

Journal of Youth Development

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Editor's Comments:

Welcome to the Fall issue of the Journal of Youth Development ~ Bridging Research and Practice. This issue examines a variety of topics including workforce development, youth engagement and the academic performance of adolescents in rural environments. Readers will appreciate the innovative Program Articles as well as research addressing issues such as Latino participation in community programs.

We invite you to submit manuscripts highlighting the latest practices in the field of youth development to patricia.dawson@oregonstate.edu. Refer to our website for author guidelines.

The support, vision and inspiration of the Journal of Youth Development's Publication Committee is greatly appreciated as we continue to progress with this new venture.

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Feature Articles

Investing in Professional Development: Building and Sustaining a Viable 4-H Youth Workforce for the Future [Article 080302FA001]

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Positive youth development outcomes are influenced by a competent, highly trained work force that enjoys their work with young people. The youth work field has struggled with how to keep and motivate front line youth workers given the heavy workloads, low pay, lack of recognition and irregular time demands to compete with family responsibilities. Professional development is a key strategy for retaining and motivating youth workers. A model of professional development called the Western 4-H Institute has been developed and held now for two sessions. Results from participants indicate that this strategy can have a positive influence on job satisfaction, competencies, and retention. In fact, only 10 percent of participants had left during the intervening 5 years, and job satisfaction had increased significantly over time. Organizational loyalty among participants is not high, but with early career professionals, they may still be trying to find their niche. A regional training model has shown itself to be effective in supporting 4-H youth professionals and is building a sustainable workforce for the future.

A Process and Outcome Evaluation of Police Working with Youth Programs [Article 080302FA002]

Anderson, Stephen A.; Sabatelli, Ronald M.; Trachtenberg, Jennifer

A process and outcome evaluation of 10 Police Working with Youth Programs was conducted. Process results indicated that the core components of the programs were consistent with those identified in previous literature as characteristic of quality youth development programs. Outcome results indicated that youth participants reported significantly improved attitudes toward police and social support received from significant, non-familial adults. Two subgroups of youth, most notably minority youth and younger participants in lower grade levels, reported positive changes in their capacity to resist peer pressures. Minority youth reported positive changes in their sense of mastery over stressful life situations. Relationships between core program components and youth outcomes also were examined. Implications of the findings and future process and outcome evaluations of youth programs are discussed.

An Examination of Youth Voice via Quasi-Experimental Methodology [Article 080302FA003]

Cater, Melissa; Machtmes, Krisanna; Fox, Janet E.

The purpose of the study discussed was to determine if youth voice affects the ownership and engagement of youth in a county 4-H program. A youth-led approach was used with the treatment group to facilitate youth and adults sharing decision-making power. The comparison group utilized an adult-centered approach where decisions about the club programming were made strictly by the adults. A pre- and post-measurement design was used. Analysis of covariance was employed to determine if differences existed between youth participating in the treatment group and comparison groups and if differences existed between youth based on

race. Findings indicated statistically significant differences between the treatment and comparison groups on all three constructs and statistically significant differences between Caucasian and non-Caucasian youth on the constructs of ownership and relationship with adults. It was concluded that, in programs incorporating voice, youth experience more ownership and engagement and have a more positive relationship with adults.

Employers Can Do Youth Development Too [Article 080302FA004]

Vogel, Eric

Professionals and volunteers who care about the welfare of young people know the importance of caring adults. The field has worked with all types of adults, including parents, teachers, and youth workers to enhance their understanding of youth development philosophy, approaches and practices. However, we've virtually ignored an entire sector of adults who play a major role in the lives of young people—employers. Given the large number of youth in the workforce, and understanding the critical role of caring adults, the question becomes, "how do we focus attention on preparing employers and other workplace adults to be more thoughtful and intentional about their interactions with young people?" The objective of this paper is to lay out the relevant issues and to begin the dialogue about building the capacity of employers to better support the development of our young people.

Community Interactive Processes and Rural Adolescents' Educational Achievement: Investigating the Mediating Effects of Delinquency and Self-Esteem [Article 080302FA005]

Adedokun, Omolola A.; Balschweid, Mark A.

The study reported in this paper examines the effects of community interactive processes on rural adolescents' educational achievement. Specifically, the paper explored the direct effects of community interactive processes on rural adolescents' educational achievement and the indirect effects via self-esteem and delinquency. The method of structural equation modeling was used to analyze data from a nationally representative panel study of rural adolescent boys and girls in 10th grade through 12th grade. The results make a compelling case that communities are conduits for boosting self-esteem, facilitating normative behaviors and academic performance in rural adolescents.

Working With Female Juvenile Delinquents: What Youth Practitioners Need to Know [Article 080302FA006]

Patton, Joy D.

This article is organized in a way to help youth practitioners recognize the most pertinent issues faced by female juveniles and to provide help in guiding professional interactions, communication and decision-making. The guidelines discussed are suggestions for practice based on an empirical review of the literature. Recent research has identified ten characteristics of female juvenile offenders to consider when working with this population. These areas include: (a) impaired cognitive functioning, (b) low academic achievement, (c) weak language skills, (d) peer relationships, (e) onset of menarche, (f) early sexual experiences, (g) mental illness, (h) victimization (i) low self-esteem and (j) race.

Program Articles

Engaging Adolescents as Community Organizers [Article 080302PA001]

Tetloff, Meredith; Griffith, Matt

VOX Teen Communications, a non-profit youth development organization in Atlanta, GA, positions adolescents as leaders in their community. Empowerment theory and a participatory approach are tools often utilized to achieve youth leadership. Teens participated in a community organizing project to create a "for-teens", "by-teens" resource guide Web site

(www.teenresourceatl.org). This guide evaluates agencies, Web sites and hotlines on their "teen-friendliness" when providing services to youth in need. The empowerment-based program allowed the teens to take ownership of the project, resulting in a high level of commitment. Anticipated successes of the program include better access to help for teens in need; positioning teens as both users of the guide and leaders of the project; increased confidence and skill-level of the teen participants; and better informed service providers in the community.

4-H "Survivor" Camp: A Real-to-Life Experience in Living on Your Own

[Article 080302PA002]

Smith, Carole; Cowan, Janice; Schreiber, Debera

In recent years many school district budgets have been reduced. Essential life skill classes, such as home economics and personal finance, have been eliminated leaving youth unprepared to live on their own. 4-H Survivor Camp was developed to meet this need. Survivor Camp provides the opportunity for youth to learn and practice basic life skills needed to make a successful transition from high school to young adulthood. The camp is based on seven core lessons: Living on a Budget, Renting an Apartment, Living with a Roommate, Food Preparation, Career Preparation, Self Awareness and Personal Reflection. Evaluation results show that youth who have participated in the program feel more prepared to face the realities of living on their own. The value of this curriculum is that it is adaptable for youth anywhere and in a variety of settings. This article discusses the real-to-life experiences taught at the camp and the related life skills reinforced.

The Youth Empowered for Success Program: A Multi-faceted Approach to Youth Leadership Development and School Culture Change in Southern Arizona

[Article 080302PA003]

Parrish, Pam; Wilhelm, Mari; Florez-Urcadez, Yvette; Jeffrey, Daniel A.; Roebuck, James; Burnett, Bill B.

Arizona's first Teen Institute (TI) program, Youth Empowered for Success, began in July 2004. It is the first TI-based project to focus on nurturing resilience via Health Realization (Pransky, 2007). The YES program's design to "create conditions for success" in high schools is discussed. YES utilizes a strengths-based, multi-faceted approach of (1) teaching participants how to access their innate resilience and common sense (Health Realization), (2) training them in community development for school culture change and (3) helping them develop meaningful partnerships with adults. YES also expands upon the TI model by providing staff support for community development throughout the academic year. It is hypothesized that these efforts ultimately will increase overall well-being and reduce the incidence of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use (ATOD) as well as depression and suicide among youth.

Covering our Bases: A Military 4-H Youth Development Program

[Article 080302PA004]

Roueche, Joanne; Jones, Debra A.

Land-grant universities, through the 4-H program, have offered support and partnership to the military since World War I. More recently, the U. S. Army, Air Force, and 4-H have partnered to provide military installation youth programs involving over 7,000 youth in 4-H clubs in the United States and abroad. Military youth and families, not affiliated with Base or Post installations, were extended similar support as an aftermath of September 11, 2001. All youth involved through military outreach are enrolled as 4-H members through their respective counties integrating them into local, state, regional, and national 4-H activities and events. Authors share their experience developing relationships with their Air Force partner in

implementing positive youth development programs, and explain how these actions resulted in successful funding for increased outreach.

Research and Evaluation Strategies

Evaluating an Initiative to Increase Youth Participation in School and Community Gardening Activities [Article 080302RS001]

Lekies, Kristi S.; Eames-Sheavly, Marcia

Across the country, youth gardening opportunities are rapidly increasing, as is the need for documentation on successful strategies for working with young people. This paper describes the evaluation of the Greener Voices project, a three-year initiative created to increase youth participation in gardening activities through consultation, resources, and information provided to adult leaders at six sites across New York and Pennsylvania. The evaluation is highlighted to encourage others to think about ways to incorporate evaluation into gardening programs. Useful strategies include starting early with evaluation planning, using an underlying program theory or logic model, collecting data through multiple methods, coordinating evaluation and program planning, building theory into evaluation, and publicizing findings. Documenting lessons learned can contribute to the knowledge base in the youth gardening field.

Latino Youth Participation in Community Programs [Article 080302RS002]

Skogrand, Linda; Riggs, Kathleen; Huffaker, Stacey

Twelve Latino parents were interviewed regarding what attracted their children to community activities and ways to increase participation of Latino youth in activities. According to the parents interviewed, children participated in activities which they enjoyed, activities that made them productive and kept them out of trouble, helped them gain skills that would benefit their future, and activities that involved the entire family. Implications for programming for Latino youth are provided.

Resource Review

Learn to Live: Simple and Practical Activities to Promote Health, Nutrition and Physical Fitness in the K-8 Curriculum [Article 080302RR001]

Dirga, Ali Ann Y.; Stavrianeas, Stasinos

Current health education and physical fitness programs have failed to prevent the youth obesity epidemic. The diminishing emphasis placed on such programs due to curricular and budgetary constraints results in few opportunities to promote students' active participation in regular physical activity and health education programs. Findings indicate that a successful program to promote healthy nutrition, an active lifestyle, and regular physical exercise requires that the information is easily accessible, and presented in a clear and concise format. Readers are introduced to a comprehensive program, easily adjustable throughout the K-8 curriculum. It is designed to complement regular classroom activities by introducing a series of stand-alone lessons and activities to educate students on the benefits of regular exercise and healthy lifestyle. This program can be used in any community and can offer the youth population the information they need to create healthy habits that will last a lifetime.

Investing in Professional Development: Building and Sustaining a Viable 4-H Youth Workforce for the Future

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Investing in Professional Development: Building and Sustaining a Viable 4-H Youth Workforce for the Future

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Abstract: Positive youth development outcomes are influenced by a competent, highly trained work force that enjoys their work with young people. The youth work field has struggled with how to keep and motivate front line youth workers given the heavy workloads, low pay, lack of recognition and irregular time demands to compete with family responsibilities. Professional development is a key strategy for retaining and motivating youth workers. A model of professional development called the Western 4-H Institute has been developed and held now for two sessions. Results from participants indicate that this strategy can have a positive influence on job satisfaction, competencies, and retention. In fact, only 10 percent of participants had left during the intervening 5 years, and job satisfaction had increased significantly over time. Organizational loyalty among participants is not high, but with early career professionals, they may still be trying to find their niche. A regional training model has shown itself to be effective in supporting 4-H youth professionals and is building a sustainable workforce for the future.

Introduction

The youth work profession has both challenges and opportunities. First and foremost, youth work is characterized by high turnover. Youth work often does not pay as well as other career choices, so that the young, energetic individuals attracted to this work in the first place often leave for other jobs which offer more financial compensation. Second, youth work entails long and irregular hours—hours that disrupt family lives of the professionals as well as the participants. However, in the case of the former the sacrifice is required while for the families it

is a choice. Burnout is often cited as a reason for leaving by frontline youth workers (Laroche & Klein, 2008; Yohalem, Pittman, & Moore, 2006). And finally, youth work is so hectic and time demanding that training is sometimes sacrificed to direct service. Front line workers often have inadequate support and ongoing professional development to keep them current and motivated (Garza, Borden & Astroth, 2004).

These factors, among others, can translate into high turnover and low job satisfaction. Nearly every youth service organization has searched for ways to recruit, retain and sustain youth workers. As one national report framed it, burnout, extreme work loads, long hours and high turnover are all elements for the most talented youth workers (Casey Foundation, 2003). On top of this, our society continues to undervalue youth workers and their contributions to developing contributing adults of the future.

Yet, good youth work demands a highly skilled, knowledgeable work force (Stone, Garza & Borden, 2005). In fact, a national study described the critical link between positive youth outcomes and relationships with front line youth workers (Bouffard & Little, 2004). This report also suggested that investing in the professional development of youth worker staff can positively impact the sustainability of the youth development work force. Others have also documented the importance and value of professional development for youth workers (Bowie & Bronte-Tinkew, 2006). At the same time, however, there is a lack of information about the relationship between positive youth development outcomes and professional development training of staff.

While there are many programs designed to meet the professional development needs of front line youth workers, there is a dearth of information about the impacts of these efforts.

First, can investments in the professional development of youth workers result in identifiable benefits? Specifically, can efforts to train and support front line youth workers make impacts on job satisfaction, turnover, burnout and retention?

Second, what is the relationship between professional development training for frontline youth workers to youth development outcomes?

These were just some of the questions we sought to address in a regional training approach designed for early career 4-H professionals.

