, and youth typically experience high levels of motivation and interest in the types of activities these programs offer (Larson, 2000; Vandell, Shernoff, Pierce, Bolt, Dadisman, & Brown, 2005). Results of research studies suggest that the success of programs for older youth may be related to the availability of leadership roles and whether there are opportunities for choice in the content and structure of activities (Harris, 2008).

Benefits of Participation

The current body of research indicates that youth obtain developmental benefits from consistent participation in well-run, quality youth programs (e.g., Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Little & Harris, 2003; Little, Wimer, & Weiss, 2008; Scott-Little, Hamann, & Jurs, 2002; Vandell et al., 2006). Through such programs, youth are able to meet needs for belonging, connection, independence, and mastery (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Kress, 2006). Research suggests that to derive the benefits of participating in youth programs, youth must participate with sufficient frequency, over a long enough period of time, and in a variety of activities (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Metz, Goldsmith, & Arbretton, 2008; Rose-Krasnor, Busseri, Willoughby, & Chalmers, 2006; Vandell et al., 2005; Vandell et al., 2006).

Studies have shown that higher frequency of participation is associated with increased developmental outcomes (Hansen & Larson, 2007; Little & Harris, 2003). Additionally, frequency and breadth of participation (i.e., participation in a variety of activities) were found to relate to more positive well-being, higher academic orientation, stronger interpersonal bonds, and less risk behavior involvement (Rose-Krasnor et al., 2006). Regarding duration of participation, longer participation was related to more favorable development (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Vandell et al., 2006). Although little is known about the ideal amount of participation, most likely it is not "one size fits all," but dependent upon who is involved and under what conditions. We know that participation matters (Weiss, Little, & Bouffard, 2005), and there continues to be interest in outcomes of long-term participation.

Of course, the necessary condition is that youth must participate in programs to derive these benefits. However, participation is more than simply showing up, and joining and persisting in out-of-school activities is a dynamic process (Lock & Costello, 2001). Recent research seems to indicate that youth may initially have extrinsic motivations for participating, but over time, they may adopt the program's goals as their own (Pearce & Larson, 2006). Consequently, these conditions would lead them to become engaged participants, that is, "being actively involved in cognitive and social endeavors that promote growth" (Weiss et al., 2005, p. 24). When youth are engaged in such a manner, they experience the benefits of participation more fully.

Several factors are thought to enhance engagement. Recent research has begun to make the connection between youth engagement as the mechanism that leads to youth outcomes (Miller & Hall, 2006; Pearce & Larson, 2006). Studies show that youth desire new and challenging activities, as well as opportunities for leadership, to hold meaningful roles, and to carry out real responsibilities (Arbretton, Bradshaw, Metz, Sheldon, & Pepper, 2008; Chaskin & Baker, 2006; Hansen & Larson, 2007; Harris, 2008; Pearce & Larson, 2006). Studies also show that these conditions are present in many organized youth activities (Hansen, Larsen, & Dworkin, 2003).

However, youth programs often experience a decline in their adolescent enrollment (Russell & Heck, 2008; Vandell et al., 2006). Such a decline may be problematic because participation sustained over time is thought to lead to more positive outcomes than casual or irregular participation (Miller, 2003; Weiss et al., 2005). Russell and Heck (2008) suggest that the dropout phenomenon may be due to a mismatch between youth programs and youths' developmental needs, a view that is supported by Eccles et al.'s (1993) theory of stage-environment fit. Thus, it is important to understand what aspects of youth programs are sufficiently engaging to sustain long-term participation.

Participation in 4-H Programs

One specific organization is 4-H, the country's largest youth development organization, with more than seven million youth members and 500,000 volunteers (Kress, 2006). 4-H has a long, rich history of positive educational programs designed to develop citizenship, leadership, and life skills. Youth participate in 4-H through a variety of delivery modes, including clubs, camps, school enrichment, and after-school programs. Although 4-H is often associated with its agricultural roots in rural areas, programs are also located in suburban and urban communities across the country and on military installations around the world.

Studies of 4-H programs have used various approaches, including alumni studies, surveys of current members, comparison with non-members, and surveys of key informants (i.e., volunteer leaders, staff, and parents). Overall, studies of 4-H members show that participation leads to the development of many skills. For example, youth develop their abilities to work in teams, speak in public, meet new people, and assume responsibility as a result of their participation, whether through camps (Digby & Ferrari, 2007; Ferrari & McNeely, 2007; Garst & Johnson, 2005) community service (Hairston, 2004), or overall participation (National 4-H Impact Assessment, 2001; Fox, Schroeder, & Lodl, 2003; Maass, Wilken, Jordan, Culen, & Place, 2006). In a recent survey in Ohio, half of the 4-H members in 5th, 7th, and 9th grades indicated their participation in 4-H has been critical to their success in life (Lewis, 2008).

Longitudinal research has shown that 4-H youth were more likely to be on a positive youth development trajectory than comparison youth (Lerner, Lerner, & Phelps, 2008). 4-H members and alumni repeatedly have identified the development of leadership skills as an important aspect of their 4-H involvement (Mulroy & Kraimer-Rickaby, 2006). Consistent with the literature that identifies leadership experiences as a key component of programs for adolescents, Russell and Heck (2008) found that those 4-H members in leadership positions had a low risk of dropping out.

4-H, however, is not immune from declining membership as youth reach their adolescent years (Albright, 2008; Lauxman, 2002; Russell & Heck, 2008). Those programs that have been able to attract and engage adolescents over time bear further examination. The current study is designed to explore such issues of participation.

Purpose

The study reported here is part of a larger investigation of long-term participation in 4-H youth development programs. In the current study we explored youths' perspectives of their involvement at Adventure Central, a comprehensive 4-H youth development program based at an urban park facility in Dayton, Ohio. Specifically, we wanted to learn about the opportunities

they considered meaningful and ways in which these opportunities provided a context for learning and development.

Program Setting

Adventure Central was developed in response to a community need for positive youth development programs (Cochran, Arnett, & Ferrari, 2007). It is a partnership between Ohio State University (OSU) Extension's 4-H Youth Development program and Five Rivers MetroParks in Dayton, Ohio. Serving as a hub for out-of-school time programming, Adventure Central brings the 4-H experience into an urban environment for youth ages 5 through 18 during out-of-school hours. Beginning with just 25 youth when pilot programming started in October 2000, total enrollment for the 2007-2008 year has grown to 380 youth and their parents. There have been over 64,000 total contact hours with youth in after-school, day camp, and residential camping programs, and youth attended at least 100 days of programming (with some attending as many as 160 days). During the school year, youth typically attend three hours a day, whereas in the summer attendance averages seven hours.

The Adventure Central program is housed in a renovated one-floor building with an open, central reception area that includes lockers for youth to store their belongings. The building consists of a multi-purpose room, kitchen, staff offices, five classrooms, and a mobile lab of fifteen laptop computers. Situated on over 60 acres, outdoor space includes raised bed gardens, a fenced play area, access to a creek, a paved recreation trail, and hiking trails, all providing an opportunity for a variety of interactions with the natural environment. This physical location is particularly relevant in an urban area, as it has allowed for a consistent, stable presence and identity in the neighborhood.

Youth at Adventure Central have the potential to benefit from broad participation in terms of the intensity, duration, and breadth of the programming opportunities available. The center is open for programming between 1:30 and 8:00 p.m. from Monday through Thursday during the school year and offers expanded hours in the summer. Program delivery at Adventure Central includes after-school, summer day camp, parent engagement, and teen programming. Program offerings include homework assistance, computer lab, and activities in the areas of science, nature, literacy, and healthy lifestyles. In addition, youth have the opportunity to develop workforce skills, leadership, and cultural literacy through participation in a youth board, supervised job experiences, and special projects. An emphasis is placed on hands-on, experiential activities that use research-based curriculum. In addition, there is an embedded curriculum that addresses developing personal qualities, such as respect and responsibility, and life skills, such as leadership, teamwork, and communication. This is accomplished by such means as a code of conduct, as well as an emphasis on building relationships with peers and adult role models.

The two 4-H Youth Development educators from Ohio State University (OSU) Extension who lead the Adventure Central program spend much of their time on staff development and training. A diverse staff mix – in terms of background, age, gender, race, level of education, and other characteristics – is an important part of Adventure Central. Partnerships with the local universities and organizations have provided the service of six full-time AmeriCorps members. In 2007, 150 volunteers contributed over 20,000 hours working with youth.

Adventure Central's program is guided by a framework that incorporates the features of positive developmental settings (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; National 4-H Impact Assessment, 2001), essential elements (Kress, 2006), and the six Cs – competence, confidence, character, caring,

connection, and contribution (Lerner, 2006; Lerner et al., 2005); this framework is described in more detail elsewhere (Cochran, Arnett, & Ferrari, 2007). In addition, continuous monitoring and evaluation ensure that the programs at Adventure Central are aligned with best practices in youth development.

Using multiple evaluation methods, several studies indicate that Adventure Central is meeting the developmental needs of its participants. Evaluation at Adventure Central has focused on aspects of overall program quality (Ferrari, Paisley, Turner, Arnett, Cochran, & McNeely, 2002) youth-adult relationships (Paisley & Ferrari, 2005), motivation for participation and retention of teens (Ferrari & Turner, 2006), parental perceptions (Ferrari, Futris, Smathers, Cochran, Arnett, & Digby, 2006), and workforce skills (Ferrari, Arnett, & Cochran, 2008).

Sample and Methodology

Miller (2003) noted that youth programs often offer intangibles that are hard to quantify. Thus, we chose to employ qualitative methods. Specifically, we chose to explore the unique perspective of the youth participants through focus groups.

To develop questions, we followed procedures recommended by Patton (1990) and Krueger and Casey (2000). Questions were semi-structured and open-ended to elicit youths' perspectives. They addressed how participation has been helpful to them, attitudes and skills they have acquired, opportunities afforded to them, and their insight into program features that have captured their interest and engaged them in sustained participation.

We conducted four focus groups with a total of 16 participants out of a possible 19 who met the criterion of having attended the program for at least three years. Several youth had attended the program since its inception in 2000 when they were 5 or 6 years old. Average attendance in the program was five years. Participants, all of whom were African-American, were between the ages of 11 and 16 ($M = 13.75$). Four were male and 12 were female. Each interview lasted approximately 1 to 1 ½ hours and took place at Adventure Central. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for analysis.

We examined the interview transcripts and identified key themes related to the research questions, then engaged in an iterative process of clarification and refinement regarding these themes. Transcripts were coded in accordance with the themes, and passages were grouped together to categorize the main ideas as presented by the youth.

Results: Youth Responses

In the interviews, youth discussed the types of opportunities they had over the years as participants in the Adventure Central program. They spoke about a variety of different opportunities, many of which involved specific things they learned or did and their interactions with people within the context of the after-school setting. In the next section, we describe the types of opportunities that were meaningful from the youths' perspective. Further analysis of these opportunities led us to look at their salient features, in other words, how opportunities matter.

Types of Opportunities

The opportunities to do new things included experiences with nature as well as with the workforce. Because of the program's physical location in an urban park facility, there was a

unique opportunity for participants to “be with nature right in the middle of the city.” Other nature-related experiences included regular trips to the nearby creek, fishing, and overnight camping. Workforce-related experiences included filling out job applications, developing resumes, and having a job interview, as well as actual on-the-job experiences at Adventure Central and other parks within the MetroParks system.

Opportunities to go places were viewed positively. The youth spoke at length about their experiences in the Teamwork and Cultural Literacy program, where they traveled out of state and experienced how other cultures lived. Another new type of opportunity was for public speaking, with participants noting that “in almost every activity we do, you are speaking.” In addition to these everyday activities, they gave presentations at national conferences, the state fair, and other local and state 4-H events.

There were many opportunities for the youth to have leadership roles, such as serving on committees and helping younger children with activities and homework. They noted that “we actually ran our own meetings.” The youth were able to give back through community service activities like Make a Difference Day. They were also able to give their opinions and input, for example, about the types of activities offered.

Participants spent some of their time at Adventure Central in more everyday activities such as doing homework, hanging out with friends, eating a meal, and playing games. All of the opportunities provided the context for learning new knowledge and skills. What they learned ranged from general –“you learn about the world and stuff” – to more specific knowledge, such as the names of plants, the need for exercise, and the dangers of smoking. Among the skills they learned were leadership, teamwork, decision making, and emotional regulation.

These opportunities also provided the context for positive interactions with adults and peers. The youth placed a high value on the relationships they were able to form through Adventure Central, indicating they felt welcomed by others and found it easy to fit in. In addition, respondents remarked how they enjoyed meeting youth in other states through Adventure Central’s trips and activities. They felt supported by the staff, who listened to them (“You have people to talk to here....you know the people here are going to listen to you.”) and who helped them to “make sure you are on the right path” and to work through any personal difficulties they were having.

How Opportunities Matter

As youth reflected on their experiences, additional insights about these opportunities became clear. In our second wave of analysis, we were able to identify the salient aspects of these opportunities. Although the content of what the youth learned was important, more meaningful was the value these opportunities held in terms of their development.

Opportunities keep them coming back. The youth spoke about how coming to Adventure Central had opened new doors for them. “I came here because of new opportunities and new experiences that you won’t have at home. I do have fun at home, but the stuff you do here you might not do at home.” Fun was mentioned often in connection with why the youth liked coming to Adventure Central. In addition to the things they got to do, people figured prominently in their comments.

“We are actually out getting into stuff, field trips, meet new people, learn new things. I think that is what keeps me coming back. The people too.”

"I like learning stuff here and coming here and seeing everyone everyday. I know everybody here since I have been here so long. It is fun."

"Adventure Central is like a home away from home and it's fun and you get to see your friends."

Multiple opportunities are available. Youth had multiple opportunities to participate in particular activities and to learn certain skills. It appears that they learned through a process of repeated exposure to new opportunities. This repeated exposure helped them to "get used to it," for example, to become more comfortable with the natural environment and not to be afraid when speaking in front of groups.

"I started working at [one of the MetroParks], and I didn't want to work with plants and there used to be a lot of bugs and bees. I do not like bees. Then, I started getting used to it and it all went well. Plus the people you work with....They are in there and make you laugh, and then they get you to doing stuff. You just end up liking it."

"Before...I didn't say anything. Now in a group I can talk."

"I went to the Ohio State Fair two years in a row and did a presentation. My first year, I was real scared and intimidated, but my friends I was working with were used to it and they weren't scared. So, they started talking to me about it. The second time I was used to it. I was ready."

"You look forward to coming here every year looking for something different instead of looking at the same thing over and over again."

As a result of opportunities like those mentioned above, respondents' attitudes changed and their confidence increased. This shift in attitude is exemplified by one participant, who initially described herself as someone who liked to be inside, but who now "didn't want to be inside, I wanted to be outside and get dirty." As another youth noted, "it is hard to be shy because there are so many activities where it involves speaking and a team. You got to work with people. It is hard to be reserved."

Opportunities change with age and maturity. The youth appreciated the new opportunities and experiences they had as they became older. These opportunities often involved novelty ("things I never imagined I'd do"), challenge ("getting out of my comfort zone"), responsibility, and being able to do "real" work within the program and beyond.

"You get different opportunities as you get older. When I first started coming here we played with our friends. Once you get to a certain group they ask you to do certain things and to be more involved in different programs and stuff...now we have the JET [Job Experience and Training] program, doing new things every day."

The youth felt they were viewed as role models, and that the younger children might be encouraged to remain with the program by watching what they did: "I think once the little kids see what we do, it makes them want to do that. So, they might stick around until they get bigger." They also recognized that they had to earn more freedom by demonstrating that they could accept the responsibility that went along with it. For the most part, youth thought that

the amount of responsibility they had was just about right. However, some youth felt they might be able to handle even more responsibility.

"As we got older...we had to make more decisions and have a little bit more say-so. They let us run our activities. Say we wanted to do papier mache, if we give a valid reason why...I'm pretty sure we could do it. We have to show our responsibilities. We also have to do our part and be respectful at the same time. If our group leader might say no, we have to be able to take it as maybe; if we showed her we are capable of doing it, then maybe we'd be able to do it."

As youth got older, they had opportunities to contribute; not only were they asked to give input, but they felt that their ideas were taken seriously.

"They [the program leaders] asked people what they thought, what helped, what did they think they should do or what do you think they would enjoy. They gave us some of their ideas and we gave them feedback. Now, you can see some of the stuff starting to happen."

Taking advantage of available opportunities. The youth recognized if they took advantage of the opportunities made available to them, they could "get something good out of it." They also felt that people needed to be open to trying new things. On more than one occasion, youth spoke about being presented with and taking advantage of opportunities to "get out of my comfort zone." They often took advantage of these opportunities even though they were unsure of the outcome. Their willingness to take such risks implies a sense of safety and trust in the adult staff members. Some of these experiences were with nature, work experiences, and experiences they encountered on some of their travels.

"You've got to be willing to try different stuff though. Because like when you have to go for an interview. I was freaked out. I was scared."

"We went to a camp. We were supposed to make a house to sleep in out of cardboard boxes we taped. I was thinking that sleeping outside was not going to work. I got out of my comfort zone. We tasted different foods from different places and different types of stuff and that took us out of our comfort zone."

"They had us do the high ropes, and I am not afraid of heights, but I can't stand being high at a certain level, and we had a little harness on, and I got halfway through it and there was a rope that you had to swing across...I was happy that I did it at the end."

Making good choices and staying out of trouble. The youth felt that Adventure Central provided them with a positive alternative and kept them out of trouble and undesirable neighborhoods. As one young person explained, "It's a good place to be. It has kept me out of trouble. If I didn't come here and went straight home from school, I don't know what I would be doing." Others echoed that sentiment:

"I think Adventure Central has kept me out of trouble because there is no telling what I would be doing. Probably sitting on the couch eating potato chips."

"Coming here has really kept me out of trouble. Where I live, it is nothing but trouble. When I leave from here, I might sit on my front porch for awhile; I refuse to walk

around the neighborhood. We do go outside here, and we do learn about decision making and all that.”

Clearly, having a place to go was important, but it was also the activities and the people that were beneficial.

“Here if you do something wrong, they teach you and they show you how it can affect you or how much trouble it can get you in. They have programs like *Health Rocks*, and they teach us not to do drugs...they teach us not to do bad stuff and not to be involved with violence.”

The youth noted that a difference between school and Adventure Central was the people: “you get a talk from somebody with experience, somebody who has done the same thing.”

Learning and having fun are connected. The youth also recognized that they were learning and having fun at the same time. “I like it a lot here. Not only is it educational, but it is fun here as well. You get to learn a lot of stuff that you don’t learn at school here.” In addition to an overall fun atmosphere, there were certain themes in their responses. The creek, in particular, was a place that was associated with fun. Youth also reported that it was not simply the opportunity to do activities that they might do elsewhere, but that “you exercise in a fun way.” When the youth spoke of their work experiences, they often were described as initially challenging, but ultimately enjoyable.

“Working at the arboretum, I had no choice but to touch the caterpillars because that is what I was working with and that is what I was getting paid for. It wasn’t just me getting paid for it. It was a lot of fun and I got to do a lot of things that I thought I wouldn’t like to do but ended up liking a lot.”

Learning transfers to other settings. Furthermore, youth also recognized that what they learned through Adventure Central’s programs carried over into other areas of their life, at school, at home, and at work.

“Now when I go to different places, it is easier for me to adapt with different people and their backgrounds.”

“One thing that is important to me is responsibility because after working through the JET program I take more responsibility in doing my chores now because before then I really didn’t do anything around the house. It helped me with my school work because I didn’t take any responsibility if I had to get something done.”

“At [my job at another park], I didn’t know I was doing as well as I was doing. I was just doing things that I learned here and that I know how to do. [That makes] you feel a lot better about yourself. Like you can do this and you can do that.”

Helping in the future. Youth also felt the skills they were learning now would help them in their future careers. It is notable that when they spoke of skills they learned, they mentioned skills termed *21st century skills* (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2003), that is, those such as leadership, problem solving, and teamwork, that apply to many jobs rather than those skills that are job specific.

"I want to be a lawyer when I grow up, and I think Adventure Central will have a part of that because being a lawyer you have to work with the person you are defending or the person who is having a problem. You have to learn to talk with them. You have to be like a mini team, so team working skills. Then, when you are in the court you have to talk in front of people, so public speaking skills also. I think all of those things would help me at that job."

"I know that the program would help me with sports management because I had to plan so many activities while I was here."

"I think it will help you anywhere or in any job you decide to go to. It will just help you to be able to be in the work environment, being able to deal with coworkers, being able to deal with difficult people who you might not always get along with, and people that are different than you."

In summary, the youth experienced a wide range of opportunities throughout their years of participation at Adventure Central. They spoke positively of their experiences, of the ways they had grown personally, and of their relationships with peers and staff. They learned new skills that helped them as they were growing up and also recognized the ways in which their participation would benefit them in the future.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to explore long-term participation in a 4-H youth development program in an urban after-school setting. As after-school programs take a growing interest in serving middle school and high school youth, it is critical to understand how to best meet their needs through program offerings and structures that are different from what exists for younger children. The youth in this study were able to articulate clearly not only how they benefited from their participation, but also what specific program aspects were meaningful to them. Clearly, our study documented that Adventure Central has affected participants' lives in positive ways, such as having new opportunities they wouldn't have had otherwise.

As youth move into late adolescence, they must begin to make critical decisions about their future educational and employment plans. The youth in this study gained new knowledge and skills, particularly in areas of interpersonal relationships, communication, and job preparation. These competencies enhanced their feelings of confidence and self-mastery at the present time, and also prepared them for a successful transition into young adulthood, higher education, and the world of work. With employers increasingly concerned that many entrants to the workforce lack essential skills (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Levy & Murnane, 2006), it is important for youth development professionals to intentionally address how their programs might assist in this transition (Cochran & Ferrari, 2008). The opportunity to explore new interests, work in small groups with others, learn real work skills, and connect with the broader community through after-school programs is "emerging as one of the nation's most promising strategies for developing twenty-first century skills" (Schwarz & Stolow, 2006, p. 81). This is especially critical for urban minority youth who face challenges with respect to their transition to the workforce (e.g., Constantine, Erickson, Banks, & Timberlake, 1998; Lippman, Atienza, Rivers, & Keith, 2008).

We found that Adventure Central integrated meaningful and enjoyable ways of learning, and did so in a way to reflect the changing developmental needs from middle to late childhood, and

into adolescence. Although structured differently than most 4-H club programs, the youth were engaged in typical 4-H opportunities, such as learning subject-specific knowledge, public speaking, leadership, camping, attending and presenting at 4-H conferences, and participating in the state fair, that were beneficial learning experiences, as well as being engaged in additional opportunities unique to Adventure Central. It should be noted that youth at Adventure Central participate with greater frequency than if they were members of a typical 4-H club. However, the current study as well as previous research has documented the existence of positive youth-staff relationships (Paisley & Ferrari, 2005), a sense of belonging (Ferrari et al., 2006; Ferrari & Turner, 2006), and mastery of skills (Ferrari et al., 2008), demonstrating that the essential elements are present to facilitate learning and development.

As the youth grew older, they saw new opportunities they could aspire to, such as serving as a teen leader or participating in the workforce skills program. They were given more responsibility and challenged in new ways. The opportunity to take on new tasks and master new skills are necessary components of intentional youth development programs. Such opportunities for progressive learning and leadership are important because they allow youth to maintain their interest and continue their involvement as they get older (Walker, 2006). It is evident that the youth felt these skills were now helping them in other settings and they were able to articulate how skills learned in Adventure Central has helped them at home and school. They also could envision how these skills could help in the future.

The results of this study lend support to those who note that environments suited for adolescents' developmental needs must provide sufficient amounts of both support and challenge (Eccles et al., 1993). The youth trusted their peers and the adult staff, who helped them safely navigate new or frightening situations such as public speaking, having a job, camping, or other aspects of the natural environment that were unfamiliar to them. Furthermore, the findings support other research indicating that challenging activities (Miller & Hall, 2006) and leadership roles (Arbreton et al., 2008; Chaskin & Baker, 2006; Hansen & Larson, 2007; Harris, 2008; Pearce & Larson, 2006) are important for development. Lacking such challenges, youth may not experience significant growth.

Finally, from a theoretical perspective, the findings lend support to the usefulness of stage-environment fit (Eccles et al., 1993) and developmental intentionality (Walker, 2006; Walker et al., 2005) to inform youth development programs. They are also congruent with the grounded theory being developed by Larson and his colleagues (e.g., Larson, 2007; Larson & Brown, 2007; Larson & Hansen, 2005; Larson, Hansen, & Walker, 2005; Larson et al., 2004; Larson & Walker, 2006; Larson & Wood, 2006; Pearce & Larson, 2006; Watkins, Larson, & Sullivan, 2007). Specifically, their work has sought to describe the ingredients of positive youth development and the processes of developmental change. Larson (2000) contends that youth activities provide a "fertile context" for development to occur (p. 178). Researchers and practitioners should consider using these theoretical perspectives to inform their work.