Situation

In many of the 13 Western states, professional development training for 4-H professionals is a significant challenge because of small staff numbers, long times between hiring, great distances in many Western states and limited training budgets. As a result, professional development training comes long after youth workers are hired, content is often generic rather than specific, and opportunities for networking are limited to a just a few colleagues. Like other areas of the country, front line 4-H youth work professionals are often hired without much previous field experience, and they often have to wait years for core training that can help them succeed. Often, these in-state training experiences are short, quick-fix approaches that serve to address immediate programmatic and policy requirements rather than developing critical competencies. If positive results occur, it is likely more attributable to chancy causation than intentionality. Authentic professional development should be systematic and ongoing.

Moreover, some state 4-H program leaders have found that newly-hired 4-H agents often lack an understanding of the 4-H club program and its value in youth development. A training regime which would provide a common grounding and support for why clubs still matter as a viable delivery method would be valuable to cultivating professionals' support for sustaining this important avenue of participation (Walker, Dunham & Snyder, 1998).

In 2000, the 4-H program directors of the 13 Western states were approached to support a regional professional development initiative designed to build a common basis of competencies and skills for 4-H professionals throughout the region and improve retention and job satisfaction. Our belief was that only through a larger effort, pooling resources to realize an economy of scale, could the 4-H system impact job retention, satisfaction and reduce burnout and turnover.

Curriculum Design and Implementation

Following a commitment of financial support from Western 4-H program leaders, a design team was assembled to develop a curriculum for an intensive 4-day training regime for early career 4-H youth professionals. Content for the curriculum included elements from each of the existing 4-H Professional Research and Knowledge (4-H PRK) taxonomy domains at that time—youth development, youth program management, volunteerism, communication and educational design (Hastings & Lifer, 1988). In addition, survival tips, priority setting and policy issues were also included. Significant time was also allotted for networking and camaraderie.

The first Western 4-H Institute, as the program was ultimately titled, was held in April 2002 on the campus of Utah State University. At this initial professional development training, 76 professionals from nearly all 13 Western states participated. A second Western 4-H Institute was held in February 2006 in Las Vegas, Nevada. A summary evaluation of this first cohort was published in 2002 (Astroth, 2002). A wealth of information about this first cohort was collected regarding demographic profiles, job satisfaction, competencies, professionalism and time spent at work. Additionally, institute participants had the opportunity to respond to open ended questions regarding their experience in planning the 2006 institute (Lindstrom, 2004).

The curriculum for the second Institute was revised slightly following revisions to the 4-H PRK taxonomy to align more with competencies—hence renamed 4-H Professional Research and Knowledge Competencies (4-H PRKC). This revised taxonomy includes 6 domains:

1. volunteerism;
2. youth development;
3. youth program management;
4. access, equity and opportunity;
5. organizational systems; and
6. partnerships (Stone & Rennekamp, 2004)

Sixty-one professionals participated in this professional development training. A summary evaluation of the second cohort was compiled in 2006 (Webb, et al., 2006). The evaluation results from this report supported the results from the report of the 2002 Institute.

In 2007, we surveyed participants from both cohort groups to try and understand the influence of the training on the participants themselves. We were especially interested in turnover, job

satisfaction, skill development and career options. Of the original 137 participants, we were able to collect email addresses for 131 professionals.

A third Institute is planned for February 2009, so we were anxious to survey the first two cohorts in order to gain any insights which could be applied to the next professional development training.

Results

During the Institute, we had collected email addresses from all participants, and so contacting them through a Survey Monkey tool was easy. Over a period of months, a survey tool was designed to include questions from post-Institute evaluations as well as unique questions to assess job satisfaction, skill development, career advancement and future career aspirations. The questions were submitted to 4-H professionals for face validity.

The survey was launched in the spring of 2007 and left open for a period of one month. Several reminders were sent to non-respondents to enlist their participation. Bounced emails were pursued with individual state leaders to ascertain job status for specific individuals.

Demographics

In the end, 70 participants completed the survey—a response rate of 51 percent. Of those responding, 70 percent were female, 58 percent had earned a master's degree while 26 percent had earned a bachelor's degree. About 10 percent had only a high school diploma or associate's degree. Six percent had earned doctorate degrees.

Of those responding to the survey, 59 percent were county agents/educators, while 22 percent were program coordinators, assistants or para-professionals of some kind. About 10 percent were district/area agents or specialists, and just 4 percent were state specialists. The remainder of participants were represented by state 4-H program leaders, program aides or others.

Turnover

Of this original set of 131 professionals, 13 had quit—a turnover rate of 10 percent. Some of the participants had quit and gone on to other careers; others we simply could not locate.

Career Advancement

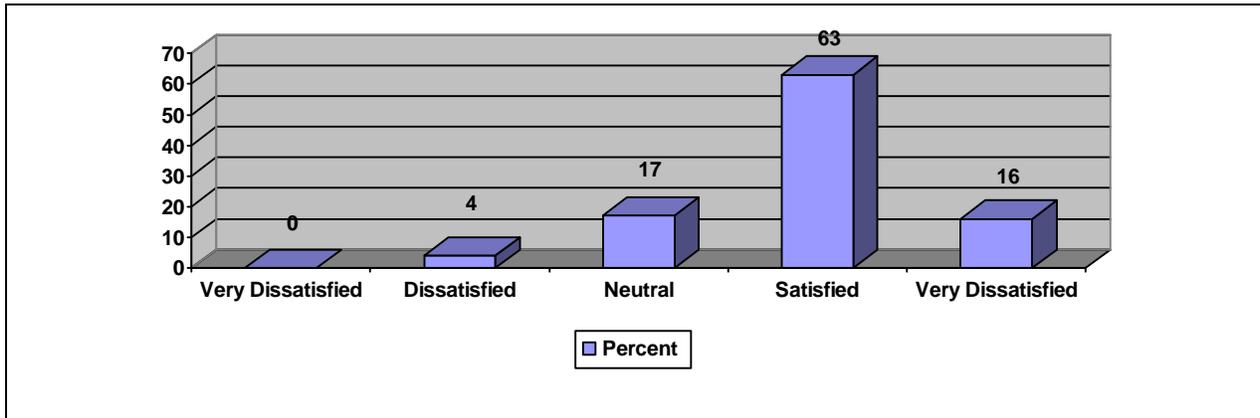
One of the areas we wanted to learn more about was whether participants had risen in the ranks since their participation in the Institute. Nearly 60 percent of respondents from the two cohort groups were at the same level as when they participated in the Institute. However, 27 percent had increased in position or responsibilities while 7 percent had transitioned completely out of 4-H responsibilities but still worked for Extension in some other capacity. One participant, for example, had been promoted to County Extension Director in a large, metropolitan county.

Job Satisfaction

As a result of this intensive professional development experience, how satisfied were participants with their jobs? Were they more frustrated, or were they looking for other jobs? A series of question sought to find answers to these questions.

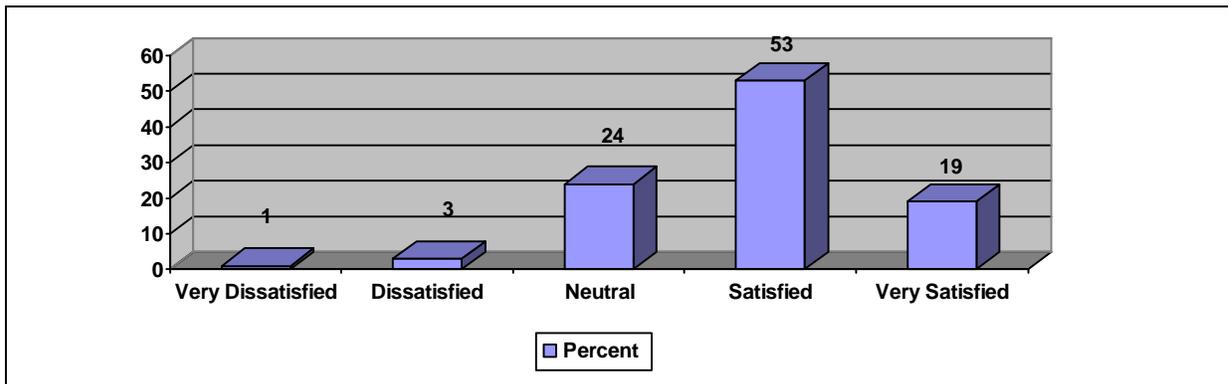
When we inquired about participants' current level of job satisfaction, 69 percent indicated that they were "satisfied" and another 16 percent indicated that they were "very satisfied." Seventeen percent indicated that they were neutral—neither dissatisfied nor satisfied (See Table 1).

Table 1
Job satisfaction levels of respondents at the time of survey



Using a post-then-pre design, we also asked participants about their level of job satisfaction at the time in which they were enrolled in the Institute. Their responses are found in Table 2.

Table 2
Job satisfaction of Institute participants at the time they were involved in the Institute



Finally, we simply asked participants if their jobs were enjoyable. Nearly four out of five respondents agreed with this statement (80 percent) while only 17 percent indicated that they were neutral on this question. Less than 3 percent disagreed with this characterization of their job environment.

Competencies and Confidence

Several questions sought to gain insights into the professional competencies and skills. When asked whether their participation in the Institute has enhanced their skills to work in 4-H youth development, nearly half (49 percent) said "to a good extent." Nearly a third indicated that the

Institute had “adequately” enhanced their professional skills. Fourteen percent indicated that the Institute had only a limited influence on their professional skills.

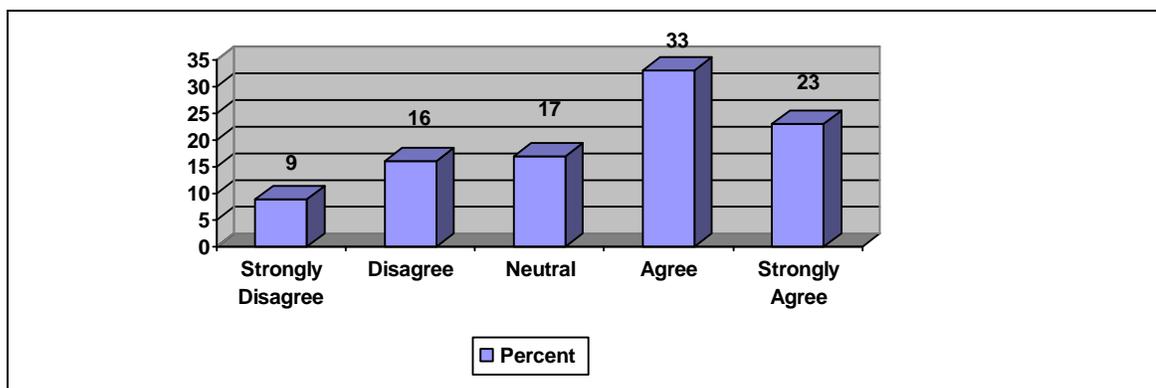
With respect to changes in self-confidence to manage and lead a 4-H program as a result of the Institute training, 43 percent indicated that they had “moderate confidence” while another 39 percent indicated that they had “high confidence.” Only 3 percent (2 respondents) indicated that they were “not at all confident.”

We wanted to learn to what extent participants found the Institute training valuable to them in developing professionally as a 4-H practitioner. A large number of the respondents from both cohorts indicated that the training was “highly valuable” to them—44 percent of the total. Another 11 percent said the training was very valuable toward this goal, while another 11 percent indicated that the Institute training had limited value to them as a 4-H practitioner. No one indicated that the training had no value at all.

Retention

A series of questions sought to understand the intrinsic motivations of participants related to staying with a career in Extension. When asked if “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my professional career with Extension working in 4-H” (emphasis added), over half of the respondents indicated a positive response. However, nearly a fourth of respondents indicated that they did not see themselves spending their career in 4-H Extension work. Another 17 percent were not sure (see Table 3).

Table 3
Percent of respondents who indicated their satisfaction with staying in a 4-H career with Extension



In another series of questions, we also sought to probe feelings of organizational loyalty, sense of belonging, and range of employment options from the participants’ point of view. For example, Extension employees often talk about Extension being a “family” that looks out for one another and supports each other. One question, then, asked respondents if they felt “part of the family” in Extension. Half of all respondents agreed with this assessment, and another 13 percent strongly agreed. About one-fourth were neutral on this question, while 14 percent disagreed with this characterization.

Because a job with Extension may have been many respondents’ first “real” career offer, we asked how obligated these new employees felt to remain employed with Extension. Interestingly, 38 percent did not express any obligation to remain with Extension, and another

20 percent were undecided. However, thirty-nine percent agreed with this assessment (see Table 4).

Table 4
Percent of respondents who expressed an obligation to remain with
Extension as their employer

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not sure
Percent	14.3	24.3	20.0	28.6	11.4	1.4

Another question sought to uncover whether current employees felt trapped in their current career path with few options. To what extent were some of these employees staying with Extension because of perceived limited career options? The majority of respondents felt that they had other options but were intentionally choosing to stay with their career in Extension. Over 50 percent, for example, disagreed with the statement that they had “too few options to consider leaving Extension.” However, fewer felt that staying with Extension was just as much a matter of desire as a matter of necessity. About a third indicated that they felt they had limited option in their current position—because of family, cost of living or other factors.

Asked if their job was “the best job I have ever had,” only 11 percent disputed this statement while half agreed. However, the jury is still out for a significant portion—fully 39 percent were neutral on this statement.

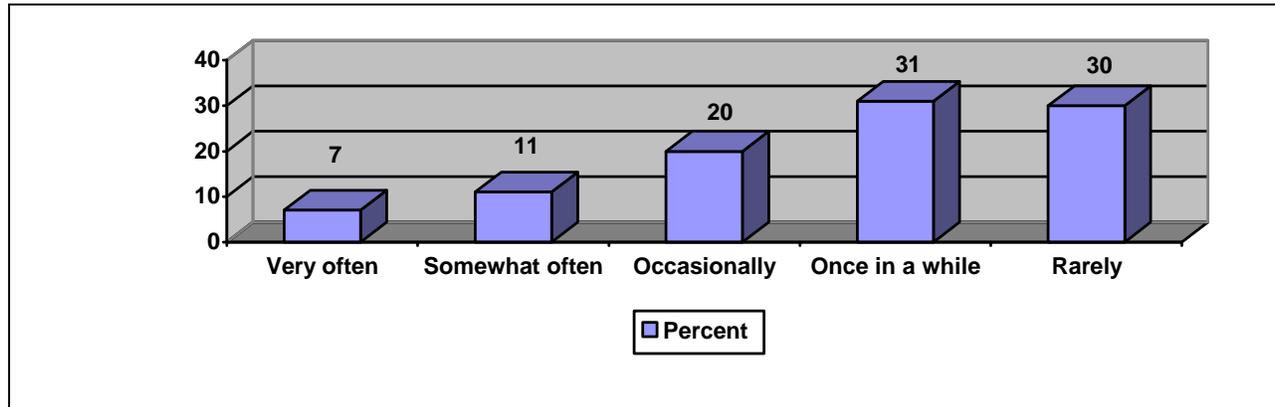
For these new employees, loyalty to Extension is still not strongly embedded as it might be for longer-term faculty and staff. In response to a question about whether it would be wrong to leave Extension now, even if there were benefits to them personally, nearly 60 percent said they would leave Extension if it were to their advantage. However, a fifth of the respondents indicated that they felt compelled to remain employed with Extension, even if it were to their advantage to move on. Another one-fifth of respondents were neutral on this question.

When asked if they would be looking for a new job within the coming year, half of the respondents said that this was not at all likely. Yet a sizeable portion thought that this scenario was a likely event in the next year.

Finally, we asked how often these participants thought about quitting. One third reported that they thought about this once in a while, but another third said “rarely.” One fifth (20 percent) said “occasionally.”

Table 5

Percent of respondents who thought about quitting



Work Environment Relationships

One of the areas we were curious about was whether the advanced training in the theory and practice of positive youth development affected relationships with co-workers. We were concerned that after receiving such in-depth training that these new insights and skills might create a distance or alienation with co-workers. Fortunately, this did not seem to be the case for most participants. In fact, nearly half (44 percent) disagreed that they were somehow in a different place philosophically from co-workers as a result of the Institute training. Twenty-eight percent were neutral on this assessment, and only 17 percent agreed that they now had trouble relating to co-workers as a result.

Discussion

Demographics. As with other studies of 4-H youth workers, the ranks are heavily weighted towards female employees. Nearly three-fourths of respondents were women while only a third were male. Most have earned a master's degree—again attesting to the high level of education that 4-H youth workers bring to their avocations. This higher level of education provides 4-H with a strategic advantage compared to other youth organizations. Whether it translates into higher program quality has yet to be documented.

Turnover and Retention. Youth work can be stressful, challenging work but at the same time it can be very rewarding work. Youth workers typically are paid less than other professionals and often work long hours—including evenings and weekends. These elements—long hours, modest compensation, stressful work environments—are not ingredients for increasing retention or staff stability.

What do we know about employee satisfaction in general? A recent national survey by Salary.com of more than 15,000 employees in all fields found that 65 percent of them plan to leave their current positions in the next three months. Lower paid employees are 66 percent more likely to look for a new job than highly paid employees. Specifically, employees earning less than \$40,000 per year are approximately 25 percent more likely to look for a new job than the average employee (Salary.com, 2006).

Moreover, this survey of national employees found that the most common reasons for wanting to leave their current job were (1) inadequate compensation (57%) and (2) no opportunities for

advancement (37%). Insufficient benefits or poor working hours were also cited as reasons for leaving a job by less than 1 in 5 workers (Salary.com, 2006).

Employee turnover is expensive. Human resource professionals “estimate that turnover costs 26.8 percent of the annual salary of the person being replaced” (Salary.com, 2006). But other estimates of turnover costs are much higher—as much as 50 percent to more than several times the worker’s salary, depending on the person who must be replaced. To anyone who has conducted a search for a staff position, they know that replacing staff is an expensive and long-drawn out endeavor. Training and orientation time alone are quite expensive.

Surveys of youth workers have found that the youth work field is particularly prone to high turnover and other challenges. For example, the Beacon Workforce Study in San Francisco found that workforce retention, sporadic opportunities for professional development and ongoing funding issues were characteristic of the youth workers’ environment in the Bay area. While many found their work highly satisfying and full of purpose and meaning, many professional youth workers did not stay in the field long because “pay is insufficient or incommensurate with their education, because they don’t see a clear career ladder...and because Youth Development work can be emotionally depleting for many” (Resource Development Associates, 2006, p. 4).

Not surprisingly, youth work is often plagued by high rates of turnover and low retention. As a result, the youth development field, in general, is characterized by young, inexperienced people hanging on while looking for other, better opportunities. The Beacon survey of youth workers in San Francisco, for example, found that 72 percent of respondents found their work to be stressful—much higher than national finding where only 34 percent feel work is stressful (Resource Development Associates, 2006).

Despite the reputed high turnover in youth worker ranks, however, only 10 percent of the respondents from the Institute group had left for other employment even including the cohort that began in 2002. Of course, there could be several explanations for this. Those recruited for participation in the Institute may be those who have early on indicated a passion and commitment to 4-H youth work and are thus more likely to stay. Another explanation may reside in local realities—lack of higher paying positions, connection to the community and other geographic factors which reduce the chances of re-locating.

Skill Development. As reported by the respondents, the Institute is effective at building professional skills and competencies for the majority of participants. Most indicated a high level of confidence and that their professional competence had improved. More than 90 percent felt that the Institute was valuable enough that it should be continued to be offered in the Western region. Because a majority of participants are early career professionals, this skill development is essential to providing support and orientation to the rigors of 4-H youth development work.

Job Satisfaction. From those who responded to the survey, job satisfaction had increased from the time when they first participated in the Institute training. The greatest increase was in the “satisfied” response which showed an increase of 10 percent—a significant difference. Although there were no significant differences between the other ratings, there was a general shift towards greater job satisfaction after the passage of time since the training.

Interestingly, about a fourth of respondents had advanced in position or responsibilities since participating in the Institute training program. The reasons for this advancement, however, are

not clear and warrant further study. Since so many of the participants are new to Extension, it would not be unusual for some advancement to occur as these employees gain more experience on the job.

Organizational Loyalty. As for building a close knit culture akin to a family environment, half of those who have been through the Institute training experience felt this was true, but a sizeable portion of the group is still undecided on this issue. Extension must do more to develop an organizational culture which includes everyone and supports everyone.

Early career employees apparently take some time to decide how viable their jobs are before dedicating themselves to it as a career. Some are so new that they cannot adequately assess the desirability of their current position relative to other options. Organizational loyalty runs shallow rather than deep with these respondents. Nearly half said that they might be looking for another job within the next year, and two-thirds said that they would willing to leave Extension if it were to their advantage to do so. Future research should look into the strength of organizational loyalties and what factors support or weaken these bonds.

Summary

For the 4-H organization, a regional training model for early career 4-H professionals appears to be a viable approach to fostering the skills and competencies necessary for new youth workers to succeed in their careers. Turnover is relatively low, and job satisfaction improves over time. In addition, these employees are likely to report that they intend to remain on the job. In our region of the country, where resources are scarce and training options are equally scarce, a regional training effort has proven effective to supporting new staff and faculty within-depth, lasting professional development.

Based on our experience, other national youth-serving organizations might also benefit from more regionalized trainings held on a regular basis. Training and support are often areas where new hires express the need for more help (Laroche & Klein, 2008). "Sink or swim" has too frequently been the training model in youth development. Our experience shows that focused, early career professional development, the nurturing of professional networks, and fostering organizational loyalty can make a difference in staff turnover and job satisfaction.

When asked if the institute was worthwhile a participant of the 2002 Institute offered insights that may be keys to the success to the process:

"It (the institute) was relevant to my career stage. I had only been in Extension two years and was desperate for practical ideas. It was useful and had timely information. Information was presented from experienced colleagues through the West (I enjoyed this greatly). I actually turned in some of the presenters as possible outside reviewers for promotion and tenure. I enjoyed meeting with others who were new in their career also. It was the only training I've been too where we were given time to truly learn from others in attendance. It gave me a sense of well being that others were having the same struggles as I was having (as a new agent). I don't know if you are aware of it but when we (Institute participants) see each other at NAE4-HA or Western Region Leaders Forum we still make connections about the Institute."

As training dollars in Extension and other youth programs become ever more scarce in the future, others may want to consider a regionalized training model to augment limited national or local training programs. Our regional model has shown itself, after two cohorts, to be

effective at providing in-depth training on core competencies to help employees be successful and minimize turnover and dissatisfaction. By reducing turnover and enhancing skills, we can effectively build a sustainable youth development workforce for the future.

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A Process and Outcome Evaluation of Police Working with Youth Programs

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A Process and Outcome Evaluation of Police Working with Youth Programs

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Abstract: A process and outcome evaluation of 10 Police Working with Youth Programs was conducted. Process results indicated that the core components of the programs were consistent with those identified in previous literature as characteristic of quality youth development programs. Outcome results indicated that youth participants reported significantly improved attitudes toward police and social support received from significant, non-familial adults. Two subgroups of youth, most notably minority youth and younger participants in lower grade levels, reported positive changes in their capacity to resist peer pressures. Minority youth reported positive changes in their sense of mastery over stressful life situations. Relationships between core program components and youth outcomes also were examined. Implications of the findings and future process and outcome evaluations of youth programs are discussed.

Introduction

Research has suggested that community youth development programs produce positive youth outcomes. Such programs seek to promote youth development, as opposed to intervening in specific problems, by fostering intellectual, social and emotional competencies. These competencies serve as protective factors, and lessen the likelihood that youth will engage in harmful or destructive behaviors (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Community youth development programs have been shown to improve youths' academic success (e.g., grades, motivation, and commitment to schooling), vocational achievement, and social development (e.g., positive identity, personal efficacy, self-regulation, resistance skills, problem-solving skills and quality of adult and peer relationships) (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2002; Eccles, & Gootman, 2002; Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, & Foster, 1998).

However, there are a wide variety of community programs that fall under the rubric of "youth development programming." Examples are community youth drop-in centers (Hirsch, 2005;

McLaughlin, Irby, & Langman, 2001), after school mentoring programs (Rhodes, 2002), youth leadership training (Boyd, 2001), and community civic involvement projects (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2004). It is unclear whether or not these different types of youth development programs can be equally effective.

Police Working with Youth Programs.

Police working with youth in non-enforcement roles is one type of community youth development program that has received even less attention. Based in part upon a community policing model, which has become common in law enforcement, these programs bring police together with local youth in the community in Police Athletic Leagues, Police Explorer Scouts, and other activities such as fairs or summer camps (Greene, 2000; Roth et al., 2000). However, there are relatively few studies that examined the effectiveness of engaging youth and police in non-enforcement roles to promote youth development.

Changes in police and youth attitudes toward each other following participation in a 6-week basketball program offered by a Police Athletic League was examined in one study. Results indicated that police officers reported significantly improved attitudes toward minority youth on their teams and toward minority youth in general. However, youth reported improved attitudes only towards team members (police officers and peers), but not toward police on the whole (Rabois & Haaga, 2003). In another study, police worked with economically disadvantaged, inner-city youth as role models and instructors in a variety of activities such as community clean-up projects, recreational activities, and tours of local businesses. Police also gave talks about themselves and their work. Observations, focus group interviews, and surveys of parents and participating staff indicated that the program was successful in instilling a sense of responsibility in youth, improving some youth and parents' attitudes toward police, and improving participating officers' attitudes toward youth. However, as the researchers noted, the short-term nature of the program (8 weeks) and lack of follow-up did not allow for conclusions about long-term impact (Thurman, Giacomazzi, & Bogen, 1993).

One of the most comprehensive evaluations of police working with youth programs was an evaluation conducted with 17 programs, in both urban and suburban communities, in the State of Connecticut (Anderson, Sabatelli, & Trachtenberg, 2007). A variety of police working with youth programs including, Police Academies, athletic leagues, adventure activities programs, and Police Explorers Scouts programs were studied. It was found that a subgroup of youth who entered these one-year programs at a lower level of psychosocial functioning showed significantly more positive changes than a comparison group of youth who began the program with a higher level of overall psychosocial adjustment. Despite these significant findings, the study did not address whether or not youth changed their attitudes toward police (an important overall goal of such programs) or what specific program components accounted for the significant changes reported by youth participants. In fact, this latter issue, regarding what specifically accounts for positive changes following completion of a community youth development program, remains largely unanswered.

Effective Youth Programs.

Little empirical evidence is available to indicate what program components or combination of components within effective youth programs are responsible for positive outcomes (Eccles, 2005; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Kahne et al., 2001; Lopez & McKnight, 2002; Scott-Little, Hamann, & Jurs, 2002). Process researchers have been adamant in pointing out that "black box" approaches that focus on recording positive changes in participants while ignoring what actually happens in the program are inadequate. Further, we cannot assume that a program

operates exactly as it was originally planned. Rather, what are needed are research designs that study the processes actually operating within programs and how these processes affect the results that are achieved (Dehar, Casswell, & Duignan, 1993; McLaughlin, 1987; Wholey, Hatry, & Newcomer, 1994).

Catalano et al. (2002) reported that none of the studies included in their comprehensive review of youth development program evaluations included information about the program, the implementation process, or the relationship between the implementation process and outcomes. Larson (2000) in his analysis of the field of youth development concluded that, like other fields, outcome evaluations have been needed to justify funding for youth activities even though we are not yet sure what might be the independent and dependent variables for such evaluative research. He proposed that a first step should be descriptive and process research that helps to conceptualize the essential elements of developmental change.