Implications

The findings from this study suggest some clear implications for youth development professionals. As expected, we gained valuable insight about what programs can do to actively engage teens. Specifically, youth development professionals can look for ways to increase the developmental value of opportunities for youth in the following ways.

1. Intentionally develop activities that are relevant in the world outside of the program to enable participants to make the transition to adulthood.
2. Provide youth with progressively more challenging experiences, responsible roles, and leadership opportunities.
3. These experiences may take youth out of their comfort zone; therefore, ensure that adults provide sufficient supports, such as helping youth break a project into manageable steps and set realistic goals for their work (Larson, Hansen, & Walker, 2005).

Both scholars and practitioners have noted that youth do not gain skills and develop into caring, contributing citizens by simply showing up at programs (e.g., Weiss et al., 2005). The two-pronged challenge of recruitment (attracting youth early so they grow up within an organizational culture of positive youth development) and retention (keeping them involved in meaningful ways to foster engagement) will continue to be a concern of youth development professionals. By asking youth to describe their perspective, it was clear that it was not any single activity that was the “magic bullet” of engagement. In fact, to assume so would be missing the point. For example, we found that experiences with nature were important to the participants in our study. Does that mean that program planners should rush to include nature in their programs? Not necessarily, or at least not for this reason, because other activities, such as the arts (e.g., Larson & Brown, 2007; Larson & Walker, 2006), can produce similar results. Instead, it is important to understand *why* these particular experiences were salient. The key appears to be knowing that opportunities matter, ensuring that they are intentionally designed with adolescents’ needs and interests in mind, and ensuring that the contexts of these opportunities contain features known to contribute to positive development (e.g., caring adults).

This study provides support to the growing body of literature on positive outcomes of long-term participation and how the opportunities provided by such programs lead to youth becoming engaged participants, able to reap the developmental benefits afforded by their participation. However, youth development professionals’ job is never done, as they must continue to reflect on what works and why, and then act on this understanding.

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Afterschool Programs in America: Origins, Growth, Popularity, and Politics

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After-school Programs in America: Origins, Growth, Popularity, and Politics

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Abstract: The historical and recent growth of afterschool program (ASPs) in the U.S. Particular attention is given to the recent history of social and political influences that have led to growth and current popularity of ASPs. The article begins by reviewing changes in schooling and the labor force that created a supervision gap between the school day of children and work day of parents. This gap contributed to the need for afterschool child care. Next, influences leading to a growing recognition of the significance of school-age childcare for working families and their children, including research on the potential risks of self care and benefits of well-designed ASPs, are described. These discussions are contextualized alongside decades of social and political action and debate over the development of and funding for ASPs in America. Several key factors likely to affect after-school programming in the near future are discussed.

Introduction

Although considerable attention has been devoted to afterschool programs (ASPs) over the last two decades (e.g., Mahoney, Parente, & Zigler, in press; Vandell, Pierce, & Dadisman, 2005), these contexts have been part of American culture for over a century. This article discusses the origins of ASPs and overviews the history of social and political influences that have led to their growth and current popularity. We cover some of the most salient factors affecting the emergence and expansion of ASPs including: changes in the adult labor force, the disappearance of child labor, increasing worry over children's safety in dangerous neighborhoods, recognition that (a lack of) supervision for children during the hours following school dismissal has consequences for their in-school success and psychosocial well-being. We

also examine social-political efforts to expand – or in some cases thwart – the growth of these afterschool programs.

Origins of Afterschool Programs

ASPs emerged primarily from historical changes in children's participation in the labor force and formal schooling (Halpern, 2002). During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the need and desire for American children to participate in the growing industrialized labor force decreased. Groups such as the Children's Bureau, religious institutions, and labor unions worked diligently to end child labor force participation, believing it morally wrong for children to work, especially in dangerous occupations.

Simultaneously, educational expectations for children increased and were bolstered by compulsory education laws passed in the late 1800s. The creation of universal, compulsory education led to an extended period of discretionary time during the afterschool hours for children in the U.S. (Kleiber & Powell, 2005). This fact, coupled with the decrease in child labor, led to what Halpern (2002) described as a "distinct childhood culture" resulting from the larger period between childhood/adolescence and the transition to early adulthood. Drop-in afterschool centers, first called "boys' clubs," appeared in the latter part of the 1800s to fill this idle time. The turn of the century, however, brought with it the idea that more structured play activities would be beneficial for children's growth and development (Lee, 1915). ASPs were subsequently created with mission statements and purposes beyond those of basic child care (e.g., to provide developmental supports to working families, build children's social and academic competencies).

Factors Affecting the Growth of Afterschool Programs

Changes in the American labor force. From their origins to the present, a major factor accelerating the growth of ASPs has been changes in family and labor force participation. Specifically, the rise in women's participation in the paid labor force created a need for child supervision that was no longer being met by traditional family roles and structure. This increase rose sharply in the years during and following World War II. By 1955, 38% of mothers with children 6-17 were employed (U.S. Department of Labor, 2005). Since then, the percentage has continued to increase, with 46%, 55%, 70%, and 76% of mothers employed in 1965, 1975, 1985, and 1995, respectively. In 2004, 78% of mothers with school age children were working (U.S. Department of Labor, 2005). These changes in labor force participation were driven by several factors including economic necessity and the rise in single-parent families.

Rising rates of maternal employment had a significant impact on child care in America. As a result of the gap between the end of the school day for children and the work day of their parents, direct parental supervision of children during the afterschool hours became impossible for many working families. The supervision gap, along with the growing child study movement, (White, 2000) increased attention on the need for adult-supervised and safe afterschool activities for school-aged children (Halpern, 2002; Kleiber & Powell, 2005).

More recently, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (i.e., welfare reform) has specifically affected parental employment among low-income families. This legislation eliminated cash assistance to families with children as an entitlement program (i.e., AFDC) and provided strong incentive for adults to move from welfare to participation in the paid labor force (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (NRC-IOM), 2003).

Although it is difficult to demonstrate causation, rates of employment among poor, single mothers did increase in the years following welfare reform and a considerable amount of the recent political and scientific attention surrounding ASPs has focused on the safety and supervision needs for low-income working families with children (Casey, Ripke, & Huston, 2005; Halpern, 1999; Vandell & Shumow, 1999). Despite this recent attention, the current provision of ASPs does not meet the needs of many working families in America (Stonehill, 2005) and parents continue to struggle with afterschool childcare needs as a result. We discuss the issue of supply and demand for ASPs and the current status of funding for families in more detail later in this section.

The changing American neighborhood. Changes and concerns over the neighborhood context have also affected the growth of afterschool programs. The expansion of urban areas and tenement housing in the early part of the twentieth century extended children's play environments into the surrounding streets and raised new concerns about child health and safety. By the 1960s, inner-city neighborhoods were becoming more dangerous settings for children as a reflection of what Halpern described as "a breakdown of traditional social organization, a decline in informal social control, and shift from turf-focused gang conflict to drug-related violence" (Halpern, 2002, p. 200). Concerns over the impact of exposure to neighborhood crime and violence continues to the present and the potentially deleterious effects of such exposure for children's academic and social development are now well documented (e.g., Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998; Greenberg, Lengua, Coie, & Pinderhughes, 1999; Salzinger, Feldman, Stockhammer, & Hood, 2002).

With regard to afterschool time, gang violence and juvenile crime peak between 3pm-6pm (Newman, Fox, Flynn, & Christenson, 2000). As a result, organizations such as Fight Crime: Invest in Kids have argued that ASPs can play an important role in protecting children from exposure to crime and violence through the provision of safe and adult-supervised setting. In support of this contention, Lord and Mahoney (2007) found higher rates of aggression in the school classroom and lower academic achievement for children exposed to high amounts of violent crime during the afterschool hours. The academic and social consequences of exposure to violence were particularly problematic for children whose afterschool arrangement was self care. However, attending an ASP appeared to partially buffer children against the development of such problems.

Concerns over self care. Although many parents have managed to find adult-supervised arrangements for their children during the afterschool hours, an alternative for millions of American families is self care (i.e. an afterschool arrangement where the child is not under the direct supervision of an adult for extended periods of time). Though the term is seldom used today, children in self care were once called "latchkey children" for the house key they wore around their necks. Today, data from the 2005 Census indicates that 14% (5.2 million) of 5- to 14-year-olds experience an average of 2-9 hours/week in self care (U.S. Census, 2005). The National Household Education Surveys Program of 2005 reports that 7% and 27% of students in Grades 3-5 and 6-8, respectively, spend time in self care at least once a week (Carver & Iruka, 2006). The America After 3pm national household survey reports that 7% (1.3 million), 34% (3.9 million), and 52% (6 million) students in grades 1-5, 6-8, and 9-12, respectively, take care of themselves after school (Afterschool Alliance, 2004).

Although historical documentation of rates in self care is scarce, U.S. Census data indicate that this arrangement has become more common for American families over recent decades (e.g., Johnson, 2005; Smith, 2000; 2002). The increase in self care likely reflects the rise in rates of

maternal employment and longer working hours, increases in the proportion of single parent families, and the lack of availability/affordable alternative afterschool arrangements for working families (e.g., Mahoney & Parente, in press; NRC-IOM, 2002; Vandell & Shumow, 1999).

One impetus for expanding ASPs is the concern that children in self care are at-risk for the development of academic and social adjustment problems. However, the developmental implications of self care for school-aged children have been a source of debate in the scientific literature and across political initiatives to intervene in afterschool child care (Mahoney & Parente, in press). On the one hand, self care was, and to some extent still is, viewed as a way of facilitating responsibility and independence. For example, along with the risks of self care, Riley and Steinberg (2004) acknowledge some possible benefits including opportunities for children to experience autonomy and develop skills apart from adults, and providing an arrangement that (without a supervised alternative) allows parents to work and earn income for the family. Scholars also note that self care is often defined poorly in the literature and may involve care from older siblings or other adults, and that some families employ communication and monitoring strategies that could reduce risks associated with self care (Mahoney & Parente, in press).

On the other hand, for decades scholars have pointed out possible dangers of self care. Indeed, the first Congressional Children's Caucus in 1983 focused on the issue of latchkey children. Child development experts who testified at this Caucus noted that, as opposed to learning through extended periods of solitude, age appropriate forms of responsibility in small increments were how children learned responsibility (Zigler, 1983). It was argued that self care could be both physically dangerous and have negative developmental outcomes, especially for pre-adolescent children.

Since the 1983 Caucus, findings from several studies support these early contentions. For example, net of demographic controls, children experiencing in-home self care have been shown to be at increased risk for:

- 1) stress, loneliness, and fear at home (e.g., Long & Long, 1983),
- 2) low social competence, grades, and academic achievement at school (e.g., Pettit et al., 1997), and
- 3) high cigarette, alcohol and marijuana use among middle school children (e.g., Richardson, Dwyer, McGuigan, Hansen, Dent & Johnson, 1989).

In addition, some research groups have found that, for low-income elementary school children, self care is linked to higher ratings of school-based externalizing behavior problems (Marshall et al., 1997; Pettit et al., 1997; Posner & Vandell, 1994). Moreover, out-of-home self care for early adolescents, which can include any unsupervised afterschool arrangement out of the home and includes activities with peers, has also been associated with low academic achievement (e.g., McHale et al., 2001), high externalizing behavior problems in the school setting (e.g., Pettit et al., 1999), and susceptibility to peer pressure (Steinberg, 1986).

These general associations vary according to the amount of self care experienced, the individual considered, and the ecological conditions in which self care takes place. For example, self care is more consistently related to adjustment problems for younger children as opposed to adolescents (e.g., Galambos & Maggs, 1991; Pettit et al., 1997; Steinberg, 1986), children with pre-existing behavior problems (Pettit et al., 1997), and youth experiencing low levels of parental monitoring (Mahoney & Parente, in press). In addition to individual characteristics, socioeconomic status and neighborhood conditions appear to moderate this relation. Negative

social and academic outcomes associated with self care are more evident among children from low-income families (e.g., Kerrebrock & Lewit, 1999; Marshall et al., 1997) and for poor children living in neighborhoods with high levels of crime and violence (e.g., Levine Coley, Morris, & Hernandez, 2004; Lord & Mahoney, 2007).

Overall, several scholars agree that unsupervised afterschool time offers fewer possibilities for developing academic and social competencies and places children at increased risk for developing adjustment problems compared to adult-supervised settings such as ASPs (Hayes, Palmer & Zaslow 1990; Mahoney & Parente, in press). This general conclusion, along with supporting scientific evidence, both helped to move the afterschool child care issue into the forefront of political discussions and bolster the demand for, and popularity of, ASPs.

Social and political influences (1969-1990). The struggle to support early and school-age child care has historically been a difficult one. Many politicians, especially conservatives, view child care as a family matter rather than a government concern. This perspective can be contrasted with the notion that government should provide child care assistance to support working mothers with young children. In response to such opposing viewpoints and the perceived needs of working families, child care has been part of the political discussions in Washington since the late 1960s. Chaired by President Nixon, the first White House Conference on Children and Youth was held in 1969. This conference led to the development of the Comprehensive Child Development Act of 1971 (also known as the Mondale-Brademas Bill), the most comprehensive child care policy ever proposed in U.S. (Morgan, 2001). As proposed, this legislation provided the right to quality child care services for all children regardless of socioeconomic status (H.R. 6748). The bill also included an emphasis on children from low-income families and offered standards for strengthening quality and evaluation for child care programs.

If passed, the Comprehensive Child Development Act would have provided \$2 billion in funding annually for child care (Morgan, 2001; Zigler, Marsland & Lord, 2009), that would meet "... the needs of children... including infant care and before and afterschool programs for children in school" (H.R. 6748, page 16). The bill aimed to ensure that any child care program, including those serving school-age children, would be available to all families, with poor families receiving full support, and others receiving funds calibrated to family income level.

However, the early release of "Windows on Daycare" in 1970, the first national report of the quality of child care developed by the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) (Keyserling, 1972; NCJW, 1999), emphasized severe limitations to quality child care in programs throughout the U.S. It was evident the nation was not prepared to implement a national child care system that would ensure quality programming for children from any age group. In the light of this information, the 1970 Conference on Child Care was organized by then-chief of the U.S. Children's Bureau, Prof. Edward Zigler (Yale University) in order to provide information on quality child care to prepare the country for the 1971 Comprehensive Child Development Act. Involving about one thousand participants, including leading national experts on childcare for children, conference discussions revolved around child care needs and solutions for three age groups – infant/toddler, preschool, and school-age children. The conference produced "cookbooks" of how to mount quality programs for all three of these groups, noting that the provision ASPs for school-age children represented the largest of opportunities for quality child care because of its relatively low cost. The informational books were distributed by the Office of Child Development, where the Children's Bureau was housed, and which would have taken the management role in the 1971 Comprehensive Development Act.

Unfortunately, the Comprehensive Development Act was vetoed by President Nixon after passing Congress. The veto sent a vitriolic message to those striving to develop quality, universal system of child care. Notably, no new legislation passed through Congress until twenty years later with the 1990 Child Care and Development Block Grant (Zigler, Marsland, & Lord, 2009).

However, Congressional discussions of afterschool time did not end with the Nixon veto in 1971. As mentioned previously, concerns about children in self care continued to grow with increasing rates of maternal employment and rising numbers of single parent families across the 1970s and early 1980s. In response, Senator Dodd (D-CT) initiated and chaired the first Congressional Children's Caucus in 1983. The topic of the first Caucus was latchkey children. At the time, testimony from experts including, Thomas Long, Evelyn Moore, Michelle Seligson and Edward Zigler, identified the provision of adult-supervised alternatives for these children as one of the most critical needs facing the American family. In addition, latchkey children themselves provided testimony on the variety of fears and risks they experienced while unsupervised during the afternoon hours. The Caucus, however, did not result in any immediate changes in funding for afterschool child care, in general, or for ASPs, specifically.

The importance of ASPs again came into the spotlight in 1988. That year, Bruce Babbitt, who had championed child care as the former governor of Arizona, sought the 1988 Democratic Party nomination for president. In developing his campaign policies, Babbitt brought together a group of twelve childcare experts to inform him on the most achievable and pressing childcare issues facing the nation. The group agreed that afterschool childcare was a realistic goal to include as a plank in his political platform for president. Although Babbitt's bid for the presidency did not come to fruition, he later became Secretary of the Interior during the Clinton administration. His interest in afterschool childcare was potentially influential to members of the administration – including First Lady Hilary Rodham Clinton. Indeed, President Clinton's interest and progress in afterschool child care reflected the First Lady's orientation to improving child care in the U.S. Notably, the Clinton administration's afterschool initiative – the 21st-Century Community Learning Center's (21CCLCs) – was successful. We discuss this legislation in more detail below.

The first substantial federal initiative in school-age care was the 1990 Child Care Development and Block Grant (CCDBG), now called the Child Care Development Fund, or CCDF. The grant provides assistance to low-income households and those receiving or transitioning off public assistance, through subsidized child care expenses. Though no particular allocation of funds was specified for afterschool care, CCDF funds can be used to pay for school-age childcare (see Table 1 for recent state allocations of CCDF). Notably, the bill implementing the CCDBG originally included quality of childcare as a qualifier for receiving funding, but this component was removed before the bill was passed. Accordingly, CCDBG funds do not necessarily provide for quality ASPs. States are also allowed to use a certain portion of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title I funding to subsidize childcare, including afterschool childcare (see Table 1).

Social and political influences (1991-present). The past 15 years represent a period of continued growth and interest in ASPs. The 1991 National Before and After School Study (Seppanen & deVries, 1993), that included a nationally representative sample, provided some of the first estimates as to how many American children participated in ASPs. The study reported that approximately 1.7 million children in Grades K-8 were involved in a formal before/after-

school program. When unregulated ASPs were included, the estimate climbed to 3.2 million children. A few years later, the 1997 National Survey of American Families – involving a representative sample of families in 13 states – found that roughly 6.7 million children between the ages of 6-to-12 were enrolled in an ASP (Capizzano et al., 2000). More recently, the America After 3PM survey, a national study of school-age children in Grades K-12 conducted by the Afterschool Alliance (2004), reported that 6.5 million children were involved in ASPs.

Several social and political factors during the past 15 years help to account for the recent growth. First, President Clinton's political agenda called for greater attention to school-age child care. The Clinton administration was successful in passing the 21CCLC legislation. The 21CCLCs represent the major source of Federal support for ASPs in the U.S. Federal funding for the 21CCLCs was first authorized in 1994 under the Improving America's Schools Act (P.L. 103-382) and then supported under the ESEA in 1998. Funding for the 21CCLCs increased steadily through the end of the Clinton administration (i.e., \$40 million in 1998 to \$1 billion in 2002). However, under the Bush administration, funding for the 21CCLCs was reauthorized on January 8th, 2002 as Title IV, under Part B of the Leave No Child Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. The reauthorization resulted in several changes that affected dissemination of funds, program content, and the requirements for program evaluation (e.g., program administration was transferred from the Federal to State the level, requirements for evaluation and performance indicators increased, there was a stronger focus on academic enrichment activities, funding targets shifted to low-performing schools in low-income areas).¹

On February 3rd, 2003 the requested authorization from the Bush administration proposed to cut the 21CCLC funding by 40% (\$400 million) based on stated findings from a national evaluation of the centers conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. However, the proposed funding reduction in the requested authorization was not appropriated by the Senate Appropriation Committee (Mahoney & Zigler, 2006). Since passage of NCLB Act of 2002, the funding level for the 21CCLCs has basically been frozen. Table 1 provides the current state allocations for 21CCLC funds.

Research suggests, however, that current funding provided by the 21CCLCs is not enough to meet the demand. In 2004, 3,469 organizations applied for 21CCLC grants, but only 38% (1,327 organizations) actually received funding (Stonehill, 2005). Given an average award of \$346,787, the 21CCLC budget would need to be increased by approximately \$743 million to meet all requests for new funding (cf., NRC-IOM, 2003). The need for expanding ASP funding is called for by other reports, as well. For example, Halpern (1999) estimated that only 9%, 14%, and 35% of school-aged children were served full-time by ASPs in Chicago, Boston, and Seattle, respectively. Likewise, in a national study of parents of school-age children, the Afterschool Alliance (2004) estimated that an additional 15.3 million children in the U.S. would participate in an ASP if they were available. Accordingly, despite the Federal initiative, the demand for ASPs continues to exceed the supply (Halpern, 1999; Hayes et al., 1990).

Opinion polls on the popularity and need for ASPs echo the above statistics. For instance, the Afterschool Alliance 2003 national opinion poll funded by the C.S. Mott Foundation, asked 800 registered voters if they agreed that children should be offered organized activities such as ASPs. Ninety-four percent agreed (Afterschool Alliance, 2003). In fact, 80% agreed that ASPs were an absolute necessity. Most of surveyed voters supported setting aside Federal, state, and local funding for ASPs, 77% indicated they were concerned with the level of current funding, and 52% reported a willingness to increase their state tax by \$100 so that every child could attend an ASP (Afterschool Alliance, 2003).

The funding gap and proposed budget cut for the 21CCLCs, coupled with their public popularity, again drew attention to ASPs in the Presidential election of 2004. In opposition to the Bush administration's proposal to cut Federal funding for the 21CCLCs, Senator John Edwards (D-SC) called for the Center's annual appropriations to increase to a level \$4 billion. Together, the Presidential campaign platform of Senators John Kerry (D-MA) and Edwards included a proposal to increase the 21CCLC funding level to \$2.5 billion (roughly the same amount that the NCLB legislation promised by fiscal year 2007). The proposal included keeping schools open for afterschool activities until 6pm and providing transportation for program participants.

However, with the 2004 re-election of President Bush, Federal funding for the 21CCLCs generally has been frozen at an annual appropriation of about \$1 billion. An exception is Funding for 2008. On March 11, 2008, the House Subcommittee on Early Childhood Education held a hearing, entitled "After school programs: How the Bush administration's budget impacts children and families," which addressed the potential effects of the president's budget and its reductions in afterschool program spending. Among others, Rep. Dale Kildee (MI), Prof. Deborah Vandell (University of California, Irvine), Priscilla Little (Harvard Family Research Project), and Ladonna Gamble (Interim Project Director of Flint Community School's Bridges to the Future afterschool program) opposed the Bush administration's proposed cuts to the 21CCLCs and argued for increased funding (Committee on Education and Labor, 2008).

Although the subsequent 2008 appropriation did, in fact, represent the first sizable increase (\$999,862) since 2002, the proposed budget for FY 2009 calls for \$281 million reduction in 21CCLC funds. However, President Barack Obama's plans include expanding 21CCLC funds which we discuss more in the final section of this article.

Second, state and local governments have developed their own initiatives to support ASPs in recent years. One unique state initiative is California's Proposition 49. Led by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger (R-CA), Proposition 49 (also known as the After School Education and Safety (ASES) Program Act of 2002) provides funding to: (1) maintain existing before and afterschool program funding; and (2) provide eligibility to all elementary and middle schools that submit quality applications throughout California (California Department of Education, 2009). Currently this program provides \$537 million to public schools in 386 districts across the state. Recipient schools primarily serve students from low-income families. We highlight only California's state initiative here because it is unique in its scope; however, overall state-wide funding allocations for school-age programs from three major sources – 21CCLC, CCDF, and Title 1 – are provided in Table 1.

At present, the most significant ASP initiatives have occurred at the level of city and local governments. One example is Boston's After School & Beyond program, a merger of the Boston 2-6pm After-School Initiative and the Boston's After-School for All Partnerships. The program grants funding, resources, and support for qualified ASPs. Another major city initiative is New York City's (NYC) Out-of-School Time (OST), launched in October 2005. Following a two-year market research analysis to better understand child care needs in different areas of the city, NYC's OST provided free ASPs to over 550 neighborhoods throughout the city.