Although such descriptive and process research has been limited to date, a number of researchers and theorists have proposed criteria for effective youth programs. Often these formulations have supplemented the limited direct empirical evidence on community youth development programs with other sources of information such as theories of adolescent development (Eccles & Gootman, 2002), research on adolescents' mental health and adjustment (Durlak & Wells, 1997, 1998), prevention programs targeting risk and protective factors (Catalano et al., 2002), and school-based after-school programs (Kahne et al., 2001; Posner & Vandell, 1994).

Despite differences in the criteria proposed by these authors for assessing quality youth development programs, there is near universal agreement on several of the factors deemed to be essential. These include:

- safety,
- supportive relationships,
- challenging activities, and
- meaningful involvement

(Connell, Gambone, & Smith, 2000; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Gambone, Cao Yu, Lewis-Charp, Sipe, & Laco, 2004; Walker, Marczak, Blyth, & Borden, 2005; Yohalem, Pittman, & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2004).

Safe and Secure Environment.

Numerous authors have emphasized that positive development must begin in an environment that is both physically and psychologically *safe and secure* (c.f., Gambone et al., 2004; Vandell, Shumow, & Posner, 2005). For instance, Eccles and Gootman (2002) noted that positive settings must be free from violence and unsafe health conditions because of their direct impact on physical health and survival. Furthermore, research on children and adolescents has consistently identified a safe and trusting environment as essential for healthy development and adjustment (Bowlby, 1988; Erikson, 1968; Rohner & Britner, 2002).

Supportive Relationships.

Several reviews of youth program evaluations have concluded that *supportive relationships* with staff and other non-familial adults are one of the most frequently identified characteristics of effective youth programs (Catalano et al., 2002; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Roth et al., 1998). More recent studies not included in earlier reviews have supported these earlier conclusions.

Youth-staff relationships have been found to be a key determinant of both retention and success in youth programs (Noam & Fiore, 2004; Rhodes, 2004).

Offering challenging and stimulating activities that lead to the development of life skills is another frequently identified characteristic of effective youth programs (Catalano et al., 2002, Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Eccles, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Roth et al, 1998; Walker et al., 2005). Organized activities offer youth opportunities to acquire social, physical, and intellectual skills that may be useful in a wide variety of settings including school. Furthermore, they provide opportunities to contribute to the well-being of the community and develop a sense of agency as a member of the community. Belonging to socially recognized and valued groups allows one to establish supportive networks with peers and adults, and experience and deal with challenges. Catalano et al. (2002) concluded, on the basis of the results they reviewed, that 75% of effective programs targeted increased opportunities for youth participation in positive social activities, and recognition and reinforcement for that participation. Larson (2000) has argued that a core component of positive development is initiative, which only develops when concerted effort is combined with experiences that are complex and challenging. He found that structured voluntary activities such as sports, arts, and participation in organizations were the contexts where these elements of initiative were most likely to co-occur.

Meaningful involvement, the fourth major component of effective youth programs, has been referred to with a variety of terms such as opportunities to belong, support for mattering, acceptance, and inclusion (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Some out-of-school youth programs, especially those serving low-income youth in dangerous neighborhoods, have been described as providing a "family-like quality" (Halpern, Barker, & Mollard, 2000). In such a setting, youth know one another well, accept each others' quirks, tease each other but not too harshly, and describe each other as friends. However, meaningful involvement entails more than a sense of belonging. It also includes opportunities for active participation in decision-making, responsibility, and leadership. Youth are encouraged to have an active voice in decision-making within the organizations that influence their lives (O'Donoghue, Kirshner, & McLaughlin, 2002). Finally, meaningful involvement includes active participation in one's community. At this level, it involves planning and involvement in public action, as in the case of community service activities, and access to political, and economic spheres (O'Donoghue et al., 2002; Tolman & Pittman, 2001).

Program Description

The primary objective of the present study was to conduct a process evaluation of Police working with Youth Programs to identify the core elements of the program and to assess the degree to which these core elements were consistent with established youth development programming principles. A second objective was to determine the extent to which youth changed their perceptions of police in their communities following completion of the program. Our third objective was to assess the extent to which youth participants reported changes on several youth development outcomes included in the study. Finally, we were interested in examining whether the core program components implemented within the Police programs were associated with positive youth outcomes.

Police Working with Youth in Non-enforcement Roles is a program funded by the State of Connecticut through the Office of Policy and Management. It provides funds for local communities to increase or enhance positive police interactions with youth outside of the traditional enforcement role. Programs are generally funded for a one-year period. A total of 10

community programs were funded during the evaluation period, September 2004 and August 2005. Three of the 10 programs were in major cities, and the rest were in suburban towns and communities. Communities offered different types of programs tailored specifically to the available resources in that community. However, all included regular interaction with police officers in a variety of roles and activities. Three communities offered Police Academies. Police academies generally consisted of law enforcement classes and seminars offered on a regular basis. They included lectures, role-plays and demonstrations, military drills similar to what recruits at the adult Police Academy experience and field trips to police facilities. Lectures covered such topics as bicycle safety, gun safety, fire safety, and cultural diversity. Two programs offered after-school recreational programs that generally included athletic teams and other adventure activities.

One program offered a Police Explorers Scouts program. Explorer programs involved young men and women in police operations designed to interest them in law enforcement. Youth were expected to develop leadership skills and became familiar with basic law enforcement skills and procedures such as traffic control, arrest and search, bomb threat response, crime prevention, crime scene search, and white collar crime. Finally, police in four communities engaged youth in the development of youth councils. Police worked closely with youth in a variety of roles including planning sessions for field trips and community service projects.

Although the programs differed in terms of their program content, they all shared a number of common characteristics. The programs were open to any interested youth. All programs were expected to offer open, instrumental, and supportive relationships between youth and police. In addition, all programs were expected to offer a safe environment, challenging and stimulating activities, opportunities for youth to be involved in leadership and decision-making roles, and community or civic involvement. As was noted earlier, these characteristics have all been found to be associated with high quality youth development programs (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Gambone & Arbretton, 1997; Roth et al., 1998; Yohalem et al., 2004).

Evaluation Design

Youth leaders in each program were chosen by program staff and then trained as observer-reporters by the evaluation team to complete Project Activity Reports after each program meeting or activity. The Project Activity Reports documented attendance, the type of activity (planning meeting, field trip, training session, etc), purpose of the meeting, and a qualitative description of the activities that took place between police and youth. All sheets were signed by the youth observer and a staff member to document their agreement on the content provided.

The evaluation design also involved administering pre-test and post-test surveys to youth who were engaged in youth development activities in the participating communities. Each program was asked to include all youth who had participated in their program in the outcome portion of the evaluation.

The evaluation sought to answer the following questions:

1. Based upon the reports collected by youth observers, what kinds of activities and program components are most frequently offered in Police Working with Youth Programs? Are these activities and program components consistent with those deemed to be essential for successful youth development programs?

2. Do youth who participate in Police Working with Youth programs report improved attitudes toward police following completion of the programs?
3. Do youth who participate in Police Working with Youth programs report improved developmental outcomes following completion of the programs?
4. Are program implementation processes (program components) associated with positive youth outcomes?

Outcomes Included in the Evaluation

It was hypothesized that youth who participated in these programs would likely show changes in three general categories of outcomes (Sabatelli, Anderson, & LaMotte, 2005). These included youth personal adjustment, social competencies, and positive adult-youth connections. The specific outcomes included in the evaluation are described below according to each of these outcome categories.

Personal adjustment. It was hypothesized that Police Working with Youth programs would have a positive influence on participants' self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as, the belief in one's capacities to organize and execute the sources of action required to manage prospective situations (Bandura, 1997). It is a context-specific assessment of competence to perform a specific task or domain. This means that accurate assessments of self-efficacy must be based upon specific skills or skill sets. For this evaluation, one skill set that had been found in an earlier evaluation of Police Working with Youth programs to show positive change was included. This was self-regulatory efficacy, which was defined as the ability to resist negative peer pressures.

It was further hypothesized that youth working with police also would develop a greater sense of mastery or personal control over their environment. It was thought that focus on developing leadership, communication, and decision-making skills in the context of recreational, adventure, or other structured police training activities would naturally translate into an enhanced sense of personal control, or the capacity to manage the day-to-day stresses and strains encountered by youth. It also was anticipated that exposure to the skills emphasized in Police Working with Youth programs would enhance youth participants' feelings of self-adequacy and positive self-concept.

Social competencies. A social competency thought to be affected by Police Working with Youth programs was one's sense of social responsibility. Social responsibility involves a commitment to the community and the well-being of others. The emphasis in Police programs on service to others was evident in the community service projects that youth participated in and the skills training youth received in Police Explorer and Police Academy programs.

Adult-youth connections. The nature of Police Working with Youth programs is such that youth who become involved spend a good deal of time interacting with adults in a variety of experiences. It was hypothesized that, as a result, youth in these programs would develop supportive relationships with adults (staff) and perceive these adults as resources for dealing with social and emotional challenges.

Sample: Characteristics of Youth Participants

The participants in this evaluation were youth who completed a year-long Police Working with Youth program funded by the State of Connecticut, Office of Policy and Management between September 2004 and August 2005. Ten programs were evaluated and a total of 141 participating youth completed the pre-test and end-of-year assessment.

The sample was comprised of 84 males (59.6%) and 57 (40.4%) females. Their grade levels in school ranged from middle school through high school, with ninth grade being the average. Ninety-nine percent (n= 138) of the sample fell within grades seven through twelve. An additional 1.4% of the participants did not report their grade in school. The average age of participants was 14 years. Thirty percent (n= 42) of the youth reported an A grade point average in school and another 49% (n= 69) reported a B grade point average. Nineteen percent (n=26) reported a C average and 2% (n= 3) reported a D average in school. No participants reported an F grade point average. Only one participant did not report her GPA.

This sample was mainly Caucasian (56%). Among the remaining participants, 14% were African American, 15% were Hispanic/Latino, 3% were Asian, and 4% were American Indian. These statistics closely approximate population data on the State of Connecticut. Another 7% reported "other." In addition to these demographics, youth were asked to report their family status, or the caregivers living with them in the home. The majority (50% reported living with both their mother and father. About 26% reported living with their mother only, and another 13% reported living with their mother and stepfather. A little over 2% reported living with their father and stepmother. The remaining youth lived with other relatives (7%), foster parents (1%), or non-relatives (1.5%). One participant did not answer this question.

Measures

Self-regulatory efficacy. The 9-item Self-Regulatory Efficacy scale (sample items: "How well can you resist peer pressure to drink beer, wine, or liquor?" and "how well can you resist peer pressure to do things in school that can get you into trouble?") was derived from the Multidimensional Scales of Perceived Self-Efficacy (Bandura, 2001). The scale has been used extensively in research and has well-established reliability and validity. The scale was previously shown to have alpha reliabilities that ranged from .79 to .85 (Bandura, in press; Miller, Coombs, & Fuqua, 1999). Average alpha reliability (pre-test and post-test combined) in the present study was .88.

Mastery. Sense of mastery has been studied extensively in past research and found to be a strong predictor of one's ability to cope with stressful situations. The sense of mastery scale was developed by Pearlin and Schooler (1978) and is one of the most widely used measures of personal coping. It assesses one's sense of personal control over, or capacity to manage, stressful situations and events. In the present study, the scale averaged an alpha reliability of .75 over two administrations.

Feelings of adequacy. This scale measures an individual's feelings of adequacy or inadequacy in social settings. Adequacy was expected to be a more accurate measure of self concept than more global measures because it emphasizes specific social settings. A shortened 10-item version, derived from the original 20-item instrument, was used because it had been shown in previous research to be reliable and valid (Skolnick & Shaw, 1970). However, several items did not perform as well as expected in the present evaluation so an abbreviated five-item version was used in all data analyses. The resulting scale had an average alpha reliability of .72 in the present study.

Social and personal responsibility. The Social and Personal Responsibility Scale (Conrad & Hedin, 1981) measures the degree to which youth assume personal and social responsibility in a variety of settings. The scale includes five subscales that assess attitudes on social welfare, duty, personal competence, efficacy, and performance. It is designed for youth ages 12-18 (or

in grades 6-12). Only the total scale score, and not subscale scores, was used in the present evaluation. The alpha reliability for the total scale was reported by the scale developers to be .83. In the present study, the average alpha reliability was .87.

Perceived social support. The Scale of Perceived social support was developed by Canty-Mitchell and Zimet (2000). The scale measures individuals' perceptions of the amount of social support received from non-familial adults. In this instance, the items were focused on the Police and other adults who worked with youth in the Police Working with Youth Programs. The average alpha reliability over two administrations was .89 in this study.

Attitudes toward police. The pre-test and post-test survey administered to youth participants also included 10 items that asked specifically about attitudes toward the police. The items were derived from a community-wide survey originally conducted in New York City to determine residents' attitudes toward local police (Fine et al., 2003).

Results

Youth Observer Reports of Program Activities

An important goal of this evaluation was to gain a better understanding of the activities that youth participated in while attending Police Working with Youth Programs. As noted earlier, very few process studies have been conducted that actually document what goes on in youth development programs. Each program was expected to recruit youth who would serve as observers and complete regular reports on what had occurred in their programs. Observer reports were examined for commonalities and consistent themes across programs. The following activities were found to occur regularly in the Police programs that participated in the evaluation.

Planning meetings. All programs (100%) conducted planning meetings. Meetings were held with youth to discuss goals for the project year. Youth chose what activities they would be involved in and when they would occur. They then helped with organizing specific details of the upcoming events. For instance, youth helped plan future meetings, created "plans of action" to recruit other youth into the program, and helped select fund raising events and field trips.