Table 1*State-level Funding for Afterschool Programs and School-age Child Care*

U.S. Dollars (FY 2007)				
	21CCLC	ESEA Title I ^a	CCDF ^a	Total
Alabama	14,799,892	194,251,412	348,903	209,400,207
Alaska	4,807,715	34,024,598	35,066	38,867,379
Arizona	19,312,777	263,204,306	436,613	282,953,696
Arkansas	9,246,706	122,031,484	217,497	131,495,687
California	127,685,271	1,643,496,281	2,005,003	1,773,186,555
Colorado	9,545,174	123,928,378	207,475	133,681,027
Connecticut	7,050,269	111,879,468	124,481	119,054,218
Delaware	4,807,715	34,110,286	38,288	38,956,289
District of Columbia	4,807,715	46,025,737	26,556	50,860,008
Florida	48,863,242	589,157,126	990,953	639,011,321
Georgia	30,787,858	410,011,238	676,750	441,475,846
Hawaii	4,807,715	39,638,957	67,210	44,513,882
Idaho	4,807,715	41,327,392	100,538	46,235,645
Illinois	40,166,693	593,136,349	665,932	633,968,974
Indiana	13,740,151	230,085,248	362,086	244,187,485
Iowa	4,807,715	69,213,583	154,298	74,175,596
Kansas	5,985,739	88,061,074	162,060	94,208,873
Kentucky	13,656,071	185,854,297	306,684	199,817,052
Louisiana	20,942,359	277,649,636	399,201	298,991,196
Maine	4,807,715	43,870,320	58,239	48,736,274
Maryland	12,897,299	188,034,165	222,283	201,153,747
Massachusetts	14,406,511	211,607,027	221,777	226,235,315
Michigan	31,486,088	460,301,629	504,414	492,292,131
Minnesota	7,952,424	114,582,991	222,236	122,757,651
Mississippi	12,251,891	174,679,246	276,920	187,208,057
Missouri	13,789,699	201,451,741	335,998	215,577,438
Montana	4,807,715	38,634,910	49,077	43,491,702
Nebraska	4,807,715	50,662,136	99,945	55,569,796
Nevada	5,783,321	80,298,566	122,367	86,204,254
New Hampshire	4,807,715	34,248,186	40,951	39,096,852
New Jersey	19,230,836	252,408,502	319,053	271,958,391
New Mexico	8,382,367	103,846,928	159,016	112,388,311
New York	89,955,104	1,210,071,290	935,220	1,300,961,614
North Carolina	21,953,841	301,103,680	578,075	323,635,596
North Dakota	4,807,715	29,825,087	31,658	34,664,460

Ohio	30,630,985	449,254,685	584,436	480,470,106
Oklahoma	10,379,111	128,266,400	269,779	138,915,290
Oregon	9,752,332	121,425,431	195,142	131,372,905
Pennsylvania	36,073,986	516,459,476	544,030	553,077,492
Rhode Island	4,807,715	50,390,387	47,750	55,245,852
South Carolina	13,349,772	187,901,935	320,931	201,572,638
South Dakota	4,807,715	37,273,903	47,046	42,128,664
Tennessee	15,443,547	205,727,619	385,914	221,557,080
Texas	87,931,754	1,169,499,588	1,877,230	1,259,308,572
Utah	4,807,715	58,196,911	194,135	63,198,761
Vermont	4,807,715	27,198,995	25,172	32,031,882
Virginia	15,391,238	204,733,095	337,932	220,462,265
Washington	13,007,033	182,795,119	287,259	196,089,411
West Virginia	7,341,628	89,220,610	117,700	96,679,938
Wisconsin	11,315,527	201,600,575	257,389	213,173,491
Wyoming	4,807,715	28,094,060	23,402	32,925,177
American Samoa	684,738	8,626,477	n/a	
Guam	829,561	9,261,007	n/a	
Northern Mariana Islands	248,725	3,302,856	n/a	
Puerto Rico	34,130,970	455,589,077	n/a	
Virgin Islands	920,114	11,591,805	n/a	
Indian set-aside	7,128,524	91,753,636	n/a	
Other (non-State allocations)	9,811,662	7,248,099	n/a	
Total (all States)	981,166,230	12,838,125,000	17,018,070	13,836,617,083

^a School-age resource and referral earmark funds.

Note: 21CCLC=21st Century Community Learning Centers, CCDF=Child Care and Development Fund, ESEA=Education and Secondary Education Act.

Providence, Rhode Island has also made substantive investments in ASPs over the past several years. Along with Mayor Cicilline's Providence After School Alliance (PASA) and under the city's Education Partnership group, the city has put forth a network of afterschool activities in five neighborhoods, called AfterZones. These AfterZones expand established community, school, and recreation centers to provide additional ASPs and related activities. Moreover, in 2005, Providence allocated \$2 million dollars in funding for qualified ASPs. Chicago's initiatives include expanding After School Matters, a citywide afterschool program, through Mayor Daley's KidStart initiative. KidStart is a network of children's programs offered by the Chicago Park District, Chicago Department of Human Services, Chicago Public Library, After School Matters, the Chicago Public Schools and others.

Third, although few rigorous studies of ASPs were conducted prior to 1990, quasi-experimental and experimental research concerning the impact of program participation on children's development has grown markedly over the past 15 years (Mahoney, Parente, & Zigler, in press;

Mahoney, Vandell, Simpkins, & Zarrett, 2009). These studies suggest that ASP participation can have important consequences for children's academic performance, social behaviors and relationships, and physical health. One result has been a transformation in the perception and goals of ASPs from one of basic child care and recreation to that of developmental contexts with the potential to contribute significantly to children's positive development (e.g., Mahoney, Larson, & Eccles, 2005; Lerner, Lerner, & Almerigi, 2005; NRC-IOM, 2002; Riggs & Greenberg, 2004; Vandell, Pierce, & Dadisman, 2005).

Finally, in recent years, major research institutions, grant-making agencies, and advocacy and education groups have played a significant role in the development of ASPs. For example, the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP; founded and directed by Heather Weiss since 1983) has published *The Evaluation Exchange* since 1995. This quarterly publication discusses current issues in program evaluation and has devoted multiple editions to innovations, challenges, and controversies in ASP research. HFRP also maintains the *Out-of-school Time Program Evaluation Database*, a searchable online resource that profiles empirical studies of ASPs.

Likewise, since the mid-1990s, the Chapin Hall Center for Children (CHCC) has included a specific focus on After-school Programs and Research. This focus has produced several publications concerning the need to expand the availability of quality ASPs, including the Making the Most of Out-of-School Time (MOST) initiative, led by Robert Halpern in collaboration with National Institute for Out-of-school Time. A main study area of the Washington DC-based research organization Policy Studies Associates (PSA) (2008) is Youth Development/After-school Programs. PSA has led several large-scale ASP evaluations including the multi-year investigation of The Afterschool Corporation's program in New York City and has developed a variety recent reports and resources concerning ASP quality, evaluation, and programming.

During the past decade, granting institutions have also made funding awards to conduct research on ASPs a priority. For example, special initiatives of the William T. Grant Foundation focus on improving the quality of ASPs and youth organizations and understanding and improving social settings. To this end, W.T. Grant has supported a variety of ASP-related research projects including experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations of ASPs, innovative approaches to research design and analysis, and the development of tools to assess program quality.

The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation has also supported a variety of ASP initiatives as part of its "Improving Community Education – Learning Beyond the Classroom" priority. These include sponsoring a variety of research projects and conferences concerned with ASP quality improvement, training, and promising practices. Since 2002 the Mott Foundation has supported the development of 31 statewide afterschool networks to help sustain and develop high quality ASPs (Collaborative Communications Group & C.S. Mott Foundation, 2006).

As one of its three main objectives, the recently merged Wallace Foundation focuses on the improvement of out-of-school learning opportunities. In addition to providing direct funds to support ASPs, the Wallace Foundations also supports ASP evaluation research and contributed significantly to the planning and implementation of NYC's OST initiative, discussed briefly above.

Furthermore, over the past decade, efforts from advocacy, lobbying, and education groups such as the Afterschool Alliance (est. 1999), Fight Crime Invest in Kids (est. 1996), the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (est. 1979)², the Forum for Youth Development (est. 1998), and the National Afterschool Association (est. 1987), have contributed substantively to public

and political awareness concerning initiatives that affect ASPs through research and analysis, network development, and communication of research and evaluation findings.

Lastly, in March 2005, the U.S. Congress initiated a bi-partisan Caucus on After School Programs. Chaired by Senators Dodd (D-CT) and Ensign (R-NV), and Representatives Lowey (D-NY) and Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), the Caucus now includes 35 Senators and 58 Representatives. The purpose of the Caucus is to increase Congressional discussion and awareness concerning the importance of ASPs for American families. In March 2006, members of this Caucus endorsed a letter to the Senate Budget Committee Chairman, Judd Gregg (R-NH), and Senate Budget Committee Ranking Member, Kent Conrad (D-ND), in an effort to expand funding for the 21CCLCs.

Towards the Future of Afterschool Programming

Afterschool programs have become a common developmental context for young people. Nonetheless, they continue to face a variety of challenges in the current social, political, and economic climate. These include:

- 1) funding support in the midst of an economic downfall,
- 2) program sustainability and expansion,
- 3) quality improvement and maintenance, and
- 4) programming to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population of children.

We highlight these issues below.

First, at the time of writing, the U.S. Presidency has recently changed hands. President Barack Obama and Vice-President Joe Biden have been working with their transition team to prepare and begin implementing some of the new administration's initiatives. Given that federal funding for ASPs struggled in past years, there are reasons to be hopeful about the incoming Obama administration.

Rather than propose to cut the 21CCLC funding, a plank in the Obama/Biden platform is to double the funding (Office of the President-Elect, 2009). This could provide afterschool programming for another 1 million children and would move much closer the No Child Left Behind Act's promise to authorize 2.5 billion to support the 21CCLCs by 2008. Obama and Biden have also proposed to increase opportunities for youth to become involved in service learning and civic activities in the community (Office of the President-Elect, 2009). This includes requiring middle and high school students to perform 50 hours of community service each year and creating 20 "Promise Neighborhoods" in areas with high rates of poverty and crime. The Promise Neighborhoods would include a network of youth services including afterschool activities.

However, the U.S. is also now in the midst of a financial crisis. The crisis has significantly affected rates of employment, consumer spending, manufacturing, and housing markets. This situation, coupled with Obama's other priorities (e.g., troop withdrawal from Iraq, energy and climate change, health care), makes it unclear what status afterschool will ultimately hold in the new administration. Indeed, the federal budget for fiscal year 2010 provides no increase in 21CCLC funding (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Second, beyond the economic challenges of expanding ASP services, the sustainability and quality improvement of existing programs have become an important issue. Although federal support will be important in such efforts, action at the state and city levels is also critical. For instance, in 2002 the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation partnered with the Afterschool Technical Assistance Collaborative to develop statewide afterschool networks (Collaborative Communications Group & C.S. Mott Foundation, 2006). The majority of states are now part of the afterschool networks. The goals of the networks include:

- 1) creating a statewide structure of partnerships focused on supporting afterschool policy development,
- 2) supporting the development of statewide policies to secure resources for new and established ASPs, and
- 3) supporting statewide systems aimed at ensuring that program quality is high.

Similarly, beginning in the mid-1990s, private funders, local governments and program practitioners in cities across America engaged in developing systems to support the expansion and quality improvement of ASPs at the city-level. Understanding the community context and process by which such citywide collaborative efforts are successfully initiated and advanced is likely to be important for the future of ASPs (Holleman, Sundius, & Bruns, in press).

Third, research shows that program staff is crucial for ASP quality which, in turn, is critical for program impacts (e.g., Mahoney et al., 2009; Smith, Peck, Denault, Blazevski, & Akiva, in press). However, at present, ASP line staff often do not hold college degrees and fewer still have received a formal education in afterschool programming that would help them to provide high quality program practices (Vile, Russell, Miller, & Reisner, 2008). Efforts to engage in a broader view of education that includes professional development and training for ASP staff seems warranted. Education programs aimed at providing such training to ASP staff are beginning and may serve as important templates for the coming years.

For example, led by Professors Joseph Mahoney and Deborah Vandell, the University of California's Department of Education has initiated a Certificate in After-school Education (CASE) program (University of California, Irvine Department of Education, 2009). CASE provides a combination of classroom instruction and supervised fieldwork across a sequence of courses. Students completing CASE requirements gain:

- 1) basic knowledge in child or adolescent development and cultural diversity;
- 2) core knowledge in theory, research, and evaluation of afterschool programs and activities, and
- 3) practical skills working with, and developing quality programming for, children and adolescents in afterschool settings.

Similarly, the Center for After-school Excellence sponsors a one-year certificate program for afterschool workers to gain foundational skills and knowledge in education and youth development through college coursework (Vile et al., 2008).

Finally, ASPs will need to continue exploring ways to best meet the needs of a diverse set of stakeholders. For example, although parents and children are key stakeholders, research suggests that they do not necessarily agree on what should be the goals and curricula of ASPs. In a recent study of a low-income sample of pre- and post-adolescents and their parents, Cornelli Sanderson and Richards (in press) found that the majority of parents wanted ASPs to provide their child with homework time, tutoring, opportunities to learn new things, and work

on computers. Although children wanted time for homework and to learn new things, most of them also wanted to have fun, go on field trips, and participate in team sports. To attract and retain youth participants, finding ways to provide programming that meets the needs and interests of multiple stakeholders seems important.

The program interests of youth who differ in terms of abilities, race/ethnicity, cultural background, age and developmental level, and gender is not well understood. On this score, whether, and to what extent, ASPs have the potential to facilitate development in a positive direction depends partly on what scholars have referred to as "stage-environment fit" (e.g., Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Eccles, Midgley, Wigfield et al., 1993). In this view, youth development depends on the degree of match between a child's existing abilities, characteristics, and interests and the opportunities afforded to him/her in the immediate social environment. Fit is optimal when the environmental features experienced are structured according to the child's current needs and developmental level.

Accordingly, because ASPs are likely to serve increasingly diverse populations of young people in coming decades, ensuring a good fit between the individual children served and the structure, stimulation, and opportunities in the program environment represents an important goal for current and future programming. In addition, program staff must be sensitive to the reality that maintaining a good stage-environment fit requires that program ecology and offerings be adjusted over time to reflect the child's increasing maturity and changing needs and interests.

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Footnotes:

1. As originally proposed under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 21CCLC legislation provided funding only to public schools or local educational agencies. However, the 2003 Guidelines for these Centers now permit that both public and private agencies (e.g., faith-based organization) be given equal funding opportunity. The impact of expanding funding eligibility in this way has not been evaluated empirically. Source: U.S. Department of Education (2003). *21st Century Community Learning Centers: Non-regulatory guidance*. Retrieved September 1, 2006 from: <http://www.ed.gov/21stcclc/guidance2003.doc>

2. As established in January of 1979, this organization was originally named the School-Age Child Care Project. The organization was renamed the National Institute on Out-of-School Time in 1997 (personal communication, M. Seligson, September 4, 2006).

The Virginia Abstinence Education Initiative Evaluation Structure: A Lesson in How to Successfully Overcome the Challenges of Multi-Site Program Evaluation

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Abstract: This discussion provides an overview of the evaluation process of the Virginia Abstinence Education Initiative (VAEI). It details the basic principles that premise the evaluation structure. The evaluation structure utilized by the VAEI is an intentional one, designed to provide the most rigorous approach possible in order to have maximum confidence in the quality of the data produced by this statewide, multi-year effort. The authors argue that this type of informed approach grounded in a high degree of evaluation rigor can help to overcome the challenges typically associated with multi-site program evaluation.

Introduction

The Virginia Abstinence Education Initiative (VAEI) is a statewide, multi-year effort to implement new educational approaches to help youth develop skills necessary to delay sexual involvement, and to evaluate systematically the effectiveness of those approaches. Funding for this effort is federal Title V Block Grant dollars. While the conduct of rigorous evaluation was not a requirement of receiving this funding, Virginia decided to emphasize program evaluation to assist programs in maximizing impact on participants.

From the outset, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) acknowledged the importance of the VAEI being data-driven as well as structured through a multi-site approach. To successfully achieve both of these goals would require an intentional and systematic process grounded in experience. The VDH had experience in managing other multi-site program evaluation initiatives, and realized the value of seeking experienced evaluation expertise as a partner in the

endeavor. To this end, the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory (SERL), an experienced university based applied social science research organization, was contracted to assist with the VAEI.

Usual Challenges of Multi-Site Program Evaluation

Multi-site evaluations (MSEs) are increasingly widespread due to their methodological advantages (e.g., increased generalizability of findings, maximized sample size, efficiency of time and testing of contextual effects) and their response to political and social demands (Cottingham, 1991; Mowbray & Herman, 1991; Turpin & Sinacore, 1991). MSEs are not without their challenges, however, and these challenges impact decisions regarding program design, budget, staffing and other issues.

The majority of challenges to conducting MSEs fall into two categories: 1) gaps and tensions between researchers/evaluators and local program staff/community members; and 2) organizational and administrative challenges across sites. While many of the challenges related to the former are common to program evaluation in general, they are intensified and exacerbated in MSEs. The latter types of challenges are more specific to coordination among multiple sites.

Program evaluations can experience tensions between the two often competing arenas of researchers/evaluators and local program staff/community members (Telfair & Mulvihill, 2000). These conflicts reflect differences and gaps between the groups in terms of: 1) the value placed on research/evaluation and 2) the level of understanding and knowledge about, and skills for conducting program evaluation.

Program staff and community members often do not place as much value on program evaluation as do researchers for several reasons. First, some program and community members distrust and/or fear evaluation efforts that may emphasize negative aspects of the program. In addition, limited resources often create a competitive atmosphere in which greater priority is placed by program staff on providing services than on evaluation efforts. This conflict is related to financial resources, staff time, or both. Often program staff members feel that the evaluators identify outcome requirements that conflict with or overlook local program goals, objectives or strategies. Finally, program staff and community members may not always be convinced that their programs will benefit from evaluation efforts. Judd, Frankish and Moulton (2001) describe these conflicts as tensions between empowerment/participation/collaboration and evidence-based decision making, as well as accountability, funding sources' and government decision makers' preoccupation with measuring outcomes.

Constantine and Cagampang (1998) describe how conflicts between program and evaluator priorities can lead to "motivational drift," the lack of motivation toward compliance with evaluation among program staff. This is typically characterized by feelings of "detachment" or lack of ownership by program staff of the evaluation design, "irrelevance" or insufficient applicability of design to local program needs, and "outcome pessimism" or the belief of program staff that positive results will not be found by the evaluation.

Gaps and tensions between evaluators and program staff in terms of the value placed on evaluation are exacerbated in MSEs. While each site may struggle with one or more issues described above, each may perceive its position differently and feel that its situation is unique. Obtaining cooperation from the various local sites becomes even more difficult than in single-site program evaluation.

In addition to differences in support for evaluation, there are often gaps between program staff and evaluators in terms of their familiarity with and understanding of program evaluation. Like the issue of support for/acceptance of evaluation, this type of “terminology/knowledge” gap is exacerbated in MSEs where there may be great variation among sites in terms of their familiarity with, and skill levels for conducting evaluation (Sambrano, Springer, & Hermann, 1997). This poses challenges in terms of staffing and training decisions (Turpin & Sinacore, 1991a). For example, evaluators often grapple with the decision to hire new staff to coordinate evaluation efforts versus utilizing existing local program staff.

The second major area of challenges to conducting successful MSEs relates to the diversity among sites and the administration and management of the data and other evaluation components. Just as variation across sites can exacerbate many of the challenges described above, variation among sites in terms of program implementation poses challenges to a standardized research protocol and ultimately data quality (Constantine & Cagampang, 1998; Cottingham, 1991; Mowbray & Herman, 1991; Ponirakis, 2002; Tushnet, 1995). These differences pose challenges to organizational, procedural and statistical issues (Turpin & Sinacore, 1991b). Research designs must include ways of identifying and analyzing contextual effects. Data collection methods must be standardized and clearly defined and communicated to program and evaluation staff.

All of these challenges – tensions between program staff and evaluators, gaps in terminology/expertise, and variation across sites in terms of program implementation and context – pose threats to fidelity to the implementation model and ultimately to data quality.

Recommendations & Strategies to Overcome the Challenges

Researchers identify various strategies for overcoming challenges to successful MSEs, addressing either or both of the general types of challenges described above. Sambrano et al. (1997) suggest that a combination of decentralized and centralized strategies can be useful in overcoming challenges of MSEs, and these types of strategies can be viewed as addressing the two types of challenges. Specifically, whereas decentralized strategies typically focus on acknowledging, addressing, and valuing individual sites’ particular needs and strengths, centralized strategies tend to address the challenges across diverse sites.

Decentralized approaches can help to prevent what Constantine and Cogampang (1998) refer to as “motivational drift,” discussed above. Such strategies that address tensions and competing perspectives between local program staff and evaluators often focus on obtaining cooperation, building local support, involving the community, and building trust. Many such strategies are referred to as “inclusive evaluation approaches” and described as participatory, collaborative, or empowering, involving program staff as full partners in the evaluation process. Constantine and Cogampang (1998) review three such approaches, 1) utilization-focused evaluation by Patton, 2) continuous process improvement or total quality management by Deming, and 3) Faulkner’s participatory planning model. They suggest that taken together, these three approaches yield three common principles:

- The full range of stakeholders must be meaningfully involved in all aspects of the evaluation;
- An evaluation must be flexible and responsive to local conditions and needs; and
- Data must be regularly and meaningfully shared (Constantine & Cogampang, 1998).

Resnicow and Kirby (1997) similarly recommend designing an evaluation that is collaborative rather than hierarchical, increasing communication between program and evaluation staff, including positive behaviors as outcomes, and involving the community in evaluation. Fetterman (2001) in the empowerment approach to conducting program evaluation, makes clear the strength of evaluations that involve stakeholders in all aspects. Koch, Lewis, and McCall (1998) also describe the benefits of involving stakeholders in designing outcome management systems to serve as infrastructure to support routine program evaluation. Other researchers suggest additional strategies for building local support such as national workshops and regular quarterly or biannual meetings of staff and evaluators to build community, share experiences, and provide feedback. Many argue that essential to the process is the provision of regular communication and returning locally generated data to the sites for their use in assessing and improving local programs. Browne, Clubb, Aubrecht, and Jackson (2001) also suggest that recognizing contributions of community members and local staff and expressing gratitude for their efforts is important. Constantine suggests that providing "regular, immediate, public, and constructive data quality feedback to local-site staff" can help avoid problems related to "motivational drift." Additional decentralized strategies include providing modular survey options for data collection and reporting, multiple evaluation design strategy options, and support for site-specific local evaluation components (Sambrano, Springer, & Hermann, 1997).

Some of the more centralized approaches that assist with organizational and administrative challenges across different sites include implementing a mandatory questionnaire for all sites (Sambrano, Springer, & Hermann, 1997) and providing technical support and assistance (via group meetings as well as on-site visits) to sites that includes a written instructional manual for data collection forms and other standardized evaluation procedures. Although the "decentralized" strategies discussed above can help to overcome the challenge of garnering local and community support for evaluation, many also address some of the organizational and administrative challenges. For example, regular communication, meetings and sharing data all facilitate evaluators' oversight of evaluation and program activities and ability to address and solve problems in a timely manner.

Additional strategies that address the challenges of diversity among sites and potential threats to data quality include focusing on process data and specific program theory (Mowbray & Herman, 1991). Fetterman (2001) similarly emphasizes the importance of evaluations that are theory-driven. These aspects are critical in assessing the validity of the intervention as they provide evidence of the degree to which the program was delivered as planned and why the observed effects were achieved.

This discussion of challenges and strategies illustrates the complexity of these issues and suggests that successfully overcoming such challenges is costly. Browne et al. (2001) similarly suggest that many of the strategies suggested by researchers require intensive investments of time and resources, critical components of a successful MSE.

Method

Virginia Abstinence Education Initiative Evaluation Structure

In response to the usual challenges of multi-site program evaluation, the evaluation structure of the VAEI was developed as part of an intentional process to accomplish the objective of maintaining the integrity of the data management process, and ultimately ensuring the quality of the evaluation data. To accomplish this, several key principles were embraced from the

start. Each principle discussed below addresses one or more of the usual challenges of MSEs and represents a guiding parameter for the VAEI evaluation. Considered together, the principles constitute a framework that strengthened the VAEI evaluation, and increased confidence in the data quality.

Discussion

Building Evaluation in on the Front End

Building evaluation in on the front end represented a realization that to successfully manage a multi-site evaluation process requires a deliberate and informed approach. This approach helped proactively address some of the challenges typically associated with multi-site evaluation such as:

- ensuring that evaluation is theory-driven and incorporated at the point of program inception;
- maintaining fidelity of the intervention across sites, optimizing communication;
- promoting a consensus view on the big picture of the evaluation and its operational aspects;
- strengthening buy-in among all evaluation stakeholders;
- anchoring consistent and predictable evaluation expertise at each site; and
- optimizing data quality.

Each of the above-mentioned challenges associated with multi-site program evaluation was learned experientially in over a decade of program evaluation work conducted by the VCU-SERL with the state of Virginia's adolescent sexual health programs within the VDH and the expenditure of over 25 million dollars. Specifically, both the Virginia Teenage Pregnancy Prevention and the VAEI had structured their multi-site program evaluations over the years to address these challenges.