Training sessions. Most (88%) of the programs offered training sessions. Training sessions generally included an orientation to the Police Working with Youth programs. The youth also received training (knowledge and skill building) in such areas as: learning how to conduct a meeting, effective communication skills, internet safety, public speaking, building team work, community safety, resources available in their communities, disabilities and diversity issues, drugs and alcohol, social skills, and dealing with stress.

Some of the programs provided specialized training focused on police work and the police profession. One town provided youth with a "crime-scene investigation" experience, where they learned to recognize specifics about their surroundings. Youth learned how to fingerprint and had the chance to fingerprint their peers. Youth were able to learn about detective work and working with K-9's in law enforcement. They also learned how to perform military drills, marching movements, salutes, and direct traffic.

Field trips. Most (75%) of the Police Working with Youth programs went on field trips. The field trips tended to fall into two categories: (1) Recreational: Ice skating, sleigh riding, bowling, rafting, hiking, hayrides, golf lessons, restaurants, and movies, and (2) Educational: Pequot

Museum, Mystic Aquarium, tour of historic Boston, tour of Police Stations and a trip to a youth prison, where youth learned first-hand how individuals their own age live while incarcerated.

Club events. All (100%) of the programs had special club events held specifically for participants. Many (63%) of the programs held festivities to celebrate holidays, such as Thanksgiving dinners, Christmas parties, pumpkin decorating, and a Valentine's Day dance. The Police Working with Youth programs sponsored other small celebrations such as a welcome home party for an officer who served in Iraq. Club events also included sports-related organized activities, such as relay races, volleyball games, and laser tag.

Community service activities. Many (63%) of the Police programs engaged youth in activities within their own communities that were intended to give participants a sense of ownership in their hometowns. These activities included cleaning up playgrounds, developing a teen reading area in the local library, giving input to a landscaping project in the center of town, holding a community picnic, and volunteering at booths in the local fair. Additionally, one town sponsored a late teen-night activity as a drug-free alternative activity for youth.

Meaningful involvement. In 63% of the programs, youth were provided a sense of ownership and affiliation in their particular "Police Working with Youth" groups. They planned activities, chose official logos, received special t-shirts, and assisted in the fitting and ordering of their own uniforms.

Youth engagement with police. Although a basic goal of the Police Working with Youth programs was to bring youth and police together in meaningful ways, it was noteworthy that many programs (63%) made a concerted effort to teach youth about police. Youth Participants were introduced to officers, including detectives, chiefs, and captains and provided "question and answer" sessions with police where they could learn about the profession and discuss misconceptions youth have about police. Opportunities to spend recreation time with officers to facilitate more positive relationships between youth and police were established. A primary emphasis in this regard was to teach youth participants new ways to communicate with police. The next section provides additional data on the outcome of these efforts.

Changes in Attitudes toward Police

An important goal of Police Working with Youth Programs was to enhance young peoples' perceptions about the police. To determine whether or not youth reported significant changes on any of the 10 items, t-tests for related samples were computed for each item individually. The results indicated that youth reported significant changes on four of the 10 items. The findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1*Average Scores on Each Item Pertaining to Youth's Attitudes toward the Police (N=68)*

Police in my community...	Pre-test	Post-test	t	Sig.
respect people like me	3.18	3.36	1.99	.05
are here to help protect people like me	3.42	3.45	.32	n/s
are more willing to threaten someone like me	3.34	3.32	-.14	n/s
sometimes will allow crimes to happen without stopping them	3.34	3.25	-.70	n/s
do their jobs well	3.28	3.43	1.49	n/s
enjoy being police officers	3.18	3.42	2.34	.05
unfairly use abusive language with some people	3.09	3.21	.89	n/s
I...				
feel comfortable when I see the police on the streets	3.10	3.39	2.26	.05
do not really think about the police I see on the streets	2.79	2.50	-2.36	.05
worry that the police I see on the streets will bother my friends or me	3.22	3.16	-.45	n/s

The above results suggest that youth felt more comfortable with, and respected by, the police as a result of their involvement in the Police Working with Youth Programs. Additional outcome results are presented in the next section.

Youth Outcome Results

This evaluation was designed to assess changes in participants who completed the year-long Police Working with Youth programs in 2005. Indicators of the youth development outcomes described earlier were administered to youth involved in the Police programs at the beginning and end of the project year. Statistical analyses, involving youth between the ages of 12 and 18, were conducted using repeated measures analysis with pre-test and post-test scores as the within subjects factor. Each outcome measure was examined separately. The repeated measures analyses on each outcome measure were repeated several times with a separate between subjects factor included each time. This was done so that subgroup differences among youth participants could be examined.

Several grouping factors were reduced to fewer categories than were originally present in the data in order to ensure relatively equal subgroup sizes for statistical power purposes. For instance, grade level was reduced to three groups that included: (1) grades 5, 6 and 7; (2) grades 8 and 9; and (3) grades 10, 11, and 12. In addition to the issue of equal groups, it was thought that these sub-groupings also represented differing developmental levels among youth. Grade point average was collapsed into three groups: (1) A-average, (2) B- average, and (3) C-average because 98% of the sample fell within these three categories. The race/ethnicity categories were also collapsed into two groups: (1) White and (2) African American and Hispanic Latino. Other racial/ethnic subgroups were excluded due to very small numbers. Again, this was done to ensure adequate subgroup sample sizes. Also, preliminary comparisons indicated that African American and Hispanic/ Latino youth did not differ statistically on any of the outcome measures included in the evaluation.

Self-regulatory efficacy. A significant two-way interaction was found between time and ethnic/racial group status [$F(2, 57) = 9.47; p < .001$]. African American and Hispanic/Latino

youth were significantly more likely to increase their scores on self-regulatory efficacy following completion of the program than were White youth. These results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Changes in Self-Regulatory Efficacy Scores Following Program Completion for Youth in Different Ethnic/Racial Groups

Ethnic/Racial Group	N	Pre-Test	Post-Test
White	47	51.74	50.21
African American & Hispanic/Latino	13	38.54	48.92

Another significant two-way interaction was found between time and grade level [$F(2, 64) = 7.93$; $p < .001$]. Youth in the lower grades were significantly more likely to improve their scores on self-regulatory efficacy following completion of the program than were youth in the higher grades (see Table 3).

Table 3

Changes in Self-Regulatory Efficacy Scores Following Program Completion for Youth in Different Grade Levels

Grade Level in School	N	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Grades 5-7	15	38.40	47.47
Grades 8-9	26	51.96	49.73
Grades 10-12	26	51.11	50.81

These results indicate that those most likely to improve their capacity to resist negative peer pressures following completion of the programs were younger (grades 5-7) and from minority (African American or Hispanic/Latino) backgrounds.

Sense of mastery. A significant two-way interaction was found between time and racial/ethnic background [$F(1, 53) = 4.95$; $p < .05$]. This indicated that African American and Hispanic/Latino youth were more likely to increase their scores on the sense of mastery measure following completion of the program. In contrast, White youth who completed the program remained essentially unchanged on this outcome (see Table 4). However, it should be noted that only 10 youth comprised the Latino/African American group.

Table 4

Changes in Sense of Mastery Scores Following Program Completion for Youth in Different Ethnic/Racial Groups

Ethnic/Racial Group	N	Pre-Test	Post-Test
White	45	22.82	22.67
African American & Hispanic/Latino	10	19.20	21.70

Social support from significant non-familial adults. A significant main effect for time [$F(1, 58) = 2.79$; $p < .05$] indicated that all youth, regardless of their gender, grade level, grade point

average, or ethnic/racial background, reported an increase in their mean scores. Average scores among all youth increased from 16.29 to 17.46 on the social support measure.

Social responsibility. A significant two-way interaction was found between time and average grades in school (GPA) [$F(2, 51) = 3.49$; $p < .05$]. An inspection of Table 5 indicates that participants who had a B-average in school improved slightly in the sense of social responsibility at the end of the program. However, the biggest change was among participants who reported having a C- average in school. This group reported the largest decline in their sense of social responsibility following completion of the program.

Table 5

Changes in Sense of Social Responsibility Scores Following Program Completion for Youth with Different Grade Point Averages

Overall Grade Point Average in School	N	Pre-Test	Post-Test
A	20	69.95	69.15
B	24	63.33	64.79
C	10	64.90	59.30

Characteristics of youth in lower grades or from minority ethnic/racial backgrounds. The findings that some groups of youth reported more positive change than others prompted some additional questions. Specifically, what other characteristics might describe those youth in lower grades or from minority ethnic/racial backgrounds who had reported the most change on several outcome measures? Chi square analyses were conducted to assess how youth in lower grades might differ from youth in higher grades and how minority youth might differ from White youth.

Youth in lower grades were significantly more likely to:

- (1) report being African American or Hispanic rather than White [$\chi^2(2) = 23.24$; $p < .001$],
- (2) live in an alternative family arrangement such as with mother-only or with father and step-mother rather than with two biological parents [$\chi^2, (10) = 17.98$; $p < .05$], and
- (3) have participated in the program for a longer period of time (1 to 2 years as opposed to 3 months) [$\chi^2(10) = 18.63$; $p < .05$].

African American or Hispanic/Latino youth were significantly more likely to:

- (1) be in the lower grades (5-7 rather than 8-9 or 10-12) [$\chi^2(2) = 24.79$; $p < .001$], or
- (2) have spent more time in the program than White youth (1 to 2 years versus 3 months) [$\chi^2(4) = 19.60$; $p < .001$].

It appears that the youth who were most likely to benefit from the Police programs shared several additional attributes in common. In addition to being younger (in lower grades at school) and having minority ethnic/racial backgrounds, they were also more likely to have spent more time in the program and lived in non-traditional family arrangements.

Core Program Components and Youth Outcomes

Regression analysis was utilized to test which program components from among the set of components identified earlier were significantly associated with youth outcomes. Program components were coded as 1= present or 0= not present in each police program. In order to

analyze these data, backward elimination was selected because we were interested in identifying the program components that accounted for the largest percentage of the variance in each of the outcome indicators after controlling for all other program components. Only the five components that had some variance (training, field trips, community service, meaningful involvement and youth engagement) were included. Planning meetings and club events were excluded because they were present in 100% of the programs. Pre-test and post-test change scores for each of the five outcomes were examined separately as the dependent variables.

The results indicated that meaningful involvement was a significant predictor of improvements in participants' levels of self-adequacy in social situations $F(1,49) = 4.18, p < .05$, accounting for 8% of the variance (Standardized beta = .28; $t = 2.05; p < .05$). Regression results for the participants' changes in self-regulatory efficacy (ability to resist peer pressures) were similar. Meaningful Involvement was the only noteworthy predictor $F(1, 50) = 2.90, p < .10$, accounting for 6% of the variance (Standardized beta = .23; $t = 1.70; p < .10$). However, given the imprecise measurement of the process measures of core program components in the study, these results should be considered only exploratory.

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from this evaluation of Police Working with Youth programs. The observational data provided by youth participant observers indicated that all Police Working with Youth Programs offered youth opportunities to engage in a variety of stimulating and interesting activities. These included structured planning meetings, club events, training sessions, and a variety of field trips. Many programs (63%) also provided opportunities for youth to become meaningfully involved in their programs through active engagement in program planning and decision-making. Stimulating activities and meaningful involvement are two of the core components proposed to be essential for successful youth development programs (Catalano et al., 2002; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Eccles et al., 2003; O'Donoghue et al., 2002; Roth et al., 1998; Walker et al., 2005).

Although previous formulations have included active participation in one's community as part of the definition of meaningful youth involvement (e.g., O'Donoghue et al., 2002; Tolman & Pittman, 2001), a distinction was made in this study between meaningful involvement within the program and meaningful involvement in the broader community through community service activities. This distinction between program and community involvement appears to have been supported by the data. Only 41% ($n=55$) of youth participated in programs that offered both community service and meaningful involvement opportunities. The rest were in programs that offered only one of the two components (23%, $n=30$) or neither component (36%, $n=48$), [$\chi^2(1) = 41.18; p < .001$]. Future research efforts might also wish to consider meaningful involvement within youth development programs as distinct from meaningful involvement in the broader community.

The outcome evaluation portion of the study demonstrated several important results. The entire sample of youth participants reported significant increases in the amount of social support they received from significant, non-familial adults. This is an important finding because supportive relationships with staff and other non-familial adults is another frequently identified characteristic of effective youth programs (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2004; Catalano et al., 2002; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Loder & Hirsch, 2003; Noam & Fiore, 2004; Rhodes, 2004; Roth et al., 1998).

Subgroups of youth, most notably minority youth and younger participants in lower grade levels, reported additional positive changes. Both of these subgroups reported positive changes in self-regulatory efficacy. Additionally, minority youth reported positive changes in their sense of mastery over stressful life situations. The capacity to resist negative peer pressures and to feel confident in managing difficult life situations are the types of personal coping resources and protective factors that have been found to promote healthy adolescent development (Benson, 2002; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Larson, 2000; McLaughlin, 2000).

Some results were notably different from the results obtained in an earlier evaluation of Police Working with Youth Programs that was completed in 2004. In the earlier evaluation, neither minority youth nor younger youth reported significant changes following completion of the programs compared to other youth. It is not clear what might account for this difference. It might be that these programs made concentrated efforts to tailor their programs to the needs of different subgroups. Alternatively, the findings might reflect differences in the samples of youth included in each evaluation. For instance, only four of the communities included in the current evaluation participated in the earlier one. In any event, it is important to highlight these differences because they suggest that different police programs are able to work successfully with different subgroups of youth.

The data also suggested that one subgroup of youth might not be responding well to the Police programs. Youth who reported doing more poorly in school, as indicated by lower grade point averages, showed decreased scores on the social responsibility outcome. That is, youth participants with lower grades in school showed a decline in their commitment to, and actions toward, helping the community and fostering the well-being of others following completion of the programs. Although the meaning of this single finding remains unclear, it suggests that programs may want to give some additional attention to assessing the needs of those individuals who enter the programs with less academic success.

The final set of analyses attempted to link the process and outcome data by examining the associations between core program components and participants' reported changes following completion of the Police programs. As was noted earlier, little evidence is available from previous research to indicate what program components or combination of components within effective youth programs are responsible for positive outcomes (Eccles, 2005; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Kahne et al., 2001; Lopez & McKnight, 2002; Scott-Little, Hamann, & Jurs, 2002). Meaningful involvement was the one core program component found to predict youth improvements in self-adequacy in social situations and self-regulatory efficacy (ability to resist peer pressures). This finding is consistent with the youth leadership literature that views young peoples' meaningful involvement in all aspects of program planning and implementation as an essential goal. Active participation in program planning, an authentic voice in decision-making, a sense of group membership, opportunities to influence the group's direction and accomplishing group-defined goal are hallmarks of youth leadership development programs (Boyd, 2001; MacNeil, 2006; Zeldin & Camino, 1999). However, given the imprecise nature of the process measures used to assess core program components in this study, these results should be considered exploratory and yet a fruitful area for further investigation.

Based upon the survey and observational data, it appears that the Police Working with Youth programs involved in this evaluation have incorporated many of the core components identified in prior research to be present in high quality youth programs. Feeling supported by staff, a sense of meaningful involvement, and engagement in stimulating and challenging activities are all important elements of effective youth programs.

As in any evaluation, the findings also raise additional questions. We still do not know what motivates youth to become involved in Police Working with Youth programs in the first place. Nor do we know what kinds of individuals are most likely to enroll, participate regularly, and complete the program. Furthermore, are there other characteristics, in addition to age and ethnicity that might differentiate those who do well in the program from those who do less well?

A more extensive process evaluation would be useful in addressing the questions posed above, such as who participates and why. Furthermore, additional efforts directed toward collecting attendance data on individual participants could address the question of whether regular (in contrast to infrequent) attendance improves youth outcomes. Finally, future efforts need to be directed toward developing research designs that allow for more compelling conclusions about the relationships between program implementation processes (program components) and youth outcomes.

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An Examination of Youth Voice via Quasi-Experimental Methodology

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An Examination of Youth Voice via Quasi-Experimental Methodology

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Abstract: The purpose of the study discussed was to determine if youth voice affects the ownership and engagement of youth in a county 4-H program. A youth-led approach was used with the treatment group to facilitate youth and adults sharing decision-making power. The comparison group utilized an adult-centered approach where decisions about the club programming were made strictly by the adults. A pre- and post-measurement design was used. Analysis of covariance was employed to determine if differences existed between youth participating in the treatment group and comparison groups and if differences existed between youth based on race. Findings indicated statistically significant differences between the treatment and comparison groups on all three constructs and statistically significant differences between Caucasian and non-Caucasian youth on the constructs of ownership and relationship with adults. It was concluded that, in programs incorporating voice, youth experience more ownership and engagement and have a more positive relationship with adults.

Introduction

Nonformal youth development programs provide a place for youth to develop life skills, to become involved in meaningful, challenging activities, and to develop positive relationships with peers and adults. Early indications of the benefits for youth whom are involved in these programs include a decrease in substance abuse and delinquency, an improvement in school performance, and an improvement in overall psychological and social development (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002; Simpkins, Ripke, Huston, & Eccles, 2005).

While researchers and practitioners have failed to agree upon a common definition of youth development, there is consensus that a wide range of approaches can lead to positive outcomes (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, & Foster, 1998). Recent research has focused on the importance of retaining youth in high-quality programs. A common challenge that is faced by practitioners is the high drop-out rate of youth in out-of-school time

programming. Increasingly, researchers are looking at the characteristics of successful programs to try to determine what factors lead to success (Little & Lauver, 2005). Why are some programs very successful at engaging youth while others seem to operate a "revolving door" program?

Many factors are being considered as part of the success equation. A key issue in youth development programs is the retention of youth in nonformal programs. Youth who do not maintain involvement cannot reap the benefits of participation. Common reasons that youth give for not participating include transportation and safety issues, boredom with the program, and time constraints associated with youths' desire to spend time with friends, work, and family supportive, and conducting care responsibilities (Little & Lauver, 2005).

Literature Review

Strategies abound for recruiting and retaining youth. The most familiar ones include program quality features such as providing a sense of safety and belonging, engaging staff who are committed and activities that are both age appropriate and challenging (Lauver & Little, 2005). The promotion of efforts to include youth in leadership and decision-making roles has grown in popularity over the last eight years. As the literature on this subject has evolved, words like "youth empowerment," "youth decision-making," and "youth voice" have become more prevalent. Studies of the supports and barriers to youth involvement in these roles frequently cite the importance of the adult's role in the program as well as the opportunities provided for youth to have a voice (Anderson-Butcher, 2005; Golombek, 2002; Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005; Pearson & Voke, 2003).

As the literature on youth development, youth-adult partnerships, youth engagement, and youth ownership have evolved, youth voice is repeatedly mentioned as an important factor in the development of engagement and ownership. Witt (personal communication, March 5, 2008) broadly defined youth voice as "the perception that one's opinions are heard and respected by others – particularly adults." The United Nations (1989) outlined children's rights to a voice in Article 12 of Convention on the Rights of the Child stating that if that child is capable of forming views then he or she has the right to express those views. The article goes on to state that these views should be taken into account in legal matters that pertain to the child. Lansdown (2001) clarified this to mean that all children are capable of articulating their views either through speech or other communication forms, and adults have a responsibility to provide the opportunity for this expression to occur.

Practitioners commonly cite voice as a best practice for youth programming, and researchers mention it as a contributor to ownership and engagement. For instance, Quinn (1999) and Mead (2003) observed that the inclusion of voice during the planning stages, as well as throughout the program, is a key best practice in youth development programs. Frank's (2006) review of literature included studies of youth participants in the field of community and environmental planning. Frank's (2006) research revealed the inclusion of increased youth voice and increased youth responsibility as commonly cited conditions for effective youth participation. In order for this to occur, a corresponding relinquishment of some of the adults' power was needed.

Cruz's (2004) case study of youth participating in a neighborhood planning and design club found that as a result of involvement, youth realized that their ideas were important and that they could make a difference when allowed to have a voice in the process. Although she does

not specifically name it "youth voice," Anderson-Butcher (2005) listed the practice of giving youth a say in how the program is planned and implemented as a means to encourage autonomy and independence in youth, and she named these as important indicators of retention. Jones (2004) frequently mentioned the level of voice as an essential factor in the type of relationship developed between youths and adults. He posited that youth voice was an important element in any relationship, regardless of whether it was adult-led or youth-led. In describing the principles and values that were the basis of effective youth-adult partnerships, Camino (2000) noted that youth wanted to have a say, wanted to be heard, and wanted to be treated as an equal partner. As pointed out in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, these are all elements of youth having a voice.

Purpose of Study

Youth development programs struggle with retaining youth in their programs, especially teenaged youth. Understanding what motivates youth to develop ownership, and to become more engaged in the program, is essential to the development of high-quality youth development programs that meet the needs of youth. Programs that cannot retain youth will not have an opportunity to impact youth. Youths' perceptions of their degree of voice play an important role in their decision to remain with (or depart from) a program. Because of the important role that adults play in facilitating the development of voice, understanding how youth perceive their interactions with adults would provide insight into strengths and weaknesses of the interactions that could be addressed through training programs for adults who work with youth. The research in the area of youth perceptions of voice in programs primarily targeting youth development is limited. This study provides an opportunity to better understand how youth experience the development of voice in a program specifically targeting youth developmental outcomes.

Method

Sample

During the 2005-2006 school year, 193 high school youth in a north Louisiana parish (county) participated in the in-school 4-H club program. Every high school student in the parish was offered the opportunity to join a local school 4-H club, and those who chose to join became local club members. One school club was purposefully selected to serve as the treatment group while the other three high school clubs served as the comparison group.

The treatment group consisted of a high school 4-H club whose population is made up of eighth through twelfth graders. During the 2005-2006 school year, there were 295 students registered at the school, and 53.9% of the student population was eligible for free or reduced price lunches. Of the 295 students in the school, 86 students chose to join the local 4-H club and thus were members of the treatment group. The comparison group consisted of the other three high school clubs in the parish. One of the high school 4-H clubs included an enrollment of seventh through twelfth graders, while the school population consisted of kindergarten through twelfth graders. There were 77 students registered at the school, and 64.94% of the students in K-12 qualified for free or reduced price lunches. The other two high school clubs in the comparison group consisted of ninth through twelfth graders. One school had an enrollment of 70 students, with 81.43% qualifying for free or reduced price lunches. The other school enrolled 91 students for the 2005-2006 school year, and 33% of those qualified for free or reduced price lunches. The student enrollment for the three schools comprising the comparison groups was 238 students, of which 107 chose to join their local 4-H club. In the comparison

group, an overall proportionalized average of 57.6% of the students qualified for free or reduced price lunches as compared to the 53.9% of students qualifying for free or reduced price lunches in the treatment group (A. Guarino, personal communication, January 23, 2006).

Procedure

The Louisiana 4-H program utilizes an in-school club setting as the predominant delivery mode for the educational component of the program. The 4-H club year began with a standard enrollment period for all county 4-H members during the month of September. The treatment group club program evolved within a semi-structured framework designed to allow the participants a voice in determining the tone and direction the club would take with an emphasis on creating a program that was youth-led.

During the first meeting, members were given examples of roles that youth were assuming in organizations: program planner, trainer, evaluator, conference planner, advisory committee member, funder, and youth advocate. Youth were challenged to brainstorm ideas in small groups for roles that their club could assume. Suggestions from the small group discussions were shared with the larger group. Members reviewed the list of ideas and voted to explore the possibility of providing more school-based activities in which youth could become involved, essentially assuming a program planning role. They again used small group discussions to brainstorm ideas for activities to propose. Lists were combined and results were evaluated by the large group. The group discussed next steps, including identifying keys to success and building administrative support. A survey of interests was developed by club members and administered to the school student body.

Following the survey, members researched the top three topics of interest to the student body and reported findings to the club. Youth members debated the pros and cons of the proposed activities, finally reaching consensus on their proposal which was then taken to the school principal. This iterative process provided a mechanism for youth to have a voice and to determine the structure of the club while pursuing a path that was both personally and collectively meaningful.

In the comparison group meetings, a traditional, adult-centered program was conducted. Youth conducted a short business meeting consisting of the recitation of the American and 4-H pledges and reports from the secretary and treasurer. Educational topics for each month's meeting were chosen and presented by the adult leader and included a hands-on activity for club members. Youth had no voice in planning the direction of the club program yet were actively encouraged to take part in the hands-on activities in the club.

Data Collection

The researcher collected data from youth in the treatment and comparison groups through pre-post surveys. A pretest was given to all youth in both the treatment and comparison groups in October 2005 to ascertain youths' perception of voice. The posttest was given in May of 2006.

Data Analysis

Demographics for youth in the treatment and comparison groups are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Youth Participants (N = 193), In Percents

Youth Characteristic	Treatment Group	Comparison Group
Gender		
Female	72.1	59.8
Male	27.9	40.2
Age		
12	0.0	0.9
13	8.3	2.8
14	20.2	18.7
15	22.6	24.3
16	27.4	20.6
17	13.1	27.1
18	7.1	5.6
19	1.2	0.0
Race		
Caucasian	67.4	81.3
Non-Caucasian	32.6	18.7
Number of Years in 4-H		
1	8.1	5.6
2	11.6	4.7
3	9.3	4.7
4	15.1	6.5
5	19.8	7.5
6	14.0	21.5
7	15.1	15.9
8	2.3	15.9
9	4.7	16.8
10	0.0	0.9
Number of Years in 4-H Junior Leader Club		
0	88.4	82.2
1	2.3	8.4
2	3.5	5.6
3	5.8	2.8
4	0.0	0.9

Youths' perceptions of engagement, ownership, and relationship with adults were measured using a researcher-developed instrument, the Youth Voice Survey. Analyses of covariance were conducted to compare the Youth Voice Survey sub-scale post-measurement summated scores for youth in the youth-led club with those of the youth in the adult-led club on the variables group and race. Responses for those youth who had missing or incomplete data were deleted from the analysis, resulting in the following usable responses: Model 1, Relationship with Adults (n=124; M = 23.51; SD = 4.422); Model 2, Engagement (n=120; M = 24.78; SD = 4.129); and Model 3, Ownership, (n=123; M = 13.38; SD = 3.074).

In order to determine which interval variables to use as covariates, a bivariate correlation was conducted between the post-measurement summated scores for each factor and the interval level demographic variables. Results indicated that Number of Years in Junior Leader Club was

the most significant demographic variable in each subscale using a .05 Alpha level on a two-tailed test of significance and was appropriate for use as a covariate. Additionally, pre-measurement summated scores were also utilized as a covariate. The decision to use these variables as covariates was supported by their entry into the regression model at significance. Further support for the validity of including Number of Years in Junior Leader Club as a covariate was provided by a reduction in the error terms when modeling the regression relationship.

Analyses of covariance were conducted using the post-measurement summated scores for each of the three subscales: Relationship with Adults; Engagement; and Ownership. For each subscale analysis, a Levene’s test of homogeneity of variances and a lack of fit test were examined. Results of these tests for each subscale were non-significant, indicating that variances were homogeneous for all three scales and that model fit was good for each of the three scales.