Ensuring Adequate Evaluation Resources were Available on this Project

One of the key lessons learned from previous experiences by VDH and SERL, and a challenge repeatedly acknowledged in the literature, is to successfully implement a multi-site program evaluation requires adequate resources. To this end, in the VAEI, there were seven distinct roles directly related to program evaluation that are handled by designated staff. Each role addresses one or more of the usual MSE challenges. The roles are: (1) local program data manager, (2) local evaluation consultant, (3) VDH evaluation director, (4) VDH evaluation data manager, (5) SERL evaluation director, (6) SERL evaluation data manager, and (7) VAEI Evaluation Consortium.

Employing a Centralized Evaluation Structure

At VAEI inception, centralization was considered to be a bedrock principle upon which the entire evaluation was based. It was reasoned that only through maximum centralization of all evaluation and data aspects could adequate and proper controls be implemented to ensure confidence in the results. Once the evaluation and data management processes were developed, this information was provided to local program sites as the evaluation operational framework. While local program sites were encouraged to continually provide feedback about the efficacy of the evaluation structure and associated data management procedures, all conceptual design, development and refinement of data management procedures was controlled centrally by VDH and SERL.

Maximizing Buy-in among All Evaluation Stakeholders

In addition to the strong emphasis within the VAEI evaluation structure on centralized oversight, there was clear recognition early of the importance of having broad and sustainable support and buy-in among all evaluation stakeholders. That support needed to be strong from project inception through the end of the initiative, because, as discussed by Constantine and Cagampang (1998), problems with “motivational drift” tend to increase over time. This was one of the primary strategies employed to avoid typical problems with tensions between evaluators and local stakeholders.

Beyond the groups of stakeholders who had formalized evaluation roles, several more key stakeholders were the targets of efforts to achieve buy-in. Those key stakeholders, without formal evaluation roles, fell into two groups: (1) staff persons charged with delivering the VAEI curricula in local programs and (2) key local program gatekeepers and decision-makers who made the programs possible because they authorized access to youth participants, typically school personnel.

Maintaining a Science-based Focus

Several attributes enhanced the science-based nature of this initiative. They are: use of a limited number of theory-driven, standardized abstinence education curricula, some of which had been replicated and evaluated previously; collection of implementation and impact data; and the use of a rigorous evaluation design (longitudinal focus, pre and posttests, and comparison groups). The threefold combination means this evaluation was highly scientific, especially in comparison to typical program evaluations.

Striving toward Continuous Improvement

The final principle the VAEI evaluation structure embraced is that of continuous improvement. This principle resulted in the recognition that ultimately the evaluation structure must demonstrate steady enhancement over time. That is, the evaluation structure of the VAEI had attempted to meet each local program where it was in the first year of the initiative, with the goal of moving forward toward full actualization of a science-based, rigorous evaluation structure before the end of the project. The following five strategies had been instrumental in the manifestation of the continuous improvement principle.

- Annual updates to the evaluation technical assistance manual.
- Local programs have been given assistance in implementing recommendations associated with evaluation barriers.
- Feedback reports on data quality have been made available to local sites.
- Local evaluation consultants have been required to have regular contact with local program staff.
- The VAEI Evaluation Consortium met quarterly to provide oversight.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Lessons Learned

The major lesson learned from the VAEI experience has been an affirmation of the value of investing a substantial level of resources for program evaluation and utilizing a highly structured evaluation approach. Another lesson learned is that there is no such thing as devoting too much effort to exploring the comparability of comparison sites. It was also learned that having an evaluator for each local program has been invaluable. Finally, it was learned that having

formal written agreements with all participating stakeholders stabilizes evaluation participation over time.

Going forward, it would behoove other adolescent sexual health or any youth development program to take heed of these six principles in designing multi-site program evaluations. Youth development program managers will have to be particularly skilled and agile these days to ensure that youth services are lean, given tight resources, and effective, given increasing demands for program accountability and pressure to achieve key customer outcomes. To do this, they will have to engage in data-driven decision making, a process that involves intentionally, systematically and routinely using data to make decisions (Lewis, Armstrong, & Karpf, 2005), and data-driven decision making is also known as program evaluation.

In this day and time, it is commonplace for program evaluations to involve multiple sites. It is also important to realize that the outcome evaluation movement is a current imperative for professionals working in health, human services, and rehabilitation (Lewis, Armstrong, Taylor, & Spain, 2006). Given the current push around planned and systematic outcome evaluation and performance monitoring, increasingly youth development and other health, rehabilitation and human service programs are looking to develop outcome measurement systems as a tool to manage the multitude of program evaluation activities. Only then, can the final principle, "striving toward continuous improvement" become a catalyst that can have the ultimate effect of bringing to fruition positive youth development outcomes.

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A New System of Classifying Out-of-School Time Job Responsibilities

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A New System of Classifying Out-of-School Time Job Responsibilities

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Abstract: Out-of-school time (OST) is a burgeoning field with both research and policy implications. Efforts to improve professional development for OST staff members are of particular interest, as funding streams increasingly target interventions which promote positive changes in student outcomes. Professional development evaluation in particular is hindered by a lack of consistency among job titles and responsibilities across OST organizations. This mixed-method study utilizes original data to explore underlying patterns of job responsibilities within the field and offers a new classification system based on exploratory factor analyses. The classification includes five categories, each with a unique combination of common job responsibilities to assist survey respondents in choosing the appropriate category: upper-level administration, mid-level administration, direct-service, capacity-building, and "other." Results suggest this new system is user-friendly to both respondents and researchers, and will garner more accurate and comparative information for future OST research and application.

Prior Research

Family structures and dynamics have changed dramatically over the past few decades. Rising levels of female participation in the labor market, dual-income/dual-career families, and single parent households have presented new challenges to families seeking out-of-school time care for their children. Parents employ a variety of methods to meet this need including afterschool programs, kin care, and self-care. While self-care is relatively uncommon for elementary school children (estimated at only 7% of 6-9 year olds by Vandivere et al., 2003 and at 9% of children grades 1-5 by Afterschool Alliance, 2004), out-of-school time (OST) programs have become increasingly widespread.

In 1997, approximately 13% of preadolescent children were regularly involved in an afterschool program (Hofferth & Jankuniene, 2001), but a more recent estimate suggests that 20% of children in grades 1-5 in the US now participate in some type of afterschool program (Afterschool Alliance, 2004). As such, OST programs have become recipients of regular funding from the federal and state governments (e.g., 21st Century Community Learning Centers) as well as from local and national foundations and corporations.

Out-of-school time programs are a beneficial solution to the dilemma of afterschool supervision. One meta-analysis reviewed quasi-experimental and experimental studies on OST programs and found a consistently positive effect of OST programs on at-risk children, in terms of math and reading achievement (Lauer et al., 2006). This effect was small but significant, and more pronounced for programs including tutoring elements. Other studies demonstrate that OST programs benefit children socially as well as academically (Huang et al. 2007; Miller et al., 1995; Vandell & Shumow, 1999).

A growing area of emphasis within OST programming is professional development. This has been identified as a critical element of OST programs for a number of reasons. OST staff represent a variety of backgrounds and preparation, and include school teachers, teachers' aides, social workers, parents, and community members. Thus, staff need specific training to succeed in an OST settings. In addition, staff retention in OST programs is often challenging (Partnership for Afterschool Education, 1999; Bowie & Bronte-Tinkew, 2006) and professional development is one strategy for enriching and retaining staff.

Moreover, studies have linked professional development to positive student outcomes in both formal education and out-of-school time settings. In general, professional development for classroom teachers is associated with a variety of positive outcomes relating to student achievement, classroom management, classroom environment, etc. (The Public Education Network and The Finance Project, 2005). National Board Certification processes are also associated with the development of stronger curricula and teachers' increased ability to evaluate student learning (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2001). Research suggests that targeted training is essential to establish this association. One experimental study found that classroom teachers attending training targeting specific outcomes and aligned with a specific reform initiative improved their classroom practice, while those attending trainings on more general topics showed no change in their practice (Whitehurst, 2002).

Research on professional development within OST programs also suggests positive outcomes, but focuses on different mechanisms and outcomes. For example, an evaluation of the Building Exemplary Systems for Training (BEST) initiative (Fancsali, 2002) found that professional development is an essential part of quality improvement and programming. Further, these results suggest that the most effect types of professional development are continuous trainings that span a diverse range of topic areas (such as youth development and how to provide quality programming). Similar to formal education, professional development in OST programs can positively impact student outcomes as well as staff retention (see Bouffard & Little, 2004 for an extensive review of the literature in this area). Bowie and Bronte-Tinkew (2006) extend this association to identify benefits to the individual youth worker, the program, and the OST field in general.

Professional development is an indispensable component of out-of-school time programming, and so is its evaluation. However, a lack of universal evaluation instruments utilized across the field has hampered both program evaluation (Geiger & Britsch, 2004) and professional

development evaluation (Kane et al., 2006), but is particularly problematic for the latter. Without reliable instruments to assess professional development impact, it is difficult to truly ascertain the base knowledge level of the participants, increases in learning associated with professional development experiences, or optimal strategies for allocating future funding. Studies are underway to increase the validity and reliability of these instruments in a variety of settings (Kane, Peter & Gabel, 2008), but even these studies run into a common problem found in OST research: the field lacks a system of common job titles, descriptions, and associated responsibilities.

OST researchers are well aware of this problem and often find discrepancies between self-reported job titles and actual job responsibilities (Fusco, 2003; LeMenestrel & Dennehy, 2003). That is, specific job responsibilities under a given job title are not consistent across OST organizations and/or programs. For instance, in the OST field, Site Director, Program Director, and Afterschool Coordinator commonly describe the same position, including the same responsibilities. Due to the diversity of programs and organizations that fall under the umbrella of "out-of-school time," this variation in the language used to describe job titles and responsibilities is understandable. Yet this presents a problem to researchers who request job titles as part of demographic data. If there is little consistency among job titles within the field, then there may be minimal value in gathering this information.

Collecting accurate information on job descriptions is especially critical to the OST field, since previous research indicates that job responsibilities affect how participants respond to professional development experiences. Through a series of five focus groups (n=50 participants) in the fall of 2004, Kane et al. (2006) found that OST administrators often seek formal, informational workshops, whereas direct-service staff generally prefer interactive workshops. Thus, the manner in which staff are categorized, in terms of their job responsibilities, is related to different substantive topics and learning styles within professional development settings. Since staff respond differently to various workshop formats, it is clear that workshops should be designed and implemented to meet the unique needs of different audiences. However, the extent to which these efforts can be successfully implemented depends on the ability to accurately classify staff.

Pilot Survey: Data Collection and Analysis

In December 2005, we conducted a pilot survey to test a new system of collecting information on the job titles and responsibilities of OST staff members. This survey gathered two essential pieces of information. First, rather than requesting *job titles* to locate survey respondents within the field of OST programming, this new system categorized individuals according to their *primary job responsibility* as an indicator of their role in the field. We hypothesized that this study could serve as a valuable resource for researchers and evaluators who gather comparable information from national respondents who serve in a wide variety of settings (such as school-based, community-based, or faith-based programs) who may utilize different language to identify job titles and responsibilities. Second, participants were asked to identify all of their job responsibilities from a comprehensive list. This allowed for the exploration of patterns within the data that may not have been readily apparent.

This pilot consisted of both quantitative and qualitative data comprised of 231 online survey respondents and 110 interview respondents. The online survey was created by the authors and advertised through various local, statewide and national listservs. The qualitative interviews were conducted within a series of national focus groups coordinated by the National AfterSchool

Association. In both settings, participants were first asked to identify a primary job responsibility from a list of fourteen options (see Figure 1), and then were redirected through a skip pattern to a job description corresponding with the identified primary job responsibility (see Figure 2). Participants were then asked if the job description “accurately summarized most of the job responsibilities” within their position.

Figure 1

Primary Job Responsibilities Used in the First Pilot Survey

Please select your PRIMARY job responsibility from the following list (circle ONE):

- 1) Oversee all aspects of one or more organizations
- 2) Oversee multiple programs/sites within an organization
- 3) Oversee one program/site within an organization
- 4) Act as Primary Teacher in one or more classrooms
- 5) Act as Secondary/Assistant Teacher in one or more classrooms
- 6) Monitor one or more programs for a funding organization
- 7) Provide training and/or technical assistance
- 8) Perform evaluation and/or research
- 9) Write grants or fundraise
- 10) Create or develop curricula, programs and/or activities
- 11) Support an organization through Administrative Services (such as Human Resources or Fiscal Management)
- 12) Support an organization through Operational Services (such as Data Entry or Clerical Assistance)
- 13) Coordinate or teach one activity/curriculum at multiple sites (such as Art Coordinator or Science Specialist)
- 14) Other (please specify):

Figure 2

Preliminary Job Descriptions from the First Pilot Survey

Category 1: Manages an organization, oversees several programs/sites, oversees fiscal management, supervises other paid staff, works with governing board, etc.

Category 2: Manages one or more programs/sites, may plan/develop program materials and activities, supervises other paid staff, etc.

Category 3: Facilitates program operation at one site, may plan/develop program materials and activities, supervises other paid staff, etc.

Category 4: Leads teaching in one or more classrooms, works directly with children/youth, implements program materials and activities, may supervise assistant teachers, etc.

Category 5: Assists in teaching one or more classrooms, works directly with children or youth, implements program materials and activities, etc.

Category 6: Monitor various programs for a funding agency.

Category 7: Provides professional development services to one or more programs.

Category 8: Provides evaluation and/or research services to one or more programs.

Category 9: Provides development services to one or more organizations.

Category 10: Create or develop curricula, programs and/or activities.

Category 11: Provides administrative support services to an organization.

Category 12: Provides operational support services to an organization.

Category 13: Provides services to more than one program sites, works directly with children or youth.

Results from both the survey and focus groups yielded two important findings. First, participants were able to select a primary job responsibility, indicating that the choices were clear and appropriate. Second, the vast majority of participants reported that the pre-specified job description was accurate in summarizing most of the responsibilities within their position (90.3%). Taken together, these indicate the potential success of this new system. Furthermore, since a strong link was successfully established between the primary job responsibilities and job descriptions, this demonstrates that researchers may be able to rely on the primary job responsibilities as a proxy for the relatively larger set of information encompassed within the job descriptions. Thus, we concluded that a simplified set of primary job responsibilities, for the vast majority of respondents, would successfully provide ample information about their overall job responsibilities in a more space-efficient manner for a survey format, while providing researchers with rich contextual information from the descriptions.

Subsequent analysis of the pilot data revealed another valuable finding—an underlying pattern existed within the groupings of job responsibilities. Survey respondents, regardless of their primary job responsibilities and job descriptions, performed many different tasks that overlapped between categories. For example, both teachers and administrators reported working directly with children and creating/developing programs or activities. As a result, we explored the possibility of using a *unique combination* of primary job responsibilities in order to more fully assess the roles of OST workers. This classification could serve to unify an even *broader* set of information gathered from OST workers through surveys and evaluations, while maintaining a strong basis for inter-organizational comparisons.

To do this, we performed an exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which can be a useful data reduction technique. It is advantageous in that it explores underlying clustering patterns in the data. This is especially useful for this area of research, given the lack of universal job categorization in the field. The results from the factor analysis showed that three factors, or clusters of job responsibilities, emerged. These included:

- **Category 1 (Administrators):** Manage a site/organization, manage a budget, write grants, fundraise, or work with a governing board.
- **Category 2 (Program Staff):** Work directly with children/youth, supervise volunteer staff, provide clerical support or data entry, or create/develop programs or activities.
- **Category 3 (Intermediary Staff):** Provide professional development, monitor programs, or evaluate programs.

The key word within each description is “*or*.” These results indicated that three separate clusters of primary job responsibilities typically emerge, but they do not mandate that *all* tasks be performed in any single position. For example, individuals who fall under the “Administrators” category are those whose primary job responsibility is to manage a site or organization, manage budgets, write grants, fundraise, **or** work with a governing board. Not all administrators need to perform every one of these tasks in order to be categorized in this way. Rather, this analysis shows that these types of responsibilities tend to be highly correlated with one another. Importantly, this provides some evidence that a more parsimonious classification system can be utilized to simplify the original list of primary job responsibilities and job descriptions. Several advantages exist with such categorization: it takes up less space on a written or online survey, it decreases the respondent’s burden, it is easier for researchers to interpret three categories of individuals rather than fourteen, and it is easier for practitioners to analyze differences based on a smaller number of groupings.

Second Pilot Survey: Data Collection

To test these hypothesized groupings on a larger scale, we revised the pilot survey to reflect these three categories and released its second Job Title Survey in September 2007. The survey remained open for 6 weeks, and was advertised through several organizations (such as the National AfterSchool Association and the Pennsylvania Statewide Afterschool/Youth Development Network) and through multiple listservs (such as those distributed by Promising Practices in After School, SAC-L, and the authors' listserv). Overall, 1,390 individuals completed the survey.

In many respects, this convenience sample mirrored the field of afterschool workers (see Table 1). Similar to national estimates from a probability sample of the human services workforce examined by Light (2003), respondents to this survey were mostly female (79%) and predominantly White (66%). A smaller percent were African American (17%) or Latino (7%), and the mean age of the sample was 42 years old. However, this sample diverged from Light's estimates in that the respondents in this survey represented a more highly educated sample. Here, most held either a Bachelor's degree (39%) or a Master's degree (29%), whereas in Light's sample most individuals had either some college (22%), or a college degree or higher (52%). In addition, in this survey half held some form of license or certification (such as for teaching or social work, 50%).

Table 1

Respondent Demographics from the Second Plot Survey

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Gender (1=female)	1390	0	1	0.786	0.411
Age	1282	19	75	42.210	11.650
White	1390	0	1	0.660	0.473
Black	1390	0	1	0.170	0.376
Latino	1390	0	1	0.070	0.262
HS diploma	1390	0	1	0.063	0.242
Associates degree	1390	0	1	0.084	0.278
Bachelor's degree	1390	0	1	0.388	0.487
Master's degree	1390	0	1	0.292	0.455
Doctorate degree	1390	0	1	0.030	0.169
Has certification	1315	0	1	0.500	0.500
Full health benefits	1390	0	1	0.316	0.465
Partial health benefits	1390	0	1	0.389	0.488
No health benefits	1390	0	1	0.189	0.391
Work for small organization	1390	0	1	0.296	0.457
Work for midsize organization	1390	0	1	0.139	0.346
Work for large organization	1390	0	1	0.423	0.494
Hours worked per week	1304	2	82	41.894	10.825
Employed part-time	1390	0	1	0.150	0.357
Employed full-time	1390	0	1	0.794	0.404
Salary distribution:	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>			
9,999 or below	47	3.6			
10,000-14,999	44	3.4			
15,000-19,999	40	3.1			
20,000-24,999	64	5			
25,000-29,999	94	7.3			
30,000-34,999	120	9.3			
35,999-39,999	141	11			
40,000-44,999	150	11.7			
45,999-49,999	107	8.3			
50,000-54,999	122	9.5			
55,000-59,999	71	5.5			
60,000-64,999	58	4.5			
65,000-69,999	54	4.2			
70,000-74,999	46	3.6			
75,000 or above	126	9.8			
Total	1284	100			

In terms of job characteristics, most worked full-time (79%) and were employed by either a large organization (of 100+ employees, 42%) or a small organization (less than 50 employees, 30%). Midsize organizations were not as prevalent within the survey responses. Part-time workers worked an average of 26 hours per week, earned an average annual salary between \$20,000 and \$24,999, and did not generally receive any health benefits from their employers (69%). Full-time workers worked an average of 45 hours per week, earned an average annual salary between \$45,000 and \$49,999, and generally received either full health benefits (38%)

or partially paid health benefits (47%) through their employers. A wide range of states participated – only 5 states in the US were not represented –although clusters of surveys came from New York (22%) and Pennsylvania (13%). Some international OST workers participated from countries such as Columbia, Germany, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore (although to maintain consistency regarding work environments we include only OST workers from the United States in our analyses).

Lastly and most importantly, this larger sample yielded a more equivalent representation across the given categories than the pilot sample. This provides further confidence in the estimation of each category. Specifically, 46% identified with Category 1 (Administrators), 24% with Category 2 (Program Staff), and 17% with Category 3 (Intermediary Staff).

Findings

Participants were given the option to choose one of the three categories that included their primary job responsibility, or a fourth option, “None of these adequately describe my job responsibility,” which also allowed the participants to provide written explanations. Eighty-five percent of the respondents chose one of the three categories. While this indicates that most participants can successfully utilize this new system, three revisions can further increase its effectiveness.

First, a review of the reasons provided for those who chose “none of these adequately describe my job responsibility” showed that many respondents wanted to choose *more than one* category. Program directors and upper-level administrators, in particular, tended to respond that they were responsible for “all of the above.” While it is unlikely that a given position includes every single *primary* job responsibility, it is clear that some staff had difficulty deciphering primary from secondary responsibilities. Therefore, a separate category could be included (e.g., “Other”) that allows participants to write in different responses. When the write-in responses were recoded to accommodate this change, 96% of respondents “fit” into one of the options provided. This suggests that this slight revision would significantly increase the efficiency of this system.

Second, the remaining 4% represented individuals with primary job responsibilities that were not listed among the three categories. Job titles within this omitted category included Administrative Assistant, Office Manager, Human Resources, Licensing Coordinator, Advocacy Worker, Technical Support Staff, and Resource/Referral Staff. It seems that while the existing three categories included enough detail to capture *most* of the variation of primary job responsibilities, the inclusion of a few extra responsibilities would further increase the efficiency of the system.

Third and most importantly, we performed another exploratory factor analysis on the comprehensive list of job responsibilities from this larger sample to see if it generated results similar to the first pilot (see a correlation matrix of responsibilities in Table 2 and results of the factor analysis in Table 3).

Table 2
Correlation Matrix, Job Responsibilities in the Second Pilot Survey

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Manage an organization	1												
2. Manage a program	.047	1											
3. Provide services to multiple org.	.045	.023	1										
4. Provide services to one org.	.010	.104**	-.355**	1									
5. Have external financial resp.	.310**	.188**	.080**	.076**	1								
6. Have internal financial resp.	.318**	.415**	.033	.141**	.379**	1							
7. Supervise paid staff	.198**	.505**	-.102**	.207**	.248**	.492**	1						
8. Supervise volunteer staff	.123**	.294**	-.037	.195**	.202**	.252**	.465**	1					
9. Provide professional dvlpmnt	.170**	.262**	.145**	.123**	.201**	.343**	.285**	.170**	1				
10. Develop curriculum, programs	.045	.261**	.021	.158**	.110**	.202**	.360**	.322**	.269**	1			
11. Evaluate programs	.207**	.275**	.121**	.128**	.264**	.388**	.307**	.200**	.439**	.252**	1		
12. Monitor programs	.157**	.376**	.089**	.131**	.182**	.433**	.450**	.267**	.311**	.244**	.527**	1	
13. Conduct research	.154**	.133**	.134**	.088**	.194**	.194**	.107**	.146**	.222**	.146**	.324**	.225**	1
14. Provide support services	.067*	.141**	-0.012	.196**	.142**	.126**	.261**	.286**	.097**	.223**	.148**	.202**	.136**
Note: **p<.01, *p<.05 (two-tailed)													

Table 3

Factor Structure of Job Responsibilities in the Second Pilot Survey,
Varimax Rotated Component Matrix

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Manage an organization	.040	.103	-.009	.799	-.005
2. Manage a program	.763	.126	.124	-.002	-.030
3. Provide services to multiple org.	-.054	.254	.064	.025	-.824
4. Provide services to one org.	.030	.229	.214	-.005	.796
5. Have external financial resp.	.140	.140	.152	.719	-.034
6. Have internal financial resp.	.598	.278	-.019	.466	.064
7. Supervise paid staff	.739	.073	.327	.197	.154
8. Supervise volunteer staff	.389	-.013	.637	.151	.067
9. Provide professional dvlpmnt	.308	.639	.003	.069	-.021
10. Develop curriculum, programs	.335	.251	.525	-.148	-.001
11. Evaluate programs	.301	.739	.034	.149	.011
12. Monitor programs	.538	.502	.102	.067	.004
13. Conduct research	-.187	.666	.250	.188	-.032
14. Provide support services	-.017	.083	.781	.102	.076

Interestingly, it yielded very comparable results but with a few important alterations. The first category was split into two different groups: Upper-level Administrators (such as Presidents and CEO's) and Mid-level Administrators (such as Program Directors). The second and third categories were replicated exactly, and a new category emerged: Service Providers. With the revisions noted above, a new classification would be as follows:

- **Category 1 (Upper-Level Administrators):** Manage an organization, manage a budget, write grants, or fundraise.
- **Category 2 (Mid-Level Administrators):** Manage/Monitor one or more program sites, manage a budget, or supervise paid staff.
- **Category 3 (Program Staff):** Work directly with children/youth; create/develop programs or activities; supervise volunteer staff; or provide office support (such as clerical services, human resources, office management, technical support, or data entry).
- **Category 4 (Intermediary Staff):** Provide professional development, monitor programs, evaluate programs, or conduct research.
- **Category 5 (Service Providers):** Provides direct or indirect services to one organization (including consulting work, advocacy, resources/referrals, licensing support, etc.).
- **Other:** _____

Similar to the first Job Title Survey, most of the respondents fell into the first three categories: 51.7% were in Category 1, 25.2% in Category 2, and 16.7% in Category 3. Fewer identified with Categories 4 or 5 (3.9% and 2.5% respectively).

Limitations

As in any study, this is not without its limitations. This study relied on a convenience sample in which there was limited control over who completed the survey. The study was advertised through several organizations (e.g., The National AfterSchool Association and the Pennsylvania Statewide Afterschool/Youth Development Network) and through multiple listservs. Solely relying on organizations and listservs excludes OST professionals who may not belong to the National and State organizations, subscribe to the listservs, or have access to a computer. Future research should incorporate additional sampling techniques such as probability sampling via telephone surveys, or convenience sampling with broader coverage (such as reaching out to individual OST providers through mail or targeting OST professional development conferences and workshops). In addition, the pilot surveys did not explicitly define the term "primary job responsibilities," which left the respondents to interpret its meaning. Future research should include its definition within the survey to limit variation in the interpretation.

Furthermore, while exploratory factor analysis can be a powerful analysis tool to reduce data, its results are most appropriately interpreted with two notes of caution. First, EFA does not identify a unique solution, but rather an optimal solution that minimizes the correlations between each factor. Thus, future samples based on larger, probabilistic designs may generate alternate solutions. Second, this sample was more highly educated than previous estimates of the human services workforce suggest (Light, 2003). This may account for the larger proportion of participants falling into Categories 1-3 (Upper-level and Mid-level Administrators, and Program Staff). In the future, researchers should make a concerted effort to contact larger subsamples of Intermediary Staff and Service Providers (Categories 4 and 5 respectively). Third, dichotomous variables for each job responsibility were utilized in the EFA. The identification of the factor structure relies on linear regression estimation of each variable with each identified factor, thus continuous indicators are most appropriate. Since dichotomous indicators do not fulfill the assumption of a normally distributed variable, results warrant a note of caution (Agresti & Finlay, 1997). Future research should further explore the underlying factor structure using continuous indicators of job responsibilities (such as, "How many days in a typical week do you spend performing each of the following job responsibilities?"), as well as perform confirmatory factor analyses within a structural equation model to provide a more formal test of the proposed factor structure.

Discussion and Suggestions for Implementation

This study presents a new classification system for categorizing OST job characteristics and responsibilities in both program and professional development evaluation. Based on quantitative data from two online surveys combined with qualitative focus group data, we present evidence supporting the utilization of six categories of job titles for describing staff roles in OST research and evaluation: upper-level administrators, mid-level administrators, program staff, intermediary staff, service providers, and "other." Each of these categories are linked with a larger set of unique job responsibilities that can be used to further describe each grouping as well as to assist survey participants in making the appropriate selection. This classification may be a useful resource for researchers who seek to draw comparisons across OST organizations within the US.

When considering these results, researchers and practitioners alike should keep in mind the exploratory nature of both the sampling procedure and analytic framework. Since neither were intended for formal hypothesis testing, there may be limited practical applicability of this

classification until future research explores these relationships in a more confirmatory manner. For example, Category 3, *Program Staff* contains substantively different job tasks (e.g., direct service, create/develop programs, supervise volunteer staff, OR provide office support). It may be that two subcategories are subsumed within this single category, which future research using larger surveys may be able to parse out. Further, the distinction between “technical support” identified in Category 3 (*Program Staff*) and the responsibilities within Categories 4 (*Intermediary Staff*) and 5 (*Service Providers*) is not readily apparent. Resources/referrals and licensing support typically are considered ‘technical support,’ and all may be considered intermediary support provision, so practically these categories are confusing.

Until future research can develop a stronger empirical base for this classification utilizing probability sampling, continuous measurement of job responsibilities, and exploratory as well as confirmatory factor analyses, an alternative categorization of the results may be useful for practitioners interested in immediate implementation. This alternative classification makes two changes. First, it reduces the categorical choices to only five options, combining Categories 4 and 5 (Intermediary Staff and Service Providers) into a single category: “Capacity Building,” as many of the job responsibilities described reflect activities designed to increase organizational capacity. Second, instead of “Program Staff,” the new category is renamed “Direct-Service” and the primary job responsibility is limited to working directly with children/youth.

- **Upper-Level Administration** (e.g., Manage an organization, manage a budget, fundraise, and/or work with a governing board.)
- **Mid-Level Administration** (e.g., Manage/direct one or more program sites.)
- **Direct-Service** (e.g., Work directly with children/youth.)
- **Capacity-Building** (e.g., Provide professional development, provide technical assistance, monitor programs, evaluate programs, and/or conduct research.)
- **Other:** _____

This new classification has been field tested within an evaluation for a national after-school conference and in several professional development workshops for OST staff. The related question includes the following directive for respondents: “I currently spend most of my work week on: (choose **ONE** answer only)...” Preliminary findings from the evaluations suggest that respondents comply with this alternative system.

Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Research

Overall, the findings extend previous research by providing a new system of gathering demographic information from OST staff. Including either the research-based or “alternative” classification system within a quantitative or qualitative format can successfully and efficiently illustrate the roles of OST workers in the field. Moreover, this can be utilized as a means of comparing workers across diverse workplace settings throughout the country. Future research should further test the accuracy and utility of the research-based classification system using generalizable sampling designs, continuous indicators of job responsibilities, and factor analysis—both exploratory and confirmatory. In the meantime, the alternative classification will likely yield valuable information for OST researchers who are interested in more immediate implementation.

Lastly, professional development practitioners and evaluators may find similar utility from this classification as it allows one to explore how different staff members react to professional development workshops and conferences. Such exploration could push the field of OST

professional development further towards achieving its goal of effectively communicating new practices with staff members, and may ultimately contribute to increases in student outcomes as staff are better prepared to function within their programmatic roles.

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Neighborhood Youth Centers and Families as Supportive Environments for Youth in High Risk Urban Settings

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Abstract: Highlights of a study which examined the relationship between contextual assets within the lives of urban, poor, minority youth, and youth adjustment are discussed in this article. The assets studied were family support and supportive involvement in neighborhood youth centers. The results indicated that higher levels of family support and youth center involvement were associated with better youth outcomes. An absence of significant interaction effects indicated that strong involvement and support in one setting did not compensate for a low level of support or involvement in the other setting. Family support was found to be the most significant predictor of youth adjustment.

Introduction

The goal of positive youth development (PYD) programs is to foster the development of resilience, social skills, and competencies that can facilitate young peoples' transition from adolescence into adulthood in healthy, pro-social ways (Roth & Brooks Gunn, 1993). PYD models focus on fostering the development of positive adjustment by pairing youth's innate capabilities with structured supports and opportunities. Supports and opportunities include family, neighborhoods, schools, congregations, youth organizations, and community-centered programs (Benson, 2002; Connell, Gambone, & Smith, 2000; Eccles & Gootman, 2002). It is generally recognized that the greater the number of opportunities available to youth, the greater the likelihood they will develop in pro-social ways (Benson, 2002; Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Successful youth development programs have been found to share several important characteristics. These include a safe setting, supportive relationships, challenging activities, and

meaningful youth engagement (Walker, Marczak, Blyth, & Borden, 2005; Yohalem, Pittman, & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2004).

Although successful youth programs offer opportunities to engage youth in stimulating and engaging activities, it is apparent that stimulating activities alone do not promote youth development. Meaningful involvement, and positive, supportive interactions with others are also essential elements (Larson, 2000; Rhodes, 2004). A study by the National Research Council (Eccles & Gootman, 2002) identified supportive relationships, support for self efficacy, and support for mattering as essential elements of successful PYD programs. The importance of supportive staff relationships has been supported in a number of studies and forums (Halpern, 2005; Hirsch, Roffman, Deutsch, Flynn, & Pagano, 2000; Noam & Fiore, 2004; Rhodes, 2004). Among the 5 C's of PYD elaborated by Lerner and colleagues are a sense of connection and caring/compassion (Lerner et al., 2000; Lerner et al., 2005). These studies all point to the importance of attending not only to the types of opportunities or developmental settings available to youth but also to the quality of interpersonal relationships (e.g., support, caring, connection) that are offered within these settings and the level of involvement youth attain.

The present study examined family factors and youth center involvement as related to positive youth development. First, we were interested in whether positive relationships with family and neighborhood youth centers were independently associated with young people's adjustment. Second, we were interested in determining which of these two supportive contexts was most predictive of youth adjustment. Specifically, is an emotional connection to one or both settings most predictive of youth adjustment? If both settings predict positive adjustment, is one a more significant predictor than the other?

In the next sections, we provide further justification for importance of studying these two developmental settings in relation to one another.

Family Dynamics and Positive Youth Development

Two important family functions related to positive youth adjustment are parental monitoring and supportive family relationships. Parents who regularly monitor (i.e., are involved, knowledgeable about) their children's whereabouts, peer relationships, and out-of-home activities have been found to have better adjusted children in terms of levels of empathy and conflict management skills (Field, Diego, & Sanders, 2002). Knowing where your child is and who he/she is with have been found to deter negative outcomes such as delinquency, aggression, depressive symptoms, and substance abuse (Ary, Duncan, Duncan, & Hops, 1999; Parker & Benson, 2004; Svensson, 2000). These same factors have been found to enhance positive skills such as ability to control anger and deal with frustration (Griffin, Scheier, Botvin, Diaz, & Miller, 1999; Larson, 2000; Pabon, 1998; Smith & Krohn, 1995).

Parental support has been shown to help insulate youth, including inner-city minority youth like the ones studied here, from anxiety and depression (Zimmerman, Ramirez-Valles, Zapert, & Maton, 2000), foster self-esteem (McCreary, Slavin, & Berry, 1996), and buffer the effects of stress and promote psychosocial adjustment (Taylor, 1996). Rohner and Britner (2002) maintain that parental acceptance and support are universal processes necessary to promote development and adjustment. Larson (2000) found that presence of family support increased the likelihood that youth would maintain their participation in youth program activities and thus increase the likelihood of receiving benefit. Youth who report a positive level of support within their families are also likely to hold more positive opinions of their community and to participate

more in local youth programs thereby increasing the likelihood of benefit (Morrissey & Werner-Wilson, 2005).

Neighborhood Youth Programs and Positive Youth Development

Research has suggested that minority youth living in inner city neighborhoods may be especially vulnerable to a host of social and mental health risks. Poverty, pervasive violence, and inadequate schools have been linked to higher rates of internalizing and externalizing behaviors for urban, minority youth (Hay, Fortson, Hollist, Alheimer, & Schaible, 2007; Ingoldsby et al., 2006; Lerner et al., 2005; Li, Nussbaum, & Richards, 2007; Prelow, Weaver, & Swenson, 2006). Involvement in neighborhood youth centers have been found to offer youth a source of "primary support" or a "buffer" from environmental risks (Catalano, Berglund, & Ryan, 2002; Morrissey & Werner-Wilson, 2005; Werner & Smith, 2001; Wynne, 1997). Neighborhood centers provide youth with alternative or "neutralizing" experiences and reduce exposure to negative experiences (Catalano et al., 2002; Masten, 2001; Werner & Smith, 2001). Connections with centers offer youth a unique form of support that differs from their homes or schools.

Hirsch and his colleagues (c.f., Hirsch, 2005; Hirsch et al., 2000; Loder & Hirsch, 2003; Roffman, Pagano, & Hirsch, 2001) found that supportive and positive connections with youth centers were associated with improved self-esteem, psychosocial functioning, and greater likelihood of staying out of trouble. Positive involvement in youth centers also has been found to reduce aggression and internalizing problems such as anxiety or depression (Scales et al., 2000). According to Lerner (2004), sustained relationships with mentors or caring adults, with a focus on positive development and community involvement are critical components of community programs. Hirsch et al. (2000) found that neighborhood center staff provided a support function that fell between family support and the direct instruction received in their relationships with teachers.

The relationships between supportive families and involvement in supportive youth center relationships are not well understood. The studies reviewed above suggest that families and neighborhood youth centers are both directly related to positive youth outcomes. However, several authors reported that family support was not directly connected to positive youth outcomes. Rather, family support was connected to center use which in turn was associated with positive youth outcomes (Larson, 2000; Morrissey & Werner-Wilson, 2005). The present study attempted to clarify these inconsistent findings by examining the direct effects of family support and youth center involvement on youth adjustment.

Research Questions

The following research questions were examined in this study of urban, minority youth living within impoverished neighborhoods.

1. Are levels of emotional involvement and support from family and connections to the neighborhood youth centers independently associated with adolescent adjustment? A corollary of this question explores whether or not emotional support and involvement in one setting is more predictive of youth adjustment than emotional involvement and support in the other setting?
2. In what ways do family connections and center involvement work in conjunction with and independent of one another to predict youth adjustment?

It was expected that this sample of youth would reflect levels of adjustment consistent with the risk-laden environments in which they lived. Thus, the greater the number of supports and opportunities available to youth, the greater the likelihood they would report positive

adjustment. It was expected that family supports, in particular, would be predictive of youth adjustment. What remains uncertain, however, is whether or not center involvement would be predictive of adjustment and whether or not center involvement would compensate in positive ways for the absence of family supports.

Method

Study Design

The data for this study were part of an evaluation of a state-wide "neighborhood youth center project." Twenty five youth centers in the state's largest and poorest cities were provided state funding to "increase the range and extent of positive experiences for at risk youth." The centers provide inner city youth with safe accessible spaces that provide supervised out-of-school activities. Centers were required to structure their programming around positive youth development principles with the goal of promoting development of skills and competencies that would enable youth to make positive choices and demonstrate improved resistance skills (Catalano et al., 2002; Masten, 2001; Werner & Smith, 2001). More specifically, all centers involved in this study were required to offer: athletic and recreational opportunities; enrichment or tutoring activities; skills training in areas such as problem-solving, decision-making, conflict resolution, peer counseling and life skills; parent involvement in planning the program; youth involvement, including, but not limited to, input into planning and management of the program and youth leadership development activities; and, coordination with existing community services for youth.

Youth filled out one-time survey questionnaires during the fall of 2000, detailing their experiences within the centers and their relationships with their families along with several indicators of adolescent adjustment. The total number of surveys completed was 1360. However, 305 surveys were removed because of incomplete data or because the age of the youth responding to the survey was under 12 or over 18 years of age. In addition, it was decided to drop the relatively small portion of the sample of youth whose ethnicity was White or "Other" (comprising 3% of the total sample). These youth were dropped from the sample because their low numbers made it impractical to examine subgroup comparisons based upon ethnicity. As a result of these adjustments, the total sample used in the analyses consisted of 1055 youth.

This sample was comprised of 655 African American youth and 400 Hispanic youth. The mean age of the sample was 15.5 ($SD = 2.19$) years, with 54 and 45 percent of the sample, respectively, being males and females. Forty-five percent of this sample reported a "B" average in school, 12% reported an "A" average, and 25% reported a "C" average. The family status of the youth who participated in the study was quite varied. Forty-two percent of the sample resided with both their biological mother and father. Another 41% of the participants lived in a mother-headed household, and an additional 8% lived with relatives other than their biological parents. The remaining small percentage of participants reported living with other non-related adults. The information provided on the family income levels of the youth within the sample was not reliable. However, one reliable indicator revealed that slightly over 67% of the youth within the sample reported receiving free or reduced price meals at school, meaning they met the state poverty guideline for food assistance.

Measures

The variables included in this study focused on family and youth center connection and were measured by the following scales.

Family support. The family support subscale was taken from the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)-Family (Canty-Mitchell & Zimet, 2000). It consists of 4 items to measure family support. The scale's dimensionality and psychometric properties have been affirmed in numerous studies (c.f., Dahlem, Zimet, & Walker, 1991). The alpha reliability coefficient in the present study was .89.

Parental monitoring. The scale used to assess family monitoring was developed by Voydanoff and Donnelly (1999). The scale consisted of 2 items, asking how often caregiver know who youth are with and what they are doing when they are away from home. The alpha reliability coefficient in the present study was .76.

Youth involvement with the centers. Each youth's degree of involvement with the neighborhood centers was assessed with three measures. The amount of social support received from the staff at the centers was assessed with the Canty-Mitchell and Zimet (2000) Perceived Social Support Scale. The 4-item Significant Other Adult subscale was modified slightly to refer to relationships with center staff rather than adults in general. The alpha reliability was .90.

Measures of "center use" and "center fit" were created for this study to assess the quality of the youth's experience within their centers. It was important to determine how much youth used their center. Center use was assessed by determining how frequently youth participated in four common activities: Athletics; Support with School Work; Skills Training (e.g., peer mentoring, leadership training, community service, computer or tech training); and, Other Social and Special Activities sponsored by the centers. The responses to these questions were summed to create a score representing center use. The alpha reliability of this scale of survey items was .72.

The concept of "fit" follows the work of Hirsh et al. (2000), who found that young persons' satisfaction with their centers was associated with positive developmental outcomes. Thus, youth in the present study were asked to report on their happiness/satisfaction with various aspects of the centers (e.g., staff, types of programs offered, etc.). The term "center fit" was used to connote the degree of congruence between what youth were looking for at the centers and what they believed was being provided to them. A good match between youth needs and the types of experiences provided by the centers is thought to be necessary in order to facilitate positive developmental outcomes. The alpha reliability for this combination of survey items was .89.

Adjustment variables: Youth internalizing and externalizing behaviors. Each youth's psychosocial adjustment was measured with three well established subscales of the Youth Self Report (YSR) instrument (Achenbach, 1991): anxiety, aggression, and delinquency. The YSR has been used to measure youth adjustment in over 4000 studies (Achenbach, 1991).

The anxiety subscale was used to assess the degree to which youth internalized their problems. The scale consists of 16 items, and the alpha reliability coefficient for this scale in the current study was .88. The two subscales included to measure externalizing problem behaviors were aggression (19 items) and delinquency (11 items), and their alpha reliability coefficients in this study were .89 and .79, respectively. Higher scores on these measures were indicative of poorer levels of adjustment.

These three measures were moderately to highly correlated with one another (r 's ranged from .58 to .76). Because of the high correlation between the measure of delinquency and aggression ($r = .76$; $p < .001$), it was decided to combine these two measures into one indicator of Externalizing Problem Behaviors. Thus, two adjustment measures were used in the study. The first was a measure of Internalizing Problems Behaviors, as measured by the anxiety subscale of the YSR. The second was a measure of Externalizing Problem Behaviors, assessed by a combination of the aggression and delinquency scales of the Youth Self Report instrument.

Although the YSR is not a standard measure of PYD, it does measure psychosocial outcomes associated with positive development. These outcomes reflect one's ability to successfully cope with life in a high stress environment. In fact, numerous researchers have noted PYD is inversely related to risk behaviors such as aggression, as well as internalized problems such as depression or anxiety (c.f., Dryfoos, 1990; Lerner, 2004; Lerner et al., 2005; Perkins & Borden, 2003; Scales et al., 2000).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

The correlations among the variables used in the study, along with their means and standard deviations, are reported in Table 1. One point of interest is that youth scores on the internalizing and externalizing measures are consistent with national norms. The national mean for the internalizing indicator is 5.1 as compared to a mean of 5.7 in this sample. The national mean for the externalizing measure used in the study is 11.7 as compared to the sample mean of 12.0 (Achenbach, 1991).

Table 1

Intercorrelations of Independent (Family, Program) and Dependent (Youth Adjustment) Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Family Support	--						
2. Family Monitoring	.32**	--					
3. Staff Support	.35**	.14	--				
4. Program Use	-.01	-.05	-.15**	--			
5. Program Fit	.04	.009	.06*	.05*	--		
6. Internalizing	-.24**	-.11**	-.04	-.05	.03	--	
7. Externalizing	-.26**	-.24**	-.13**	-.03	.00	.66	--
N	1055	989	1055	1055	1055	1055	1055
Means and Standard Deviations	5.4 (1.7)	3.9 (1.1)	4.8 (1.9)	2.3 (1.3)	3.1 (0.8)	5.4 (3.3)	12.0 (4.6)

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Another important point is that the family variables are correlated in expected ways with the indicators of adjustment. That is, higher levels of family support and parental monitoring are associated with lower internalizing and externalizing scores. Center staff support was significantly correlated only with lower scores on the externalizing indicator.

The approach to subsequent data analyses was determined, in part, by first examining whether adjustment scores differed according to participants' gender, race, family living arrangements, and age. Age was not significantly correlated with either of the adjustment indicators. Both gender and race differences were significant on the internalizing measure. Females ($M = 6.2$) scored significantly higher than males ($M = 5.4$) on the internalizing measure ($t = 2.07$; $p < .03$). Hispanics ($M = 6.7$), scored significantly higher than African Americans ($M = 5.2$) on the internalizing subscale as well ($t = 4.49$; $p < .001$).

The only significant difference on the externalizing measure was with family living arrangements. Youth residing with both biological parents ($M = 10.8$) scored consistently lower on the externalizing scale ($F = 4.80$; $p < .003$) than youth residing in other family types (single-parent family: $M = 12.9$; remarried family: $M = 13.2$; other living arrangements: $M = 14.2$).

Research Question 1: Do Supportive Relationships in Both Settings Independently Predict Youth Adjustment?

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Internalizing problem behaviors. The regression results for the internalizing measure are summarized in Table 2. The combination of covariates and predictors accounted for 10.1% of the variance ($F(7,912) = 14.6$; $p < .001$). Both gender and race emerged as significant predictors. Beyond these covariates, the family support and program use measures emerged as significant predictors. The examination of the Beta's suggests that family support is a considerably stronger predictor when compared to Program Use.

Table 2

Summary of the Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Internalizing Problem Behaviors

Model	Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.195	.036		5.458	.000
	Gender	.043	.023	.062	1.894	.058
	Race	.106	.023	.151	4.629	.000
2	(Constant)	.599	.074		8.077	.000
	Gender	.057	.022	.082	2.585	.010
	Race	.087	.022	.124	3.889	.000
	Family support	-.051	.007	-.256	-7.201	.000
	Monitoring	-.014	.011	-.045	-1.353	.177
	Staff Support	.005	.006	.026	.755	.451
	Program Fit	-.006	.011	-.017	-.550	.582
	Program Use	-.023	.009	-.082	-2.543	.011

Externalizing problem behaviors. The regression results of the externalizing measure are summarized in Table 3. The combination of covariates and predictors accounted for 12.9% of the variance ($F(6, 889) = 21.8; p < .001$). As expected, family living arrangements emerged as a significant predictor. Beyond this covariate, both indicators of family connections emerged as significant predictors. Youth who experienced higher levels of family support and monitoring scored lower on the scales assessing aggression and delinquent behaviors. Only one of the variables used to assess youth center involvement emerged as a significant predictor. This was program fit. Youth who reported greater satisfaction and happiness with the programs they attended were more likely to report lower levels of externalizing problem behaviors.

Table 3

Summary of the Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Externalizing Problem Behaviors

Model	Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.365	.016		22.712	.000
	Family Structure	.036	.011	.106	3.174	.002
2	(Constant)	.930	.062		15.064	.000
	Family Structure	.028	.011	.084	2.662	.008
	Family Support	-.041	.007	-.220	-6.191	.000
	Monitoring	-.052	.010	-.177	-5.314	.000
	Staff Support	-.007	.006	-.042	-1.243	.214
	Program Fit	-.020	.010	-.061	-1.920	.055
	Program Use	-.014	.008	-.054	-1.682	.093

Research Question 2: In What Ways do Family Connections and Center Involvement Work in Conjunction with and Independent of One Another to Predict Youth Adjustment?

A second approach to data analysis was developed to examine the degree to which family connections and center involvement independently and interactively predict youth adjustment. For this analysis, a composite "family connections" variable was created by multiplying together the family support and parental monitoring scales. The resulting scores on this composite measure represented a continuum with youth reporting the lowest levels of monitoring and support at one end, and youth reporting the highest levels of monitoring and support at the opposite end. A decision was made not to create a second composite measure of center involvement, due to the lower inter-correlations among center variables.