Analysis of covariance assumes that the slope of the regression relationship between the covariates and the response is the same for all factor levels (Freund & Wilson, 2003; Kutner, Nachtsheim, Neter, & Li, 2005). In order to test this assumption, the full model for each subscale was analyzed including main effects and interactions. These analyses utilized type one sums of squares. The tested interaction terms for each subscale included each of the following: Group * Pretest Summated Scores; Group * Junior Leader Years, Race * Pretest Summated Scores; and Race * Junior Leader Years (See Table 2).

Table 2
Interaction Terms F Statistics and Significance Levels

	Group * Pretest Summated Scores	Group * Junior Leader Years	Race * Pretest Summated Scores	Race * Junior Leader Years
Relationship with Adults Subscale				
F	1.583	.120	2.678	2.417
p	.211	.730	.104	.123
Engagement Subscale				
F	1.219	2.688	.003	.402
p	.272	.104	.955	.527
Ownership Subscale				
F	.698	.029	.901	1.389
p	.405	.865	.345	.241

In each model, none of the interaction terms were significant, thus confirming the assumption that the slope of the regression relationships between the covariates and the response were the same for all factor levels. Therefore, the interaction terms were deleted from the model and only the main effects were analyzed.

Main effects for the independent variables, group and race, were tested for each of the subscales (See Table 3). For the Relationship with Adults subscale, both independent variables were significant, although an R squared value of .216 (and an adjusted R squared value of .190) were returned for this model indicating that a substantial amount of variance was still

unexplained. Partial Eta squared was used to determine the effect size of the model. An effect size of .216 was returned, indicating a low effect size (Sheskin, 2004).

Analysis for the Engagement subscale indicated that the independent variable, group, was significant (See Table 3). An R squared value of .266 (and an adjusted R squared value of .240) were returned for this model, indicating that a substantial amount of variance was still unexplained by the model. An effect size of .266, based on Partial Eta squared, indicated a low effect size (Sheskin, 2004).

In analysis of the final subscale, Ownership, both independent variables, group and race, were significant (See Table 3). An R squared value of .339 (and an adjusted R squared value of .317) were returned for the model, indicating that a substantial amount of variance was still unexplained by the model. Partial Eta squared was used to assess effect size, with .339 denoting a low effect size (Sheskin, 2004).

Table 3

Analysis of Covariance of POST Measurements of Perception of Youth Voice Using Subscale Summated Scores Controlling for PRE Measurements of Perceptions of Youth Voice Using Subscale Summated Scores and for Number of Years in Junior Leader Club

	Relationship with Adults Subscale	Engagement Subscale	Ownership Subscale
Group			
df	1	1	1
Mean Square	93.959	95.923	52.699
F	5.932	7.406	8.165
p	.016	.008	.005
Partial Eta ²	.047	.061	.065
Race			
df	1	1	1
Mean Square	68.611	27.465	101.070
F	4.332	2.121	15.659
p	.040	.148	<.001
Partial Eta ²	.035	.018	.117
Pretest			
df	1	1	1
Mean Square	244.174	243.202	91.532
F	15.417	18.777	14.181
p	<.001	<.001	<.001
Partial Eta ²	.115	.140	.107
Junior Leader Years			
df	1	1	1
Mean Square	113.487	172.294	146.107
F	7.165	13.303	22.636
p	.008	<.001	<.001
Partial Eta ²	.057	.104	.161
Error			
df	119	115	118
Mean Square	15.838	12.952	6.455
Total			
df	123	119	122

Implications and Recommendations

In each subscale- Relationship with Adults, Engagement, and Ownership- analysis of the results for the independent variable (group) indicated statistically significant differences between the treatment group, which utilized a youth-led model characterized by high levels of youth voice, and the comparison group, which employed an adult-centered leadership model (See Table 4). This suggests that youth in the treatment group felt that they had a more equal relationship with adults than did those youth in the comparison group. Results for the Engagement and Ownership subscales indicate that having a voice increased treatment group youths' perceptions that their participation in the meetings was more important to the functioning of the club, and that they held more power and control in the club than the comparison group youth did (See Table 4).

Table 4
Subscale Adjusted Group Means by Group

Subscale	Treatment Group Adjusted M	Comparison Group Adjusted M
Relationship with Adults	24.12	22.67
Engagement	25.26	24.16
Ownership	13.66	12.52

Previous research has pointed to the idea that the relationship between youth and adults is an important factor in the development of engagement and ownership. This research supports that suggestion. An implication of this study is that the training of youth professionals and volunteers in the program is a key factor to successfully implementing programming in which youth have a voice. This is supported in studies by Kirshner, O'Donoghue, and McLaughlin (2005), Mitra (2004), and O'Neill and Barton (2005), who found that the relationship between youth and adults was an important factor in youth developing ownership and taking responsibility for the program. An additional implication of this study is that giving youth voice in developing programs of which they are a part is one way to address the problem of decreasing program participation for older youth.

Analysis of the results for the independent variable (race) indicated that Caucasian youth were more likely to feel equal to adults than non-Caucasian youth were. Interestingly enough, there was no statistically significant difference between Caucasian and non-Caucasian youth on the Engagement subscale, which looked at youths' feelings that their participation in meetings was essential to club function. Yet there was a statistically significant difference between Caucasian and non-Caucasian youth on the Ownership subscale, which measured youths' perceptions of power and control. This finding is similar to what Silva (2002) observed where, over time, participation lagged with those remaining students exhibiting self-confidence and ownership and high levels of engagement. This implies that there is a lack of understanding of how non-Caucasian youth internalize the opportunity to have voice, and implies a need to look at different support systems which may be necessary for non-Caucasian youth to have voice.

Conclusion

The issue of power is a common theme in many studies (Anderson-Butcher, 2005; Calvert, 2004; Kellett et al., 2004; Kirshner, 2003; Prilleltensky, Nelson, and Peirson, 2001; Royce, 2004; Valaitis, 2002; Vallerand, 2001), and is a topic that must be addressed via training for

adults working with youth. The basic theme that adults are not giving up all of the power to youth, but are instead sharing the power equally with youth, should be a guiding tenet embedded in training. A recommendation is made to provide adults with training in ways to balance youth ownership with adult ownership of the program. Furthermore, the thought that increased engagement and ownership might lead to retention of youth points to the need for attendance records by individual. These records could be used as a tracking mechanism to determine if increasing youths' perceptions of ownership and engagement does in fact lead to retention of youth in the program.

The findings of this study indicate that giving youth voice in the program results in increased feelings of engagement and ownership. Additionally, youth feel a closer connection to adults in the program because of the trust that is built when decision-making power is shared. Participation in youth development programs is predicated on the idea that engagement is an essential component of the process if the best outcomes are to be attained for youth. As youth become more engaged in the program, their feelings of responsibility for (and ownership of) the program increase.

Youth development literature describes youth voice as an important component of engaging youth and building ownership. This study explored the connection between youth voice and ownership, and engagement thus providing a better understanding of the concept of youth voice and its contribution to ownership and engagement. It speaks explicitly to the need for clubs that are managed with intentional inclusion of youth voice, and the need for training volunteers to prepare them for their role in facilitating youth voice and the dynamics of power inherent in this process. While the statistical interpretation of effect sizes [as suggested by Sheskin (2004)] indicated a low effect, this study is one of the first to look at youth voice as it relates to youths' perceptions of ownership and engagement using a quasi-experimental methodology. Additional research is needed to better understand this phenomenon.

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Employers Can Do Youth Development Too

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Abstract: Professionals and volunteers who care about the welfare of young people know the importance of caring adults. The field has worked with all types of adults, including parents, teachers, and youth workers to enhance their understanding of youth development philosophy, approaches and practices. However, we've virtually ignored an entire sector of adults who play a major role in the lives of young people—employers. Given the large number of youth in the workforce, and understanding the critical role of caring adults, the question becomes, "how do we focus attention on preparing employers and other workplace adults to be more thoughtful and intentional about their interactions with young people?" The objective of this paper is to lay out the relevant issues and to begin the dialogue about building the capacity of employers to better support the development of our young people.

Introduction

Professionals who care about the welfare of young people know the importance of caring adults who support and nurture positive development of our youth. Armed with this understanding, the field has worked with all types of adults, including parents, teachers, and youth workers to enhance their understanding of youth development philosophy, approaches and practices. However, we've virtually ignored an entire sector of adults who play a major role in the lives of young people, mainly employers.

Unlike other developed countries where young people are expected to concentrate their energies on school, in the United States, it is almost an expectation that youth will both attend school and be employed (Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986). While the number of young people working in paid jobs outside the home varies depending on how investigators collected the information, one study found that four out of five ninth graders had held a steady job at some point in their lives (Mortimer, 2003). The US Department of Labor (2000) reports that more than one in four sixteen year olds, and more than one in three seventeen year olds are in the labor force at any given time.

Given the large number of youth in the workforce, and understanding the critical role of caring adults, the question becomes, “how do we focus attention on preparing employers and other workplace adults to be more thoughtful and intentional about their interactions with young people?” The objective of this paper is to lay out the relevant issues and to begin the dialogue about building the capacity of employers to better support the development of our young people.

Youth employment by the numbers

In the Youth Development Study (Mortimer, 2003) conducted by Jeylan Mortimer, 82.5% of ninth graders reported ever having a steady job—steady job being defined as paid work outside the home at least weekly. Most of these youth (57%) reported steady work at age 12 or even younger. Typical jobs at this age included mowing lawns, babysitting and shoveling snow for neighbors and friends as well as paper routes. More youth reported steady work as they became older. Only 6% of youth reported never working during the ten year study.

While employment status and hours of work per week varied throughout a young person’s school years, Mortimer found the following work patterns throughout the high school years:

	Grade 9		Grade 10		Grade 11		Grade 12	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
N	160	302	163	242	220	295	228	326
% employed	40%	63%	42%	52%	53%	63%	58%	70%
Distribution of hours worked/wk								
1-10	61.9	61.3	21.5	32.6	13.2	20.3	15.4	12.9
11-18	19.4	19.9	25.8	34.3	28.2	29.8	21.1	31.9
19-20	5.6	8.6	12.9	12.4	11.8	14.2	20.2	18.1
21-25	5.6	5.0	14.1	7.9	13.6	18.3	12.7	19.3
26-30	2.5	3.0	11.0	9.1	14.5	12.2	14.0	10.7
31-40	3.8	1.3	12.9	2.9	16.4	3.7	12.7	5.8
>40	1.3	1.0	1.8	0.8	2.3	1.4	2.1	1.4

The US Department of Labor (2000) reports that 9% of fifteen year olds were employed in an average month. By contrast, 26% of sixteen year olds and 39% of seventeen year olds were considered employed by DOL standards—worked at least one hour the previous week or who worked for a family business for no pay. This differs significantly from Mortimer’s findings primarily because Mortimer asked whether the youth “ever had a steady job outside the home,” while Department of Labor only counted employment status one week prior to the study week.

By any measure, however, many youth are employed and with varying results. In the best situations, young people develop meaningful skills, relationships and a better sense of themselves. In less desirable situations, part-time jobs may actually be harmful to youth.

Impact of Youth Employment

Researchers continue to debate the impact of youth employment. In *When Teenagers Work*, Ellen Greenberger and Laurence Steinberg (1986) note the generally negative outcomes of teenagers in the workplace. In exploring some of the stereotypical benefits of working, including perceived increases in a sense of responsibility, positive attitudes towards work, learning work skills, and decreases in deviant behaviors, the authors found the following:

- **Responsibility:** Little evidence exists that would indicate an increase in the level of personal or social responsibility.
- **Learning in the workplace:** Very little time is spent by teens using academic skills (reading, writing, or computation) in the typical workplace.
- **Deviance:** The authors note that, "it is an article of faith...that working should deter youth from crime and delinquency. And faith is usually slow to succumb to facts." According to their research, work exposure does not diminish a prior tendency toward delinquency. In fact, for middle class youth, work lead to a more significant association with the frequency of using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs. These researchers note that the more hours youth work per week, the more likely they are to use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs; to be violent or to struggle in school. Theft, materialism, cynicism and acceptance of unethical practices were also noted as potential negative outcomes of teen employment.

These researchers also make a case against work for the "opportunity costs." That is, if youth are working, they might be giving up some other developmental opportunities, which would create a developmental cost to the youth in lost opportunities. In other words, an employed youth cannot take part in as many sports, clubs, social and family activities. Those developmental opportunities, if not lost, at least suffer. Work may preclude kids from being involved as they should in school, family and community.

The Youth Development Study conducted by Mortimer shows a slightly more positive picture of youth and work. Mortimer started with 1,000 St. Paul, MN ninth graders in 1988 and followed them with interviews and surveys for 10 years until they were in their mid-twenties. Using the data, she categorized the youth into four types of workers (see Table below).

	Low intensity (20 or less Hrs./Wk)	High Intensity (More than 20 Hrs. /Wk.)
High Duration (employed most months of the study period)	Steady workers. They tended to be continuously employed but restricted their hours. 24.9% of kids	Most Invested workers were employed most of the time and worked longer hours. 26% of kids
Low Duration (Employed less than 1/2 the months of the study.)	Occasional workers were rarely employed and had few hours when they were. 23.7% of kids	Sporadic workers worked long hours but irregularly. 18.4% of kids

When looking at a variety of outcomes for youth in these categories, she found that those youth that, during the study, showed signs of delinquent behavior were also found to be disengaged from school and school disengagement was found to be a predictor of hours worked. Put another way, those most engaged in work had not found ways to be meaningfully engaged in other parts of their lives and may have been using employment to have important needs met.

Mortimer's conclusions differ significantly from Steinberg's and Greenberger's in that Mortimer shows that youth find time to do what's important to them. She found that when teens worked a limited number of hours (less than 20 per week) that they still participated in extracurricular and community activities at the same rate as non-employed youth. However there was a decrease in the amount of time spent on household chores. There was also a pronounced

decrease in television viewing and other sedentary activities. Time spent on extracurricular activities and volunteer work stayed the same. In fact, for youth in grades 11-12, workers tend to spend more time on homework than do non-workers.