The relative contributions of family connections and neighborhood youth center involvement to youth adjustment were then explored via regression analyses. A series of five-step hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine associations between family connection, youth center involvement variables, and indicators of youth adjustment while also examining potential family and center interactions. When internalizing problem behaviors was included as the dependent variable, both gender and race were again entered as covariates. When externalizing problem behaviors was entered as the dependent variable, family living arrangements was entered as a covariate.

Covariates were entered first into the regression equations, followed by the family connections composite variable, and youth center involvement variables (i.e., staff support, center fit, center use). All possible two-way interactions involving the family connections variable were entered on the third step (e.g., family connections x staff support). The fourth and fifth steps involved all possible three- and four-way interaction terms involving the low and high family connections groups.

Variables are said to interact in their accounting for variance in a criterion variable when they have a joint effect, which is over and above any additive combination of their separate effects (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). In order to minimize the possibility of multicollinearity, given that the interaction terms are derived from the cross product of the predictor variables, the interaction terms were created using "centered variables." This transformation is one of the primary ways of reducing multicollinearity because of the highly correlated nature of interaction terms with the corresponding independent predictors (Norusis, 2006).

Internalizing problem behaviors. The results indicated that 8.6% of the variance in the internalizing scale was accounted for by the set of predictor variables ($F(4,913) = 15.2$; $p < .001$). The composite indicator of family connections was significantly associated with reported levels of internalizing problem behaviors ($B = -.24$; $p < .001$). The only other main effect that emerged in the analysis was program use ($B = -.09$; $p < .007$). Interestingly, no interaction terms were found to be statistically significant.

Externalizing problem behaviors. Ten-and-a-half percent of the variance in the externalizing measure was accounted for by the set of predictor variables ($F(4,884) = 28.6$; $p < .001$). Again, the composite indicator of family connections was significantly associated with reported levels of externalizing problem behaviors ($B = -.31$; $p < .001$). The only other main effect variable that emerged from these analyses was program fit ($B = -.06$; $p < .004$), though program use did approach statistical significance ($B = -.05$; $p < .09$). Again, no interaction terms were found to be statistically significant.

The absence of significant interaction terms for the analyses on both the internalizing and externalizing measures suggests that center involvement does not buffer negative effects of low family connections on adolescent adjustment and that strong family connections do not compensate for limited involvement in neighborhood youth centers.

Discussion

The overall goal of the study was to develop a better understanding of the supportive role family relationships and neighborhood youth centers can have in the lives of urban, poor, minority youth living in what is generally considered to be high risk environments. As previous research has suggested, family characteristics and neighborhood youth centers are external assets or social contexts that promote positive youth development. The primary goals of the present study were to assess whether positive connections with family and neighborhood youth centers were independently associated with young people's positive adjustment. We also were interested in determining which of these two supportive contexts was most predictive of youth adjustment and whether a strong emotional connection with one setting was sufficient to compensate for a poor emotional connection with the other.

This sample of minority youth provided an opportunity to look at the growth and development of youth who live under adverse conditions in 25 stressed and challenged inner-city neighborhoods. The majority of the youth in this study appear to be characterized by relatively high levels of psychosocial adjustment. Overall, these youth tend to have families who are closely involved with them. They are generally highly monitored by their families and spend after school hours in supervised youth development programs. In addition to having scores that indicate positive youth adjustment, the majority of the youth evidenced other protective or resilient qualities such as good grades in school, involvement in school and extra curricular activities.

The results of the study are largely consistent with the hypotheses. Specifically, there is ample evidence that family connections are associated with youth adjustment, both in terms of internalizing problem behaviors and externalizing problem behaviors. Additionally, regression analyses indicated that center use, or the frequency of youth participation in center activities, was associated with fewer internalizing problem behaviors. Program fit, a measure of youth's satisfaction with center programs was a significant predictor of externalizing problem behaviors. However, family support was a consistently stronger predictor of youth adjustment than were youth center variables.

The absence of significant interaction terms between family and center variables also indicates that the effects of family and center are largely independent of one another. That is, a high level of involvement and support in one setting does not compensate for a low level of involvement or support in the other. This finding is significant in that it has been suggested that neighborhood centers might play an ameliorative role among youth who experience poor relationships with parents and other family members (Roffman, et al., 2001). Although youth centers can be a positive resource for inner-city youth and may, in fact, facilitate their psychological adjustment, they do not appear to compensate for the level of support that youth receive in their own families. Despite the positive role neighborhood centers play, the family appears to be the more powerful predictor of adjustment for youth living in the inner-city neighborhoods studied here.

It is interesting to note, in addition, that youth adjustment within this context was connected to factors other than family and neighborhood center supports. For example, we found that internalizing problem behaviors were related to gender and race. Our findings are consistent with previous studies that have found higher rates of depression and anxiety in adolescent females than males. This difference is generally attributed to the tendency for males to externalize their emotional distress through active behaviors such as aggression whereas females are more likely to direct their emotional distress inward to the self (e.g. Kubik, Lytle, Birnbaum, Murray, Perry, 2003).

Our results also supported previous studies that identified higher rates of internalizing symptoms among Hispanic youth compared to African American and European American youth, (e.g. Pina & Silverman, 2004; Varela, Vernberg, Sanchez-Sosa, Riveros, Mitchell, & Mashunkashey, 2004; Varela, Weems, Berman, Hensley, & Rodriguez de Bernal, 2007). Some evidence also has suggested that Hispanic females are the most vulnerable group for symptoms of depression and anxiety (McLaughlin, Hilt, & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2007). However, the reasons Hispanic youth may be at more risk for internalizing symptoms have not been well-studied. Some have suggested that a possible source of anxiety is acculturation stress which may be greater for Hispanic youth and families who may have immigrated more recently to the United States (Canino, 2004; Cooley & Boyce, 2004). Another explanation is that among Hispanic/Latino families it is common for parents to exert a controlling parenting style that includes demanding the child's acceptance of parent's assertions and beliefs, and foreclosure of discussion when differences arise. This parenting style has been associated with increased anxiety in the child (Varela et al., 2004). A final explanation is that mental health problems carry a heavy negative stigma in the Latino culture which may lead to adolescents being more likely to internalize emotional distress rather than express it more openly (Varela et al., 2007).

Externalizing problem behaviors were found to be significantly associated with family living arrangements, a finding that also supported previous research findings (Cleveland, 2003). Youth residing with both biological parents reported consistently fewer aggressive and delinquent behaviors in contrast to youth living in other settings such as single-parent, remarried, or other types of households. Numerous studies have found that youth residing in single parent families are prone to higher degrees of aggression, less social and academic competence, and lower levels of behavioral control in contrast to children living in two-parent households (Griffin et al., 1999; Hay et al., 2007; Pabon, 1998; Svensson, 2000). These findings have been attributed less to the processes of divorce than to the degree and context of parental conflict to which the youth has been exposed.

Overall, these findings highlight the importance of examining the broader context within which youth development occurs. Clearly, the family, and particularly parents active involvement with their children, is a significant factor in promoting adolescents' adjustment. Although neighborhood youth centers cannot compensate for the role played by the family, they too have been shown to play an important role in fostering youth adjustment. It is also clear that other factors such as gender, ethnicity, and the child's family living arrangements play critical roles in determining the development of youth living in urban, high-risk settings.

Implications for Research, Practice, and Policy

This study offers some interesting insights in terms of the positive youth development literature. First, the majority of minority youth who participated in the neighborhood youth centers studied were functioning well. That is, none of the adjustment scale scores of the Youth Self Report were close to the clinical cutoff norms established by Achenbach (Achenbach, 1991; Achenbach,

Dumenci, & Rescorla, 2003). This adds support to a small literature base (e.g., Li, et al., 2007) that has begun to examine factors of adolescents' resilience in poor, minority, urban neighborhoods.

Second, the importance of family involvement in predicting positive youth outcomes suggests that greater attention may need to be given to family factors within the positive youth development framework. Youth program planners may want to pay more attention to youth participants' levels of family involvement and consider having strategies in place for dealing with the absence of family and parental involvement. This has important implications in several areas such as program planning, staff training, and program evaluation. Additionally, it appears to remain conscious of the different ways that race and gender are considered in relation to program planning,

Limitations and Future Directions

There are limitations associated with the present study. Although the sample was large and the results are interesting, the study was exploratory and descriptive in nature. Because the study was first designed as an evaluation of neighborhood youth centers, the measures employed in the study were limited in terms of both their breadth and depth. A one time survey provided "snapshot" information of youth in these programs. In the future, research is needed that more rigorously attempts to assess precisely how much and in what ways youth use these neighborhood programs and how family and youth center contexts interact with other relevant contextual factors such as peer relationships, schools, neighborhood conditions, or availability of other community resources. In addition, the cross-section of youth involved in such studies should be studied over time, and compared to other urban youth who are not involved in youth center programs. Again, future research using a repeated measures design and making use of a control group would begin to address the contextual factors shaping the development and adjustment of urban, poor, minority youth.

These limitations aside, the study offers insight into the lives of minority youth residing in what is typically considered high-risk environments. The youth within this study evidenced fairly high levels of adjustment and were, for the most part, positively connected to their families. The findings of the study support the conclusion, as would be expected, that the families play an important role in influencing the development of the youth residing in high risk environments. It is clear, as well, that neighborhood youth centers can help shield minority and poor youth from the risks present in urban environments.

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Educator Perceptions of Conflict Interactions Among Young Children in Inner-city Elementary and Middle Schools

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Educator Perceptions of Conflict Interactions Among Young Children in Inner-city Elementary and Middle Schools

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Abstract: A study that investigated the perceptions of educational professionals regarding the rising issue of aggressive and disruptive behaviors among young children in inner-city schools is discussed in this article. A convenient sample of 14 professionals were selected and interviewed from educators in an inner-city located in the northeast region of Ohio. Evidence of this investigation suggests that young children's aggressive behaviors are increasing in both occurrence and complexity. While these behaviors are perceived to be a function of certain environmental exposures, a case can be made for the effectiveness in conflict management and life skill application in young children as many children seem to display more problems in collective and social settings.

Introduction

Conflict between people represents one of the most basic and common forms of human interactions. Perhaps, what is most vital to the integrity of the individual and the respective community is the manner in which these conflicts occur. While there is overwhelming precedence for viewing conflict in a negative manner, it is clear that this behavior among young children is often symptomatic of dysfunction within respective families and communities (Fonzi, Schneider, Tani, & Tomada, 1997; Hughes, Gleason, & Zhang, 2005; Rinaldi & Howe, 2003). In consort, these behaviors often represent the collective experiences that children witness and experience from their respective environments. Consequently, nowhere is this issue more

prevalent than in the school system where children's collective behaviors are often a reflection of their perceived experiences in the family and the community settings.

Rinaldi and Howe (2003) employed a systems approach to understanding the relationship between conflict and behavioral outcomes. The researchers purported that perceived conflictual interactions in one setting or subsystem (i.e., family setting) can influence how children perceive conflict and behavioral responsiveness in other settings (i.e., school settings). A similar systematic approach is employed by researchers (McDonald, Jouriles, Briggs-Gowan, Rosenfield, & Carter, 2007; Yates, Dodds, Sroufe, & Egeland, 2003) who provide support to the position that early childhood exposure to violence may in fact be a catalyst to producing emotional and behavioral problems in children by affecting their internal regulating abilities.

According to Brotman, Gouley, Chesir-Teran, Dennis, Klein, and Shrouf (2005), socially deviant and aggressive behaviors exhibited by adolescents and adults can be traced back to aggressive and behavioral disturbances as early as the elementary year of children's development. Similarly, environmental factors such as inner-city poverty and stress tend to produce behavioral disturbances and adjustment problems in the form of aggression that can be identified as early as infancy and toddlerhood and as late as adolescence (Squires, J. & Nickel, R., 2003; McDonald, Jouriles, Briggs-Gowan, Rosenfield, & Carter, 2007). Given such a range of developmental consequences due, in part, to the stressors associated with poverty and developmentally inappropriate communities, it is evident that a closer look at children's behaviors may provide insight on children's developmental challenges and subsequent needs.

In the United States, professionals in the school system are plagued with the rising incident of conflicts (bullying, fighting, and physical/verbal abuse) exhibited by students (Brinson et al., 2004; Palmar, 2001; Tidwell, Flannery, & Lewis-Palmer, 2003; Pietrzak, Petersen, & Speaker, 1998; Wager, 1993). According to some researchers (Johnson & Johnson, 1995; Tidwell, Flannery, & Lewis-Palmer, 2003), many students feel that school is an unsafe environment and this can hinder student's learning outcomes. What was once a distant topic of discussion in academic classes of history and social studies is now the witnessed account of many children as they experience increasing incidents of violence in their communities and schools (Pietrzak, Petersen, & Speaker, 1998; Singer, Miller, Guo, Flannery, Frierson, & Slovak, 1999). How some students problem-solve and manage future conflicts are of great concern to teachers and administrators throughout schools (Mavropoulou & Padelidi, 2002; Palardy & Palardy, 2001; Wager, 1993).

Rationale

In response to the growing occurrence of conflicts among children, schools are implementing a variety of responsive programs to help children resolve conflicts (DuPaul & Huff, 1998; Tidwell, Flannery, & Lewis-Palmer, 2003). Increasingly, professionals are discovering that these behaviors represent poor communication skills due to limited interpersonal resources and social skills (Lane, Menzies, Barton-Arwood, Doukas, & Munton, 2005). Consequently, more needs to be known about the nature of children's conflicts, especially among inner-city children. While a considerable amount of data has been collected to investigate conflict among children, less is known about the nature of conflict and resolution among elementary and middle school students in inner-city communities and from the perspective of educators and administrators.

The purpose of this project is to develop a greater understanding of the specific characteristics of conflict as they relate to inner-city elementary and middle school students (K-8). In consort, a better understanding of conflict among inner-city children can enable professionals to develop

a programmatic intervention that is unique to their specific challenges. This project also allows for a better understanding of the problems educators face respective to inner-city school systems.

Conflict and the Academic Environment

Many researchers (Flanagan, Bierman, & Kam, 2003; Lewis, Colvin, & Sugai, 2000; Smolkowski, Biglan, Barrera, Taylor, Black, & Blair, 2005) have provided support to the view that children are not coming to school "skill ready" and are thereby limited when it comes to managing conflicts with their peers. It is clear from the noted researchers that teaching conflict management skills may be just as important as teaching the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Many children are displaying a multitude of problematic behaviors (i.e., overt aggression, verbal altercation, non-compliance) that can affect not only their ability to perform academically, but also, affect their ability to develop appropriate pro-social behaviors. These behaviors often interfere with their ability to develop relationships with teachers and peers which are essential building blocks to later social development (Flanagan, Bierman, & Kam, 2003). Similarly, researchers (Smolkowski, Biglan, Barrera, Taylor, Black, & Blair, 2005) noted these disruptive behaviors also tend to be associated with limited social skills development and can lead to later academic problems beyond the elementary years.

The management of classroom behavior in schools has emerged as a pressing issue facing educators in recent years (Mack, 2004; Palardy & Palardy, 2001; Rajpal, 2001; Sbarra & Pianta, 2001; Wager, 1993; Walker & Holland, 1979). In fact, teachers are increasingly faced with the challenge of dealing with children who have emotional and behavioral problems that present daily challenges in the classroom (Mack, 2004; Rajpal, 2001; Tidwell, Flannery, Lewis-Palmer, 2003; Mavropoulou & Padelidou, 2002). Consequently, what seems to be most challenging to this issue is the contagious nature of problematic behaviors in the classroom. According to Boxer, Guerra, Huesmann, and Morales (2005), when children demonstrate continued disruptive and aggressive behaviors, it tends to promote similar behaviors in other children who witness these outbursts in the classroom. Consequently, the frequency of these disruptive behaviors among students of diverse groups tends to result in cognitive and interpersonal deficiencies (Keogh, 2006).

In the midst of such diverse challenges, teachers are also expected to improve their standard of teaching in such a way that it is quantitatively reflected in student academic assessments (Tidwell, Flannery, & Lewis-Palmer, 2003). According to Souter (2001), physical aggression towards the teacher is a common behavioral problem that educators are challenged to address. Although the degree of problem behaviors may vary from teacher to teacher, educators in general have a concern about the growing trend of disruptive behavior (Rajpal, 2001; Wager, 1993). While these problems of conflict in the classroom are not new, they are increasing in occurrence and complexity. In fact, Walker and Holland (1979) stated:

Observers of the educational process (psychologist, sociologist, journalist, and others) have suggested that the following factors may be instrumental in accounting for such a development: (a) a general erosion of respect for adult authority in our society; (b) the deleterious effects of an increase in television-viewing by children; (c) changes in child-rearing practices; (d) an increase in societal discord, including marital conflicts that have a disruptive influence upon the family; and (e) a heightened awareness of and emphasis upon the prerogatives of the individual.

Although Walker and Holland's article was written in the late seventies, their insight on this issue still has merit and relevance to current behaviors among young children in elementary and middle school. The variables discussed are still mirrored in the modern day classroom as children continue to bring outside influences into the school and the classroom which affects how they problem-solve (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Sheline, Skipper, & Broadhead, 1994).

In many respects, school-related behavioral problems are simply a reflection of what goes on outside of the school environment (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Sbarra & Pianta, 2001; Schaeffer & Rollins, 2001). Similarly, Schaeffer and Rollin (2001) noted that the key to understanding the nature of children's conflict is rooted in their collective environment (i.e., the home, the community, the school, the media). It is for this reason that the systemic and ecological approach of Bronfenbrenner's Model of Human Development can be an effective model for conceptualizing the nature of conflict in inner city schools and potential methods to resolve the conflict.

Conflict and the Family

Many researchers (August, Egan, Realmuto, & Hektner, 2003; Frosch & Mangelsdorf, 2001) have noted that there is a connection between the quality of the family environment and child adjustment outcomes. When children come from dysfunctional families, children's adjustment outcomes tend to seek expression in the form of aggressive behaviors (Bond & McMahon, 1984; Erath, Bierman, & the Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2006; Frosch & Mangelsdorf, 2001), poor academic performance (Frosch & Mangelsdorf, 2001; Hughes, Gleason, & Zhang, 2005), and the inability to form healthy relationships (McDonalds et. al., 2007).

According to Keilty and Galvin (2006), the family represents a vital source of a child's developmental experiences which reflect such skills and traits as temperament, communication style, interactions strategies and even level of interest or engagement. Consequently, children tend to develop in a manner that allows them to cope and manage respective to the challenges of their environment. This is also indicative of the point that children's development might be a reflection of certain limitations in problem-solving, coping, and effective interacting with their peers when they come from family settings where they are exposed to high amounts of conflict and stress. This is especially the case as many children are increasing a product of families where there is stress and conflict due to divorce and single parent households (Chiriboga, Catron, & Weiler, 2009). The researchers give support to the notion that destabilizing families contribute to destabilizing factors respective to children's development and can put them at risk for social adaptation.

The School Playground

The school playground has traditionally been a setting that is most problematic regarding the incidence of conflict among children. Borg (1999) purported that both victims and bullies indicated that the school playground was a popular place for bullying. In spite of this, researchers have found that social skills intervention can significantly decrease the occurrence of aggressive acts on the playground (Anderson-Butcher, Newsome, & Nay, 2003).

Conflict resolution programs have also demonstrated positive outcomes towards reducing aggression on the playgrounds. In fact, Cunningham et al. (1998) indicated that approximately 90% of the disputes were successfully handled by peer mediators. The researchers also purported that the students frequently practiced their newly acquired mediation skills and frequently employed the services of the student mediation teams. In addition, the number of

incidents spilling over from the playground to the classroom significantly declined and aggressive behaviors was reduced.

Inner-City School Peer Mediation Program

The challenge associated with conflict management among inner-city children is especially problematic because of the range and complexity of factors contributing to conflict in inner-city children. Johnson, Johnson, Mitchell, Cotton, Harris, and Louison (1996) investigated the nature of conflict by investigating four specific questions that relate to conflicts elementary students face:

- (a) What types of conflicts are mediated by conflict managers?
- (b) What strategies do elementary students use to manage conflicts?
- (c) What solutions derive from peer mediation? and
- (d) Is there a difference between male-male, female-female, and male-female disputes?

According to Johnson et al. (1996), the mediated conflicts generally consisted of relationship problems characterized by physical aggression (hitting, kicking, and physical harassment) and verbal aggression (name calling, insults, and rumors). Once children were attacked, they used verbal or physical aggression to solve their problems. The cases that went to mediation had a 98% success rate; however, 84% of the solutions or agreements made by the students had a short-term result. Johnson et al. (1996) also noted that children commonly decided that avoidance was an appropriate solution to the aggressive occurrence.

What we can take away from this research is that there is definitely a need to study the nature of conflict in inner-city schools. After reviewing this literature, it is apparent that conflict resolution programs can be vital in elementary and middle schools, however, by better understanding the nature of conflict, educators are in a better position to determine the appropriate intervention. Many professionals view children's conflicts to be related to a lack of appropriate experiences and resources to effectively problem-solve; consequently, many schools are responding by providing intense and creative classroom teaching and behavioral modification programs to address the issue (Tidwell, Flannery, & Lewis-Palmer, 2003).

An Ecological Approach to Conflict

The tenants of systems theory and Bronfenbrenner's model of human development have been employed because of their holistic approach to understanding children's development. In such an approach, much attention is paid to the symptomatic behaviors and their relation to the structure and organization that exists within a child's life. Given that children are developing from their collective experiences in the home, their community, and in their educational settings, this model is very useful given the context. The ecosystems approach to conflict can be seen in the many researchers (Stouter, 2001) who purport that children's conflict at school is a function of the collective environment. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model provides precedence for educators by understanding these conflicts from the micro and meso systemic approaches. Consequently, educational leaders can now appropriately contextualize the nature of conflict which can be effective in determining appropriate intervention.

The microsystem is the layer that has direct contact with a child's immediate surroundings. Brinson et al. (2004) noted the importance of understanding that children's modeling of behavior is manifested in later imitative behaviors in the classroom. For example, children raised in environments where they witness multiple acts of violence may be inclined to integrate those behaviors into their personality development and decision making outcomes.

Consequently, children are likely to exhibit these behaviors in other settings through deferred imitation.

When children begin to integrate these behaviors across multiple settings, they are exhibiting mesosystemic outcomes. According to Bronfenbrenner (1994), the mesosystem consists of connected experiences and behaviors that are a function of two or more settings within a person's life process (e.g., the relations between home and school, school and workplace, etc.). Therefore, the transmission of life experiences and witnessed behaviors across systems creates mesosystemic outcomes.

The ecosystem reflect two or more environmental settings where at least one of the settings does not directly influence the developing child but does so indirectly (i.e., parent's employment cite or their job stability). This system begins to reflect many unintended outcomes that children often experience which can significantly affect their developmental course.

Bronfenbrenner's notion of the macrosystem reflects a larger and more collective array of factors indicative of customs, traditions, and values. The macrosystem can arguably be seen as an overall reflection of a child's socialization process which is fundamental to the previously noted systems.

The chronosystem represent Bronfenbrenner's most recent expansion of the ecological model. This system notes the importance of considering the relations to time and change among people and communities. Similarly, as individuals grow and develop, there are internal and external changes that must be considered when charting one's development.

The way children experience and interpret the world determines their behaviors. The power of an ecological and systems theory approach to conflict is that it gives educators an alternative viewpoint on the complex societal influences they encounter (Souter, 2001). In light of this view, educators are now challenged to explore program development designed to specifically address behaviors influenced, in part, by external sources.

Methodology

Based on an extensive literature investigation, the researchers surmise that a qualitative based study could provide appropriate insight towards better understanding teacher perceptions of conflict behaviors between elementary and middle school children. Upon approval, interview schedules were conducted for data collection and analysis. The structured interviews were conducted with elementary and middle school teachers, principals/assistant principals, counselors, and school psychologists to represent the professional perspective regarding conflict among young children who reside in inner-city schools.

Procedure

Prior to beginning this study, a letter of consent sent to the superintendent of the board of education in an inner-city school system of Northeast, Ohio. Once authorization was granted, letters were sent to perspective schools within the district and three schools were selected for investigation (two elementary schools and one middle school). The principals and teachers of these schools were informed of the study and also provided permission of participation in this study.

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 14 school educators (i.e., teachers, administrators, principals/assistant principals, counselors, and school psychologists). The convenient sample of participants came from two elementary schools grades (K-6th) and one middle school that has grades (5th-8th). The administrator (retired superintendent) and school psychologist work with the board of education.

Data Collection

Adult participants were subjected to face-to-face interviews which consisted of 15 questions regarding conflict among children at school. The questions consisted of both open-ended and structured items surrounding the nature of conflict educators' face with inner-city children in the school/classroom setting. Data was examined to identify common themes reflective of participant opinions, attitudes, and beliefs on the issue. (See Appendix A).

Results

Participants were asked to identify the behaviors that were deemed most problematic in a given school day. The overwhelming majority purported that children exhibit such aggressive behaviors as talking out of turn, physical and verbal abuse, lack of self-control, bullying, and non-compliance with adult authority. Consequently, these behaviors were often seen as behavioral catalysts to conflict dynamics throughout the school day. In fact, a few of the participants expressed how they felt about these behaviors.

"In the classroom their behaviors range from lack of self-control to having violent behaviors. Talking out in class...aggravating each other...This school year the behavior is very extreme" - 3rd grade teacher

"Student insubordination and conflict between each other are the most problematic. If we don't resolve the conflict verbally, it can escalate into a physical fight." - Principal (grades K-6)

Teachers and administrators were also asked about the frequency, duration, and setting of the incidents. Many participants expressed that the problematic behaviors take place during transition periods throughout the school day (i.e., changing from one class to another or changes within the classroom environment). A general theme noted by the interviewees was that depending on the conflict and circumstance of the dispute, the majority of the participants expressed that they had to stop their lessons to address disputes or correct disruptive behavior most of the time. In fact, one participant noted that she had to address students all of the time, while another teacher stated that she has to stop her lessons at least once a week. However, none of the participants noted that they never have to stop their lessons to address disputes.

Although the manner in which teachers are faced with disputes differ, it is clear that there are common themes which can be deduced from their interactions. For example, several participants indicated that their initial response conflict or disruptive behavior came in the form of verbal warnings. A few participants stated:

"First, I'll give the student a verbal warning, second verbal warning, and third I will tell the student what he/she is going to do."- Administrator ex-superintendent

“When I can’t ignore the problem anymore, I challenge the child verbally” - 5th, 6th, and 8th grade teacher

Typically, the teachers in this study would give verbal warnings to the children at the onset of conflict or a dispute, whereas administrators (principals, assistant principals) ask more questions to figure out the root causes of the conflict. Of the 14 participants, 50% purported that they do get upset over the conflict they encounter. In that, many participants stated that they get upset over the conflict because they had to stop the class lesson to address the conflicting situation.

Another question asked participants to describe how they handle the dispute or conflict situation and explored the methods of interventions used when the conflict occurs. Most teachers purported that a common technique was to remove the child from the classroom setting if a conflict escalates. This was often done as a short term response until a later intervention could be initiated. For instance, the teacher may call the parent and ask for the parent to come in to talk about the child’s behavior.

Participants also noted that while parents generally seem supportive when they call to inform them about their child’s behavioral problems, many teachers questioned the parent’s reinforcement with the children once in the home environment. In fact, some parents seemed not to care at all which is noted in the relatively low participation rates of parents at parent/teacher conferences and the difficulty of getting in touch with parents to address the issue. This finding is extremely important because some researchers (Klein & Forehand, 2000) purport that parental responsiveness to children’s behaviors was a key influence towards reducing disruptive behaviors in inner-city school systems.

Of the 14 participants in this study, over half believed that their methods of interventions work to control disputes or disruptive behaviors. Six participants felt their methods work most of the time. None of the participants expressed that their methods never worked. When the participants were asked *whether the conflict was resolved once it reaches an administrative level within the schools?* 12 of the participants felt that most of the times, the administration handles the problem. A reason why the administration does a good job with handling disputes occurs because both principals from the elementary schools in this study use the Baldrige System (Borawski and Brennan, 2008) as a way to be consistent with the children. By having a system wide approach, the children learn how to manage behavior because they have a system to follow. However, if a principal has a problem with a child, they can use creative measures.

When the participants were asked *if they have to address a particular student or students over and over again about their behavior*, four responded that they have to address the same students all of the time. Nine reported that they address the same student most of the time. In fact, the school psychologist in this study stated that 75% of the time, the same children returned to see her. The correlation between short-term resolutions by the administration and educators having to address a particular student or students is evident in this study.

The overwhelming majority of teachers and professionals indicated that they noticed a change in the conflictual behaviors in children throughout their experience teaching. In fact, many purported that the following behaviors have changed considerably in children:

- More aggression/physical and verbal abuse
- Gross Insubordination

- Lack of self-respect for themselves and other children
- Lack of respect for adults
- Lack of communication between teacher and student

The general feeling the many teachers and school professionals noted was that the problem behaviors exhibited by children was due in part to frustrations in children due to their unstable and non-traditional home environments (i.e., single-parent households, families of children with different fathers). The *solutions* that participants gave hit on many issues such as having more community support, counseling in the elementary schools, and collaborative workshops with parents, teachers, and the broader community in order to build trust and consistent involvement in the lives of children.

This study also shows that the participants feel that conflict resolution skills can change the climate of a school or learning environment. In their opinion, the school system has done a good job of giving workshops on conflict resolution to teachers, but not much has been done with children and parents. Also, more long-term training is needed, in which everyone embraces the concept of conflict resolution.

Discussion & Implications for the Future

In many ways, the problems that young children exhibit is a reflection of their witnessed experiences in consort with the resources they have to cope with the challenges associated with interacting in their broader community. Clearly, some inner-city families and communities are not preparing children with basic life application skills and this may explain why children are unable to meet the expectations of an academic environment (Sheline, Skipper, & Broadhead, 1994). Arguably, the environments that some children are a part of may explain certain skill deficits experienced by many inner-city children. Similarly, Snyder, Cramer, Afrank, and Patterson (2005) recommended caution towards generalizations suggesting that aggressive behaviors among children are exclusively associated with the child's family and home environment. Instead, it is important to also consider other factors that can affect children (i.e., peer pressure, community witnessed violence).

According to Lane, et al., (2005), it is vital that professionals implement programs that facilitate greater social development. Because the responsibility of children's development must be seen as a shared responsibility, professionals within the inner-city school systems may be challenged to think outside of the box in order to better prepare children for success. For example, school systems might consider developing more classes in the areas of life skills and conflict mediation development. These classes should be considered as prerequisites to traditional classes once children have demonstrated a certain degree of problem behaviors within the school system. While this may considerably delay the academic progress of some children, it may considerably reduce the alarming incidents of aggression and school drop-outs that we are seeing during later development.

In addition, little to no programmatic intervention exists in elementary school systems for the purpose of addressing the issue of aggression and conflict resolution (Dale, 1998). It is imperative that professionals begin to see aggression as a reflection of social skill development and begin to develop programs during the elementary years while children are impressionable. These programs can also help children to better understand and cope with their changing environment and interactions. In turn, this can bring us closer to making children's environments more safe and predictable; thus making them ready to learn.

Research clearly indicates that children are increasingly challenged to focus on learning in educational settings that are hostile and unsafe. In addition, teachers are increasingly challenged to teach to curriculum while at the same time manage the increasing disruptions associated with young children in inner-city schools (Tidwell, Flannery, & Lewis-Palmer, 2003).

Limitations to Study

Because this study is a pilot investigation, a small sample of participants was solicited for insight into the issue of conflict among elementary school children. Also, the interview questions were general and open-ended to get at the full range of professional opinions of the participants, however, the scope of generalizability may in part be affected. The researchers intend to use the findings of this pilot investigation to develop and evaluate programmatic intervention models which can be employed to enhance children's problem-solving skills and improve teacher-student interactions in the classroom.

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APPENDIX A
Interview Instrument

Grade: _____

Years of Teaching Experience: _____

Capstone Interview Question

- 1) What behaviors are most problematic or cause the most conflict throughout the school day?
- 2) How often does this behavior occur, how long does it last and in what setting does the conflict/dispute take place?
- 3) How often do you find yourself stopping the lesson to address disputes between classmates or disruptive behavior? (Circle One)
 - All of the time
 - Sometimes
 - Never
 - Other....Explain
- 4) What is your initial response to the conflict/disruptive behavior? Do you find yourself getting upset
- 5) How do you handle the dispute or conflict situation? Do you find yourself using the same methods of intervention? .
- 6) In your opinion, does your method of intervention work to control disputes/disruptive behavior in the classroom? (Circle One)
 - All of the times
 - Sometimes
 - Never
 - Other...Explain
- 7) Do you find yourself addressing a particular student(s) over and over again about disruptive behavior? (Circle One)
 - All of the times
 - Sometimes
 - Never
 - Other...Explain
- 8) In your teaching experience, have you noticed a change in the types of behavior that take place in your school?
- 9) What do you think contributes to this change in behavior? Television... the types of music the children listen to.
- 10) In your opinion what should be done to correct this problem.... Please give some suggestions.

- 11) How does the administration act as a support system for the teachers when a conflict is brought to their attention?
- 12) Is the conflict resolved once it reaches an administrative level within the school?
(Circle One)
- All of the times
 - Sometimes
 - Never
 - Other...Explain
- 13) Do you ever have to call a parent about their child's behavior? What is their response to the call?
- 14) Do you find that parents are supportive of you when you call their home? (Circle One)
- All of the times
 - Sometimes
 - Never
 - Other...Explain
- 15) Do you think conflict resolution skills can change the climate of the school or classroom environment?

Additional Comments:

Positive Youth Development through Civic Engagement

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Positive Youth Development through Civic Engagement

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Formerly of Spartanburg Youth Council

Abstract: As part of the 175th anniversary celebration of Spartanburg, South Carolina, three local foundations and the United Way agreed to fund a youth leadership project. A University of South Carolina Upstate (USC Upstate) faculty member with expertise in youth development and the coordinator of the Spartanburg Youth Council agreed to develop the project and serve as the project directors. We developed a youth philanthropy project with expected outcomes of positive development, increased awareness of community issues, and greater civic engagement for the youth. A group of eighteen teens participated in the yearlong project. Interactive workshops on topics such as community goals, grant writing, writing the request for proposals and reviewing grants were conducted. At the culmination of the project, the young philanthropists awarded grants totaling \$12,000 to eight youth serving organizations. The teens reported many positive developmental experiences and greater awareness of community needs and increased responsibility to their community.

Introduction

Prior research in youth development has focused more on risky behavior of youth and costs of these risks to the individual and to society (Biglan, Brennan, Foster, & Holder, 2004) but in recent years, some social theorists have begun to view youth as community assets and focus on youth engagement in the community (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). This approach focuses on development of skills that aid in identifying, analyzing and acting on issues relevant to youth. In this model, adults do not necessarily assume the lead in organized youth activities; instead, they facilitate opportunities to lead and mentor youth (Watts & Flanagan, 2007).

For over a half-century theorists have found that active involvement of youth in community affairs strongly correlates to citizenship in adulthood (Mannheim, 1952), and also fosters a sense of belonging and an awareness of being part of a community (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007; Flanagan, 2003). In addition, programs that engage youth in the community not only contribute to a thriving community, but also to the development of that young person (Dworkin, Larson & Hansen, 2003; Harré, 2007; Yates & Youniss, 1996).

Recent research has begun to look at the developmental outcomes of various types of youth activities. Larson (2000) analyzed positive youth development across several contexts. He specifically focused on the development of initiative, which requires intrinsic motivation, engagement in the environment, and effort directed toward a goal. Initiative is necessary for positive developmental experiences such as leadership and civic engagement. Larson reported that organized voluntary youth activities provided a more fertile context for the development of these skills when compared to school experience and social experience with friends. Therefore, organized, voluntary youth activities may be especially suited for the development of initiative and consequently other positive developmental experiences.

Hansen, Reed and Dworkin (2003) investigated the types of developmental experiences related to five categories of youth activities. These authors utilized the Youth Experiences Survey (YES) (Hansen & Larsen, 2002) to assess the impact of youth activities. They found higher rates of learning experiences reported in youth activities when compared to time in school or time spent hanging out with friends. Youth who participated in service activities reported high rates of personal development in the area of emotional control, identity exploration and identity reflection when compared to youth involvement in academic activities, sports, or performance and fine arts. The youth in service learning activities also reported higher rates of development in the areas of leadership, prosocial norms, community engagement and family integration.

Another positive benefit of structured youth activities is the formation of positive relations between youth and community adults. Jarrett, Sullivan, and Watkins (2005) found that these relationships provide important social capital for youth and support the transitions to adulthood roles such as going to college, exploring careers and obtaining jobs. These authors also found that the relationships that youth formed with community adults developed in stages, and began initially with wariness, then moved to interaction around a common goal such as a charitable cause. Through the interactions the youth began to perceive the adults as someone who cared about them, which in turn led to meaningful connections.

Libby, Rosen and Sedonaen (2005) explored the practices of a youth leadership organization that engaged youth-adult partnerships (Y-APs) in philanthropy. They found that youth philanthropy, defined as young people giving time and money for social good, strengthened the youth's involvement in the community and built strong relationships with adults. The program paired youth with adults from local foundations to make grant decisions, which resulted in greater youth involvement in the community and advances in personal and interpersonal development. This model was utilized in the present study with a group of youth in Spartanburg, SC.

Purpose

During 2006, the City of Spartanburg, SC celebrated 175 years of history. Representatives of the City proposed a special activity focusing on youth development to three large foundations in Spartanburg and the United Way of the Piedmont:

- Spartanburg County Foundation,
- Mary Black Foundation,
- Spartanburg Regional Healthcare Foundation, and
- United Way.

These joint funders agreed to provide support for the youth project and approached the Spartanburg Youth Council and USC Upstate for leadership with this initiative. The group agreed to launch a youth philanthropy project to promote positive development, raise awareness of community issues and increase potential for civic engagement of the youth in Spartanburg. Each funder agreed to support the project with \$2000, as long as the youth raised a 50% match. The funders also committed their expertise in fundraising and grant development, as well as volunteering to educate the youth on the Community Indicators Project. Community Indicators is a community assessment, planning and improvement initiative sponsored by the Spartanburg County Foundation, United Way of the Piedmont, Spartanburg County, and USC Upstate. The Community Indicator's Project contains ten goals focused on improving the quality of life for citizens of Spartanburg. The youth participated in a workshop to learn about the goals and selected *Goal #1- Our children and youth will excel academically* to be the focus of their philanthropy.

Participants

A USC Upstate faculty member with expertise in youth development and the coordinator of the Spartanburg Youth Council, agreed to be the project directors. The participants in the philanthropy project were members of Youth Voices, a group of teens that comprise the youth members of the Spartanburg Youth Council. With 30 members, Youth Voices includes diverse youth from all seven Spartanburg school districts and one private school. This was the first opportunity for many of them to be involved in a leadership program. Eighteen of these youth (10 females and 8 males) participated in the yearlong project, while the remaining 12 were not able to participate due to conflicting schedules. Thirteen of the participants were African American, four were Caucasian and one Hispanic. They ranged from 13 to 17 years of age.

Process

The project was introduced with an interactive activity to define and demonstrate the concept of philanthropy. The youth were informed of the opportunity and invited to participate in the project as philanthropists. At the next meeting a speaker from The United Way conducted a workshop on a community improvement plan, Strategic Spartanburg: Community Indicators project. The United Way facilitator reviewed the ten community improvement goals proposed in the Community Indicator's Project and surveyed potential ways that youth could support these goals. Following the presentation, the youth were encouraged to select one of the community improvement goals to focus on for their philanthropy project. First the youth individually voted and narrowed the choices to three. More discussion followed that focused on those three goals, and another vote brought the group to consensus on one goal. They selected *Goal 1: Our children and youth will excel academically* to be the focus of the philanthropy project.

An educator and recipient of grant funding for program support presented the next workshop. She spoke to the group and led a discussion on types of educational programs and opportunities for grant funds to help children and youth excel academically.

Following the introductory activities, the youth participated in a five-day leadership experience sponsored by a Community Outreach Partnership Center Grant awarded to USC Upstate. The purpose of this activity was to develop the teen's leadership skills to enhance the success of the group project. Activities included decision-making, team building and understanding diversity. The week began with two half-day sessions at USC Upstate followed by a full three-day retreat at Haley's Farm in Clinton, Tennessee, which is the home of the Children's Defense Fund. At this retreat the youth participated in an open forum discussion with a panel of young adult philanthropists and continued their leadership development activities. Following the retreat, the youth met one or two times each month to work on the project. A series of workshops were planned to further engage the youth and advance philanthropic skills.

In the first workshop following the retreat, the Spartanburg County Foundation (SCF) introduced fund raising methods and ways to raise a match. The youth chose to write a letter describing the project and asking for financial support. The SCF conducted an additional instructional workshop in writing the solicitation letter. The youth wrote the letter, formed three solicitation teams and developed a list of prospects to receive the letters. In subsequent meetings, letters were mailed and followed with a personal phone call.

A University communications specialist instructed the youth in how to plan a press conference and write a press release. Following this activity they held a press conference with the local newspaper to announce the project. They met with a USC Upstate grant writer for a workshop on writing a request for proposals and made an announcement for proposals at a Youth Council Meeting. The grant writing conducted a follow-up session to develop a scoring protocol to evaluate the proposals. The solicitation letter was successful and the youth raised the required match of \$4000, bringing the total amount the youth would award to \$12,000. The youth wrote personal thank you notes to all donors.

The youth met to review the proposals that were received from local non-profits. After evaluating each application individually using the scoring criteria they created, (See Appendix A) they worked as a team to determine the grant amounts. Grant proposals were received from nine organizations totaling \$14,644. The youth approved all nine applications and awarded \$12,000 to these organizations thereby funding at least a portion of each one.

Results and Conclusion

A final meeting was scheduled to discuss the philanthropy project and assess the outcomes of the project. Eighteen youth attended the meeting and completed the Youth Experience Survey 2.0 (Hansen, D. M. & Larson, R., 2002). The Youth Experience Survey (YES) is a questionnaire designed to assess high-school students' developmental experiences in an extracurricular activity or community-based program. The questionnaire, designed for use with multiethnic youth, assesses self-reported experiences in the activity or program in the following six areas of development: Identity Work, Initiative, Basic Skills, Teamwork and Social Skills, Interpersonal Relationships, and Adult Networks.

When youth are viewed as community assets and given opportunities to become involved in their community, positive development is the result. Research indicates that youth are active participants in their own development and we believe they are also accurate self-reporters of their developmental experiences. Given the research indicating a decline in civic engagement (Putnam, 2000), and evidence that this decline can be addressed, we believe that scholars and community leaders should pursue initiatives to foster civic skill building and engage youth in

their communities. When we teach youth about philanthropy and fundraising we are not only building future philanthropists, but also empowering youth to see themselves as leaders and agents of change. Universities are uniquely equipped with resources that can promote youth engagement in communities.

The young philanthropists reported positive developmental experiences in identity formation, initiative, interpersonal ability, teamwork and adult networks. Table 1 presents the positive developmental experiences reported by the youth participants. These young people not only increased their awareness of needs in the community and their level of responsibility to their community but also developed a sense of place in their community. While this is a small sample, the results are overwhelmingly positive and suggest that leadership programs should consider this model. The following paragraph is quoted from a participant one year later.

It had an impact on the community and it had an impact on me because a lot of local issues were brought up in the project that I was I naïve to—I didn't know they existed. I went from a minute involvement in the community to being highly involved. The project helped me build relationships with community leaders such as the Mayor and people you don't meet on an every day basis—but in this project, I got to know them and work with them. It changed my relationship with my peers in that the philanthropy group included people from different schools, backgrounds, and people I wouldn't have ordinarily met or meshed with. It helps me now to be able to work with people of diverse backgrounds because not everyone is the same. I'm very motivated to continue with this type of work. I've grown to enjoy and actually love community service.

From a developmental perspective, adolescence is an optimal time to learn skills that facilitate civic engagement. At this stage of personal and social development, youth are actively engaged in the process of identity exploration and formulating a cohesive identity, which involves a deeper understanding of self, social relationships and society, and deciding which values held by society, will be accepted as one's own (Erikson, 1968). Developmental psychologists in recent decades have moved from a focus on individual growth to an emphasis on the contextual influences on development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Thus civic involvement becomes an important context for consolidating an identity that includes political/civic development. The inclusion of civic engagement in youth programs incorporates greater social responsibility and political values into the identity process and contributes to positive social relationships (Flanagan, 2003).

None of the youth that participated could explain philanthropy in the beginning of the project or name an important issue facing the community. However, at the conclusion, all youth understood the concept and indicated a commitment to future philanthropic involvement. Additionally the youth became more aware and involved in their community and formed meaningful relationships with adult community leaders.

Table 1

Youth Experience Survey 2.0 (YES)
Developmental Experiences N=18

<i>1. Identity experiences</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. 89% reported that they tried doing new thingsb. 72% reported that the philanthropy project got them thinking more about their future, and about who they arec. 78% said the activity has been a positive turning point in my lives
<i>2. Initiative experiences</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. 90% of students reported that they learned to find ways to achieve their goalsb. 78% learned to consider possible obstacles when making plansc. 72% put maximum effort into this activityd. 78% learned to push themselves and focus their attentione. 94% observed how others solved problems and learned from them and learned about developing plans for solving a problemf. 72% learned about organizing time and not procrastinatingg. 83% learned about setting priorities and practicing self disciplineh. 89% improved their communication skills
<i>3. Interpersonal relations</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. 94% reported making friends with someone of the opposite genderb. 94% reported learning that they had a lot in common with people from different backgroundsc. 78% reported getting to know someone from a different ethnic groupd. 83% reported making friends with someone from a different social classe. 94% said they learned about helping othersf. 78% said that morals and values were discussed
<i>4. Teamwork and social skills</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. 100% reported that working together requires some compromisingb. 88.9% said they became better at sharing responsibilityc. 94% learned to be patient with other group membersd. 83% said they learned how their emotions and attitudes affect others in the group and learned that it is not necessary to like people in order to work with theme. 83% learned about the challenges of being a leaderf. 78% said I became better at giving feedback
<i>5. Adult networks and social capital</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. 72% reported good conversations with their parents because of this activityb. 78% got to know more people in the communityc. 95% increased their awareness of needs in the community and increased their level of responsibility to their communityd. 72% said the program better prepared them for collegee. 83.3% said the project increased their desire to stay in school

Acknowledgement:

- The Mary Black Foundation
- The Spartanburg County Foundation
- Spartanburg Regional Healthcare Foundation
- The United Way of the Piedmont
- Citizens of Spartanburg, SC

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Appendix A
RFP Review Sheet

**First Review
Checklist**

(Applications must meet all of the following criteria to continue to the second review)

- Maximum of 2 pages
- 12 point type
- 1 inch margins
- 501c3 letter
- Budget does not request salary or travel funds
- Letter from program participant
- Met the 3/12, 5:00 PM deadline

Second Review

Scoring

MISSION _____ (20)

Is the applicant's mission a good fit for Youth Philanthropy Goal?

PAST ACCOMPLISHMENTS _____ (10)

Has the applicant proven a record of success with similar projects?

PURPOSE _____ (20)

Is the proposed project important to Spartanburg?

NEED _____ (10)

Does Spartanburg need the proposed project?

OBJECTIVES _____ (25)

Has the applicant clearly detailed what they will achieve and how they'll achieve it?

EVALUATION _____ (10)

Has the applicant fully explained how they will know if the project is a success?

BUDGET _____ (5)

Is the amount requested reasonable? Is it clear what the money will be used for?

TOTAL SCORE _____ (100)

Application Summary:

Appendix B The Youth Experiences Survey (YES) 2.0

Instructions: Based on your *recent* involvement please rate whether you have had the following experiences in the Youth and Philanthropy project.

Your Experiences In.....			
Youth and Philanthropy Project			
Yes, Definitely	Quite a Bit	A Little	Not At All

IDENTITY EXPERIENCES

Identity Exploration					
1.	Tried doing new things	1	2	3	4
2.	Tried a new way of acting around people	1	2	3	4
3.	I do things here I don't get to do anywhere else	1	2	3	4

Identity Reflection					
4.	Started thinking more about my future because of this activity	1	2	3	4
5.	This activity got me thinking about who I am	1	2	3	4
6.	This activity has been a positive turning point in my life	1	2	3	4

INITIATIVE EXPERIENCES

Goal Setting					
7.	I set goals for myself in this activity	1	2	3	4
8.	Learned to find ways to achieve my goals	1	2	3	4
9.	Learned to consider possible obstacles when making plans	1	2	3	4

Effort					
10.	I put all my energy into this activity	1	2	3	4
11.	Learned to push myself	1	2	3	4
12.	Learned to focus my attention	1	2	3	4

Problem Solving					
13.	Observed how others solved problems and learned from them	1	2	3	4
14.	Learned about developing plans for solving a problem	1	2	3	4
15.	Used my imagination to solve a problem	1	2	3	4

Time Management					
16.	Learned about organizing time and not procrastinating (not putting things off)	1	2	3	4
17.	Learned about setting priorities	1	2	3	4
18.	Practiced self discipline	1	2	3	4

Project H.O.P.E.: Effective University Engagement with Community Afterschool Programs

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Project H.O.P.E.: Effective University Engagement with Community Afterschool Programs

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Abstract: Implemented in 2002 by the Duke-Durham Neighborhood Partnership, Project H.O.P.E. has improved the quantity and quality of afterschool programs for the youth of Durham, NC. Project H.O.P.E. provides tutoring programs, enrichment resources, and evaluation support to non-profit community partner organizations located in the low income Durham neighborhoods surrounding Duke University. Duke University undergraduates who provide tutoring services to the Durham youth in the afterschool programs gain from valuable reciprocal service learning experiences. Project H.O.P.E. is an effective model of the mutual benefits that can be gained from effective university and community engagement in the service of at-risk students.

Introduction

Afterschool programs can provide a critical supporting role as an intermediary space between schools and the home communities of predominantly minority youth. In addition, afterschool programs provide significant support to low-income minority youth. Minority youth, however, often live in communities where access to quality afterschool programs is appreciably more limited than for students living in more prosperous communities (Halpern, 1999; Hirsch, 2005; Noam, Miller, & Barry, 2002; Vandell & Shumow, 1999). Quality afterschool programs provide adult supervision and constructive activities from 3-6 PM, which are the peak hours for crimes committed by juveniles (Newman, Fox, Flynn, & Christeson, 2000). Afterschool programs are also a source for the structure needed to focus on academic and social skills improvement for at-risk youth (Chung & Hillsman, 2005; Halpern, 1999).

In 2000, the Durham Youth Coordinating Board and the Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke University prepared "The State of Durham's Children" report which noted the high dropout rates and high crime rates of Durham's youth. In 1998-99, Durham's high school dropout rate

was 5.7%, which was 24% higher than the North Carolina state average of 4.6%. The African-American teen dropout rates were 3 times higher than their white counterparts. Similarly, Durham's juvenile custody rate was 53% higher than the North Carolina state average (Reiter-Lavery, Rabiner, & Dodge, 2000).

As a result of this assessment, the Duke-Durham Neighborhood Partnership initiated Project H.O.P.E. (Holistic Opportunities Plan for Enrichment) to improve the academic and social outcomes for Durham's at-risk youth. Project H.O.P.E. collaborates with six community non-profit organizations to sponsor after-school programs for predominantly low income, African-American and Hispanic students, grades K-12. The project has three main objectives:

- to improve the academic and social outcomes of Durham's youth
- to improve and increase university and community engagement
- to build an evaluative culture that promotes a formative learning environment for university and community partners

Program Description

Project H.O.P.E.'s six community partners are nonprofit organizations who independently operate their after-school programs. They maintain operational control of their sites including administration of their staff, program and financial arrangements. Project H.O.P.E. staff manage the extensive tutoring program with undergraduates drawn from courses taught in Duke University's education program. Duke University's Program in Education provides the structure for the integrated education coursework and tutor service-learning experiences of Duke undergraduates. Education professors, through class readings, discussion, and reflective assignments integrate academic theories with experiential service-learning practices. Tutors frequently take multiple education courses while at Duke, allowing them to continue tutoring, apply for teacher licensure programs, or complete an education studies concentration. H.O.P.E. staff recruits, trains, and monitors the tutors from as many as seven or eight service-learning courses each semester.

Community partners and H.O.P.E. staff collaborate in the management of after-school resources and enrichment activities. Significant Duke University resources contribute to the after-school program success. During 2005-06, Duke University faculty and staff provided services to Project H.O.P.E. after-school program that included:

- health clinics and health education classes
- arts enrichment activities
- outdoor recreation activities
- infrastructure support (building repairs, landscaping and construction)
- participation in on-campus events for Durham students

Through program tutoring and resource activities, Project H.O.P.E. has strengthened community and university linkages between Duke University and the Durham community. Community partners and Duke students have established strong reciprocal learning cultures, which support academic outcomes for Durham's children. Although there are operational differences among the afterschool programs, the basic components of the tutoring programs are consistent across the six Project H.O.P.E. sites. Duke tutors are assigned to the programs at the beginning of the semester. Each tutor provides two hours of academic support for an individual or small group of students every week for the duration of the semester. Additional

time in the afterschool program is structured with a wide variety of enrichment activities. Project H.O.P.E. staff continuously alert afterschool program staff to free or low cost community events such as athletic events, theatre tickets, and museum tickets throughout the year.

Project H.O.P.E. staff have also worked closely with community partners to establish consistent program documentation procedures. Templates for attendance, grade and activity documentation have contributed to effective monitoring of Project H.O.P.E. programs. Community partners work with project staff to maintain program records. Project staff also collaborates with local schools to collect regular report card and testing data. Three external evaluators monitor documentation activities, conduct regular site visits, interviews and prepare quarterly reports. Regular meetings with community partners provide a continuous feedback loop that sustains the formative evaluation process. As a result of this continuous evaluative feedback, the programs have become operationally consistent and steadily improved their service delivery practices.

Program Results

Project H.O.P.E. and its community partners have developed an after-school program model that reinforces the strengths of university and community partners. Through its documentation and monitoring processes, the university and community partners are able to work together to solve emerging problems and to build upon program successes. The chart below indicates significant program changes over the program's four years:

Program Changes from 2002-2006

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Number of sites	3	5	6	6
Number of students	102	155	157	161
Student return rate	N/A	51%	54%	53%
Average program attendance	62%	74%	81%	80%
Report card collection	44%	60%	84%	96%
Students with C or higher	72%	80%	74%	70%
Number of tutors	138	176	164	136
End of Grade Test pass rate	55%	70%	75%	82% *
Tutor return rate	N/A	19%	27%	36%
Staff return rate	67%	69%	77%	43%
	4/6	9/13	10/13	6/14

*Reading End of Grade test only; Math End of Grade test scores were not available until October 2006.

Slight decrease in 05-06 staff. (There are always shifts in program staffing and as may be noted from the broader trends, just a year where there were more staff shifts than usual).

Program surveys indicate high levels of student engagement and satisfaction rates. Project H.O.P.E. elementary students were given a Fall Student Survey in September-October, 2005. A total of 53 elementary students, grades K-5, completed the survey with the following results:

- 94% of students reported that they look forward to going to school
- 85% of students reported that they study hard for tests
- 96% of students reported that they feel safer after school

- 92% of students reported that their parents talk to them about school or homework

Project H.O.P.E. elementary students were given the Spring Student Survey in April-May, 2006. Sixty-seven (67) students in grades K-5 completed the survey with the following results:

- 89% of students reported looking forward to attending this program
- 96% of students reported feeling comfortable talking to program staff
- 99% of students reported that they could get help with their homework
- 93% of students reported that they think the program helped them in school

Project H.O.P.E. secondary students were given a Fall Survey in September-October, 2005. Thirteen (13) Secondary Students, grades 6-12, responded to the survey with the following results:

- 100% thought that they were good students and were doing well in school.
- 100% reported that doing well in school was important to them
- 100% agreed that finishing school was important to getting a good job.
- 93% thought what they were learning would be useful later in life.
- 93% thought what they were learning would be important later in life
- 92% reported it was important to do well in school
- 77% reported that they expected to graduate from college with 23% expecting to graduate from high school.

A follow-up Spring Secondary Survey was administered to 14 Project H.O.P.E. students, grades 6-12 from April-May 2006. In this survey, students reported frequent engagement with academic activities through Project H.O.P.E. programming.

Program Activities	Often	Sometimes	Never
Homework help/tutoring	71%	21%	0%
Reading activities	29%	50%	14%
Math or science activities	29%	36%	21%
Arts activities	36%	29%	43%
Sports and games	50%	14%	36%
Career activities	7%	43%	50%
College activities	14%	43%	43%

Fifty-one (51) teachers completed a Teacher Evaluation Survey in May 2006. The majority of teachers indicated that H.O.P.E. students maintained or improved their academic record during the 2005-06 school year.

Development Area	Maintain or Improve #	Maintain or Improve %	Improve %
Reading	33/50	66%	34%
Math	28/44	64%	27%
Organization Skills	30/50	60%	26%
Homework/Time	34/49	69%	29%
HW Accuracy	37/51	73%	27%
70% or better on quizzes	32/49	65%	29%
Classroom behavior skills			
Classroom Participation	45/51	88%	45%
Attentive in Class	32/50	64%	28%
Completes Classroom work	42/52	81%	33%
Study Skills	33/50	66%	22%
Overall Academic Performance	37/51	73%	39%

Surveys were conducted with Duke undergraduates who took Education courses and provided tutoring to Project H.O.P.E. students in Year 4. The fall survey was completed by 30 students and the spring survey was completed by 57 students. Students reported that their tutoring experiences had the greatest impact on:

- Developing a deeper understanding of educational issues
- Developing more empathy for children who have difficulty in school
- Developing moral reasoning skills
- Deep satisfaction by helping others

Program Implications

Project H.O.P.E. confirms the value of universities working to establish strong community-university linkages to improve the academic outcomes of at-risk community youth. Project H.O.P.E. has been able to:

- Improve the quality and quantity of community after-school programs
- Promote the academic achievement of at-risk students in Durham's community.
- Provide reciprocal learning opportunities for Durham students and Duke university students
- Strengthen community-university partnerships.

As Duke students, faculty and community partners increase the quality and quantity of hours spent providing direct services and evaluating afterschool program impacts, lessons are learned everyday about communities working together. The lessons can be clustered into three specific areas:

- university and community program administration;
- service-learning in community-based afterschool programs, and
- building a culture of evaluation in community settings.

The program's blend of resource structure and program administrative flexibility is one that has been replicated regionally and presented nationally as a demonstrated success model. The collaborative structure provides a workable framework for individual communities to organize available resources to meet the needs of the community's students. Final thoughts on the program's success, however, belongs to its participants, using comments in the student's own words from their program satisfaction surveys:

"My turtor helps me out what I'm having trouble with sometime I need help and that is why she is here to help me what I'm having trouble with. That why I got a turtor to help in some thing that I could Really Smart out something."

"I am doing better than I used before I had a tutor. I am doing better in school."

and from a Duke tutor:

"I have learned lessons about life that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. I have realized the importance of patience in my time working with my tutee. This was a character trait that was lacking before my experience at EK Powe. I have also learned that tutor's impacts on their students can be profound and truly meaningful. Working with him has once again opened my heart and eyes up to just how special young children are and the responsibility that adults must accept to educate these invaluable individuals."

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Methodological Note: On Using Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) for Survey Administration in the Study of Youth Development

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**Methodological Note:
On Using Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) for
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Study of Youth Development**

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Abstract: Applied developmental scientists face the challenge of identifying research methods that enable the efficient collection of data from youth of diverse social backgrounds (e.g., ethnic, racial, religious, economic) and varying levels cognitive-linguistic and attentional skills. In addition, because access to youth during school time is often limited by educators' desire to preserve instructional time, finding methodologies to collect data from youth that are highly efficient, and also those that are feasible in less structured settings, are needed. This article outlines some of the benefits and limitations of using a voice-enhanced survey delivered on a personal digital assistants (PDA) as a method of gathering data from diverse youth in both, in and out-of-school contexts.

Introduction

Applied developmental scientists face the challenge of identifying research methods that are both motivating and efficient with respect to the collection of data. Such methods need to be identified for use in schools and out-of-school contexts from youth of diverse backgrounds (e.g., ethnic, racial, religious) and varying cognitive-linguistic and attentional levels. Access to youth during school time is often limited by school systems' desire to maintain the integrity of instructional time, particularly given the high-stakes testing and performance-related assessments of students, teachers, and schools. Access to youth during out-of-school time may be limited by youth's engagement in a range of structured and unstructured activities. A typical

paper-and-pencil (PaP) version of a survey that contains approximately 200 questions, for instance, can take between one and 2.5 hours to administer if students are read the survey aloud or if they are asked to read through the survey themselves.

Regardless of the in or out-of-school context involved in a given study, researchers are constrained by the content, pace, and format of the survey. The lack of control that youth have over the pacing of surveys that are read aloud to them, and the cognitive and attentional demands that reading the surveys themselves entails, make both of these methods of survey administration non-optimal, especially among participants for whom English is a second language (Trapl, Borawski, Stork, Lovegreen, Colabianchi, Cole & Charvat, 2005). Time may be a limiting factor, especially if working within the 50 minute structure of secondary school classes. In addition, many "surveys" seem like "tests" because of the way they are formatted (e.g., "fill in the bubbles"). Finally, to the extent surveys assess personal topics related to mental health, health and behavioral choices, privacy concerns are important determinants of participant responses. In sum, due to a range of cognitive-attentional, motivational, and privacy-related issues, students often skip questions or fail to respond in ways that accurately reflect their views and experiences on traditional surveys.

A voice-enhanced personal digital assistant (PDA) assessment may provide a useful alternative to the PaP method in accessing youth during school and out-of-school time. This article outlines some of the benefits and limitations of the PDA as a method for gathering data with diverse youth.

Voice-enhanced, PDA-delivered surveys

One method that has been proposed to address these issues associated with PaP surveys is the use of voice-enhanced surveys delivered on a personal digital assistant or PDA. While there is a range of PDA and PDA-like products available, PDAs share several common characteristics: they are

- (a) very powerful computers running the Windows operating system that have the potential for enhanced memory capability through memory cards;
- (b) easily held in one hand;
- (c) capable of running on battery power for relatively longer periods of time than most laptop computers;
- (d) utilize a pen or stylus; and
- (e) offer a range of communication and software capabilities (Bayus, Jain & Rao, 1997).

PDAs have been used in Africa for research on health and in the United States for research on risk behavior (see Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005; Trapl et al., 2005). The technical benefits of PDAs include streamlined data entry and data cleaning processes, as well as fewer problems with missing data generally or resulting from complicated skip patterns.

To create surveys to be delivered on the PDA platform with its small screen size, specialized software is needed. We used Dell Axim X51 PDAs and a program called "SEDCA" Sound-enhanced Data Collection Application (<http://www.dontpapanic.com/>). The textual version of the survey is designed using this specialized software. In addition, it is necessary to record mp3 digital voice files for each of the survey questions (and/or responses). We hired a student actress, obtained a soundproof room in the Tufts Radio station, and used basic microphone and

recording software to record the voice files for each survey question directly onto a laptop computer in mp3 format.

These audio files are then integrated with the actual written survey items through the specialized software program. The final survey, as well as all of the individual voice files, are then saved on extra memory cards that are inserted into each PDA. It is possible to have various language versions of the written surveys as well as the audio tracks of the survey on the PDA at one time using this methodology. However, memory limitations and the size of the audio files constrain this possibility.

After the design process and loading of the survey is completed, each PDA, with a pair of headphones, is now ready to deliver the voice-enhanced survey. Participants use a wand and a set of arrows to navigate through the survey on the PDA screen. Each time participants click to a new question, that question appears and is read aloud to them. Participants can adjust the volume and they have the ability to hear questions again. Participants click on their responses on the screen with the wand and they move through the survey at their own pace, in privacy.

Method

To illustrate our own experience of the benefits of using voice-enhanced, PDA-surveys, we describe data that we gathered as part of a larger study sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation (JTF) entitled "The Role of Spiritual Development in Growth of Purpose, Generosity, and Psychological Health in Adolescence." This project was a cross-sectional and multi-method study conducted in the greater Boston area (Lerner, Roeser, & Phelps, 2008). In a small methodological case study that we undertook as part of this larger study, we compared participants' experiences in taking a pencil-and-paper version of the study survey with their subsequent experience in taking the same survey using the voice-enhanced version delivered via PDA. Following the second administration of the survey in the PDA format, we conducted short exit interviews with participants who took both versions in order to elicit their views about the two methods. We present below some quotes from these interviews, as well as our own observations regarding the use of the two methods.

Sample

The sample was derived from a cross-sectional study of 399 participants (55.7% male) between the ages of 10 to 23 years who were from private religious schools and youth groups, public schools, and community-based programs in the Greater Boston area. Data were drawn from the above-noted JTF study; 48.0% of the participants were in middle school, 47.1% in high school, 2.8% in college or of traditional college age, and 2.1% either below or above the age range. The participants were religiously and ethnically diverse. In addition, 67% of participants reported that they belonged to immigrant-origin families.

The case sample included a PaP group of 31 participants (14 males, 17 females) with an age range from 11 to 21 years. The PDA sample involved a group of 24 participants (15 males, 9 females), with an age range of 12 to 26 years. The qualitative data presented here come from exit interviews we conducted with 10 participants who completed the PaP and who returned three months later to complete the PDA version of the same survey (6 males, 4 females).

Procedure

Administration of the paper-and-pencil (PaP) version of the survey was completed in December 2006. Youth participants were given an overview of the survey and assistance by the researchers in completing sample questions in order to familiarize them with the item response formats (e.g., multiple choice, true/false, Likert-scale items). They then were asked to complete the survey on their own, asking questions of the research assistants as needed. The second administration was completed nearly three months later. Participants were given a PDA, a pair of headphones, a stylus and instructions about how to complete the survey at their own pace. Once they learned how to use the PDA, they set to work on the survey. Incentives for survey completion were offered at both times, and included pizza, the headphones used with the PDA, and the raffling off of an I-Pod Nano.

Results

Observational data from research assistants and timestamps on the PDA-surveys showed that the administration time for the PaP and PDA-versions of the survey varied considerably. In general, we found that the PDA-version of the survey took about 30% less time. Furthermore, as evidenced by the noise level and frequency of interruptions that occurred during the longer time it took to complete the PaP version, and the relative silence and shorter time it took for participants to complete the PDA version, it seems reasonable to infer greater motivation, attention, and on-task behavior in the PDA vs. the PaP version. We also observed that there was significant confusion regarding the flow of prompts and skip-patterns with the PaP version for several items on the survey. However, complicated skip patterns were more easily navigated with the PDA because of the automation of such patterns. It could well be that test-retest effects shaped greater on-task behavior and shorter times to complete the survey on the PDA, but we believe that (a) the motivating and private nature of the method and (b) the reduction in cognitive/attentional load may have also contributed these differences.

To assess these conjectures, we asked the 10 individuals who had taken both version of the survey which method they found easier to navigate. We found that all 10 participants who responded to both formats indicated that they considered the PDA-version easier. Although the PaP and PDA-versions of the surveys contained the same content and number of items, participants perceived the PDA administered survey as easier, "Because you see all those papers and you'd be like, 'Aah. It's so much.' And you'd see that it's [the PDA] and you think, that will be faster."

When asked which survey method they preferred and would recommend for use with other students, one participant noted that, "It (the PDA) was much easier instead of writing because it was clear. It's better for younger kids because they can understand better most of the time." In comparison with the PaP version, one participant preferred the PDA; "Because it was better. I didn't feel overwhelmed with all the papers. So it was better." The perceived excessive length of the PaP version may have affected the amount of missing data, as evidenced by the observation that, "...on the last test I skipped a lot of questions because I didn't feel like reading it." It is interesting to note her calling the PaP version of the survey a "test." Another participant stated that the PDA was "better, you didn't have to write."

When asked whether the method of administering the survey affected participants' answers, participants had mixed perspectives; this feedback points to some limitations of the PDA. Some participants suggested that despite the increased cognitive load, the PaP version may promote more reflective participation, "Because you have to read it, and you have to take your

time....and the PDA, you could just rush through and put any answer down.” Another participant provided an alternative interpretation that, “You could rush through the one on the paper too.” The participant who considered the PaP version as fostering more thoughtful participation concluded that, “Yeah, but it would be more intimate to read it.” One participant suggested that because there is less cognitive effort involved in reading and writing, a participant’s full cognitive capacity may be engaged with the PDA, “The PDA is better because it tells you, you have more [time] to think clearly.” That is, this participant believed that working memory capacity was freed up in the PDA-version, and thus this capacity was available to reflect on the question and answer it more “clearly.”

Discussion

Consistent with other research on the use of PDA-versions of surveys with adolescent populations (Trapl, et. al, 2005) we found that the PDAs were very well-received by our participants. Survey completion time was decreased by approximately 30%. Reduced completion time for the PDA-version also meant that the survey was less of an imposition on non-instructional time of participants. The structured format of the PDA also allowed easier negotiation of questions that involved complicated response patterns. The voice-enhancement also seemed to reduce cognitive load.

Based on exit interviews, we found that the participants unanimously considered the PDA as easier, faster, and more accessible. While most participants recommended the PDAs for future administration of the survey, there were mixed opinions about which method would provide responses that best reflect what students believe. Some participants maintained that PDAs provided an easier engagement strategy making it accessible, but at least two participants suggested that people could just “tap” too fast, and therefore not really think about their answers.

Of course, this examination of the benefits and limitations of PDAs is based on a case study at a particular research site. The small sample size precluded a full analysis of missing data, patterns of variance within the aggregate sample, and whether the general aversion to long PaP versions of survey would be equally shared with participants who have higher English proficiency or higher proficiency in reading and writing, this was the case with our sample.

In turn, while the PDA does afford numerous technical benefits, such as relatively easy downloading of data with limited data entry or cleaning, PDAs do require financial and temporal investments, as well as maintenance. There are significant start-up costs associated with purchasing and programming a sufficient number of PDAs to support simultaneous data collection in multiple classrooms. In addition, the use of PDAs also requires that plans be made for their recharging, security, transportation, and technical support so that they may be reused in a research setting even if the particular PDA model is no longer available for purchase on the market.

In sum, PDAs are a viable alternative to paper and pencil versions of surveys for participants in a range of in-school and out-of-school settings, and should be investigated by others for use in youth development research. Voice-enhanced PDAs reduce the cognitive load for participants, increasing the engagement of the participant in the survey completion, and reduce survey completion time. Furthermore, researchers are beginning to go beyond examining how PDAs reduce missing data to evaluate the quality of the data (e.g., reliability) (e.g., Trapl et al., 2005). We believe PDAs will remain an important alternative to PaP versions of surveys, but

more methodological research on the issues raised in this report is needed. Future research may consider documenting whether there are significant reductions in missing data with participants from a range of demographic groups, so as to best specify with which populations the PDA may grant the highest margin of benefits.

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“Coaching the Camp Coach: Leadership Development for Small Organizations” Resource Review

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“Coaching the Camp Coach: Leadership Development for Small Organizations” Resource Review

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Abstract: Coaching is an important component of successful professional growth for leaders within any organization. However, organizations with limited resources may have challenges providing such coaching opportunities. This can be especially true for small business, non profit organizations and summer camps. “Coaching the Camp Coach; Leadership Development for Small Organizations” by Shelton, M. (2003) provides a framework, both in theory and practice, for camp leaders to improve interpersonal and intrapersonal skills through self evaluation. Accompanying the book is a CD-ROM that has multiple worksheets to be used in conjunction with the text.

Introduction

Camp organizations are no different than large corporate business in the fact that their success depends on performance driven leaders. Camps often utilize a young workforce to execute important elements of a camping program and this group often times is underserved in terms of leadership development (Shelton, 2003). The expensive executive coach used by big business is not realistic for youth camps with limited resources. Despite having limited resources, it is imperative for camp directors to seek ongoing training to become better leaders.

“Coaching the Camp Coach; Leadership Development for Small Organizations” by Shelton, M. (2003) is a cost effective means to camp leadership training. Not only can the text be used by camp directors to improve upon their own leadership skills, but it can also be implemented into staff trainings for all levels within a camp organization. The author notes the text is not designed to be a substitute for organizations that can provide trained coaches to their

employees. It is intended to be a cost efficient solution for those who cannot afford executive coaches (Shelton, 2003).

Content

- Leadership
- The Basic Four
- Physical Capacity
- Emotional Capacity
- Mental Capacity
- Integrative Factors
- Personal Change
- Coaching and Training

Application

This text is a valuable foundation for anyone working in a leadership position, particularly for camp organizations. The author takes great care in defining leadership positions and differentiating them from managers. Each role is distinctly different. The introduction of the book outlines theoretical models of high performing leaders and identifies the various roles of leaders within camp organizations. These roles are first defined and then expanded upon using situational examples that are camp specific. The author provides a valuable perspective and analysis of leadership development with real-world examples throughout the text.

The author challenges the reader to not only evaluate their existing leadership skills, but also reflect on their strengths and weaknesses as a leader. The initial chapter focuses on what the author terms the "Basic Four." These "Basic Four" internal reactions include thoughts, feelings, sensations, and impulses. They guide an individual's external behavior. According to the author, a purposeful increase in monitoring these internal events will result in more self control and better leadership (Shelton, 2003).

Throughout the text there are integrated worksheets (found on the accompanying CD-ROM) that allow the reader to self-reflect on their leadership skills. References to the appropriate worksheets are found within the chapters and relate to the leadership topic being discussed. Beyond using the text to sharpen your own leadership skills, it can be adapted for camp staff training in the hopes of increasing the effectiveness of the entire camp team. This resource can be found at the American Camp Association online bookstore (www.cart-acabookstore.com) for \$32.95.

Reference

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