Knowing that work during middle and high school often does not result in positive consequences for young people, and may even have many negative consequences, what is the solution? We know that youth work for many different reasons. Focusing on telling young people not to work is likely not a realistic strategy. But, the field can advocate for a kind of workplace that resembles a positive developmental learning opportunity for our young people. What would happen if we created a work environment, where employers act as the caring adults who are thoughtful and intentional about their interactions with young people?

Workplace as a Quality Youth Development Opportunity

In the youth development field, we understand that programs for youth have potential long-term payoffs. In *Finding Out What Matters for Youth* (Gambone, Klem & Connell, 2002) the researchers documented the link between these long-term payoffs and the supports and opportunities adults had in childhood and adolescence. As youth involve themselves in quality programs, they build relationships with peers and adults, learn skills, gain knowledge and perhaps explore potential community roles. These types of positive experiences often lead to young adults who were economically self-sufficient, had stable family lives and were active in their communities.

We have assumed that youth work is done by youth workers and business people, who employ many of the same youth, are in the business of, well..., business. And the purpose of any business is to make a profit for the owners or shareholders. Businesses that fail to make a profit cease to exist. The purpose of youth serving organizations is to "help youth deal successfully with the challenges of adolescence and prepare them for the independence and responsibilities of being parents, workers, and citizens, by attempting to help youth develop competencies (National Youth Development Information website)."

However, the conclusions drawn by Gambone, Klem, and Connell are not exclusive to youth programs. The researchers state the importance of communities finding ways for youth to have key needs met. Any way that youth find to have these needs met can lead to positive long-term benefits. While there are obvious differences between youth workers and youth employers, there certainly seems to be room for crossover in terms of meeting youth needs. The purpose of this paper is to propose the possibility that important youth needs can be met in work environments as well as in youth programs and to suggest ways to improve work environments for the developmental benefits of young people.

Youth Organizations Work through Employment

The use of employment as a tool for youth work is not a new idea. For some youth serving organizations, employment is both their means and their mission. They use employment to meet the needs of young people and in doing so provide employment opportunities.

Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles, started by Father Gregory Boyle, uses employment opportunities to help young people stay out of or break out of gang life. Homeboy Bakery, Homeboy Screen Printing and Homeboy Tattoo Removal employ young people and in the process provide an economic lift to a depressed part of the city. The youth themselves, having

turned their backs on gang life, find they can have their needs for relationships, belonging, and recognition met in other ways.

In the similarly depressed but very small town (less than 600 population) of Rothsay, MN the school owns the town's only convenience store, hardware store and lumberyard. The school uses these businesses as part of its business education program. Another group of students in an industrial arts program, using materials from the school-owned lumber yard, build a house each year that is sold to the public.

These programs and many others like them use work to bring about long-term youth outcomes. But these are first and foremost youth development programs and the people who lead them have as their primary interest the young people themselves with a secondary interest in profit. What is the role of profit oriented businesses in youth development?

The Workplace as an Arena for Positive Youth Development

After moving into a new community and inquiring about key people that impact the area's youth one business man's name, Walt Gislason, kept coming up along with the names of coaches, 4-H leaders, youth ministers and other typical youth workers. This filling station owner, Walt Gislason, was the beginning of my interest in employers and their role in youth development. Among Mr. Gislason's employees are students from alternative learning centers and community corrections, and without exception they are outstanding customer service representatives. His work is proof that paying attention to youth needs works for all youth not just the best and the brightest. Others interviewed included the manager of a department store, an electrical company trainer, a grocery store owner and a partner in a family owned meat market. These were recommended by other employers and youth workers. Comments from most of them are included in the following section as most were doing things that would be recognized as good youth development practices. It should be noted that only two of the businesses seemed at all intentional about achieving positive youth outcomes. Another business was not noted at all in the comments due to lack of evidence of any positive youth development practices.

Gisela Konopka (1973) and later, Karen Pittman (1991) identified eight critical elements essential to healthy development in young people. Employers can help young people have these needs met and at the same time build commitment of young people for the business. Walt Gislason is unfamiliar with Konopka and Pittman but he intuitively works to have these needs met in his employees. He says, "None of this is a secret but none of it happens by accident."

Following are these eight key elements (Center for 4-H Youth Development, 1996), points for employers to consider and quotes and notes from interviews with employers about their work with youth.

1. Youth feel a sense of safety and structure. Put procedures in place that keep employees safe and assure that safety procedures are covered in training.

- Consider emotional as well as physical safety. Prevent bullying, racial slurs, sexual or other forms of harassment and deal with them when they occur.
- Involve youth in determining and setting job expectations.
- Empower youth to point out safety issues. Reward them for doing so.
- Ensure that everybody is aware of emergency procedures.

"Whenever there is an accident I wonder if I could have done more... Training for employees who work with youth is the first line of prevention."
Electric Company Trainer

2. Youth need to experience active participation, group membership and belonging.

Everybody wants to belong. Building a workplace where young people feel they play a important roles will build commitment to the business.

- Be intentional about how youth will be involved in decision making. Plan for it.
- Involve youth in staff meetings. Ask for their input.
- Confront cliques and behaviors that exclude some of the group.
- Consider dress codes, uniforms, and name tags to build a team image.

"We hold contests in the store on things like signing up charge card applicants, and care plan contracts." Contributions are recognized in planned and in spontaneous ways.

Department Store Manager

One employer holds regular employee meetings where the importance of customer service is impressed on employees. "I ask how they individually impressed a customer. When one starts, others always join in." It seems to me this might be similar to what happens in opening ceremonies of various organizations that serve to bind a group and signal belonging.

3. Develop self-worth through meaningful contributions. Young people will feel free to contribute if they feel their contributions are accepted, acknowledged and appreciated.

- Ask for input from youth in solving problems.
- Reward creativity, innovation and initiative.
- Train employees to conduct employee meetings.

"Break rooms are arranged to be comfortable and welcoming. Experienced associates are encouraged to sit and visit with new staff. During daily meetings, we do a person by person check-in to get input and deal with problems before the store opens."

Department Store Manager

4. Experiment to discover self, gain independence and control over one's life. Youth are encouraged to try new things and learn about themselves. As a result they discover and practice their interest and skills, test their independence and take control of their lives.

- Help youth find what they are good at in your business.
- Rotate them among different jobs to help them find their niche.
- Give youth increasing amounts of responsibility and independence as they prove themselves.

"If the employee agrees that his behavior is problematic, then I put it back on him for suggestions. (If you were me and I was you what would you have me do?) We agree on some solutions and on a time to visit again."

Filling Station Owner

5. Develop significant positive relationships with peers and at least one adult. Youth with positive relationships tend to do better in all areas of their lives.

- Youth should not work alone for long periods of time.
- Make sure they have opportunities on every shift to interact with other youth and with adults.
- Mentor them and encourage other adult employees to act as mentors. Take opportunities to work one-on-one with each teen employee.

"Nobody works alone!"

Meat Shop Owner

"Occasionally we come across a journeyman who is a good electrician but a poor teacher or a poor role-model. In such cases we limit the amount of time any one apprentice spends with that individual."

Electric Company Trainer

6. Discuss conflicting values and form their own. Work can be a place to experience and talk about values and topics that are important to them.

- Demonstrate a high value on promoting acceptance for all. Know that employees come from different backgrounds and come to work with different values and beliefs.
- Make opportunities to build positive values in the workplace.
- Be aware of your own values and beliefs.

"Several years ago the store received a shipment of t-shirts with vulgar sayings. As a group, sales associates decided they did not want them in the store and I had them returned."

Department Store Manager

"When I noticed one of my kids smoking off the job I called the boy's mother to tell her about what a valued employee her son was. I also mentioned that I had noticed him smoking one day and that this bothered me. I also took the boy aside and told him what I had seen and that 'this kind of behavior is below your standard.'"

Filling Station Owner

One employer was unsure what I meant by "values" and had difficulty thinking of anything he did in his business that would help youth in this area. However, before I left the store he led me to a display case with pictures of troops in Afghanistan to whom the business had sent product. Letters from the troops were also displayed. He hadn't given a thought to how this simple activity might build values.

7. Feel pride of competence and mastery. Young people want to know that they are doing good work and appreciate increasing levels of trust.

- Institute a step program for employees that allows for increasing levels of responsibility.
- Call employees by name.

- Let parents know their son or daughter is a valued part of your business.

"Contributions are recognized in planned and in spontaneous ways. When I get a call from a customer about great service I just walk onto the floor and make an announcement."

Department Store Manager

There are binders full of compliments from customers. "When a card is received noting good service, the employees involved are recognized. In training, employees are told it is their job to get into the book."

Filling Station Owner

8. Expand their capacity to enjoy life and know that success is possible. Make work an opportunity for young employees to enjoy life. Help them grow from successes and failures.

- Help employees see how their contributions have made a difference to the business.
- Celebrate both successes and failures.
- Help employees see when it is time to move on and help them do so. Make yourself available to write reference letters.

"I had an employee who took a job... (in a community 15 miles away). He came back to work days before starting the new job because he didn't have any way to get there. I took him to a car dealership and to the bank to help him deal on a car and get a loan."

Filling Station Owner

Conclusion

Youth may take a job for money but they are more likely to keep the job if it helps them fulfill other needs. Youth development is not the primary concern of employers, especially business people who have to make a profit. But paying attention to youth needs seems to be something employers can do to keep their employees interested and that positively affects the bottom line.

In the employer-employee relationship almost exclusive emphasis has been placed on preparing youth employees for work. In doing so an assumption is made that it is youth who are lacking the skills necessary to make the relationship work and to some extent this is the case. Young people new to the workplace may need assistance. If they are in doubt of the importance of showing up on time and working the entire shift then they need to learn how important this is to employers. Some young people have learned to take a nonchalant attitude toward their school work doing no more than is required to get by—and they get by. At some point they need to understand that doing just enough to get by will not serve them well in the workplace. Due to their lack of experience they may not be aware how important these things are to supervisors, managers and business owners. A Chamber of Commerce director noted many frustrations his members have with youth even from the time applicants try to fill out a basic application.

Sometimes young workers do all that is asked of them and they still have a poor employment experience. One young person was told by her coworkers in a fast food restaurant that "you'll learn to hate it here but we all get used to it." When another youth was asked why she did not

apply at a nearby, upscale supper club she remarked, “No way! They treat kids like shit at that place!” (There was clearly some talk among friends at school and the word was out about that place of business.) One young person talked about driving to work through a blizzard only to find the business closed. There was a definite safety issue as the restaurant made no attempt to contact its employees about the weather related closing.

Problems with bringing youth into the workforce with positive results clearly do not rest only on the youth themselves. A piece that is often lacking is preparation of the employers and other workplace adults who have contact with our youth. Youth workers, adults who have devoted their lives to working with youth in programs, understand the importance of professional development. They may belong to professional associations, attend conferences, read or simply talk among themselves to stay current in the field. Interviews with employers indicate they have no way of staying current in their work with youth. In fact, none had given a thought to this as being important—and with predictable results. Even so, some employers do quality youth development in the context of doing business. However, it is too often a fortuitous combination of personality and luck that allows business people to connect with their youth employees in meaningful ways.

Questions and challenges for the future of youth development and employment:

- Youth development training for employers has been lightly attended. How do we create interest among employers to do youth development as part of their business? What encouragement can be given to seek training in this area?
- Not all employers are created equal and some employment situations are most certainly harmful to the development of young people. How do we measure quality in employment? How and at what point does the scale tip from positive to negative? How do we help youth and their parents distinguish between positive and negative employment experiences?
- In “Learning Well at Work” (Hamilton & Hamilton, 1997) the researchers discuss the many benefits of a close link between school and part-time work. However, past efforts to formalize those links have not been well received. How do we create intentional learning opportunities in communities including opportunities linked to schools?

According to Stephen Hamilton (1990), the student graduating from high school with a 4-point GPA and the one graduating with a 2-point GPA have basically the same shot at successful and well paying careers. The kind of performance learned in school is different from the performance required in the workplace so any graduate able to learn what the workplace requires can achieve. Therefore, those businesses and youth development organizations that help young people learn to navigate the adult world of work are extremely important. And that brings us back to the importance of employers filling important roles for young people in communities. Given today’s economic reality, more youth development programs are falling by the wayside. Where programs have been lost employers may play an even more important role in the development of our youth especially for youth who have not found other meaningful ways to link with the community.

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Community Interactive Processes and Rural Adolescents' Educational Achievement: Investigating the Mediating Effects of Delinquency and Self-Esteem

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Community Interactive Processes and Rural Adolescents' Educational Achievement: Investigating the Mediating Effects of Delinquency and Self-Esteem

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Abstract: The study reported in this paper examines the effects of community interactive processes on rural adolescents' educational achievement. Specifically, the paper explored the direct effects of community interactive processes on rural adolescents' educational achievement and the indirect effects via self-esteem and delinquency. The method of structural equation modeling was used to analyze data from a nationally representative panel study of rural adolescent boys and girls in 10th grade through 12th grade. The results make a compelling case that communities are conduits for boosting self-esteem, facilitating normative behaviors and academic performance in rural adolescents.

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

There is an ancient traditional African proverb that "it takes a village to raise a child." This proverb highlights the belief of community researchers and youth development personnel that academically and behaviorally successful and self-confident youngsters are not only the products of strong families, but, also, the products of nurturing and supportive communities and neighborhoods (Coleman, 1988; Israel & Beaulieu, 2004). Nowhere in America does this proverb hold more firm than in rural communities. Rural communities are characterized by unique social environments and social interactive processes that foster the formation and sustainability of effective social or communal networks (Crockett, Shanahan & Jackson-Newsome, 2000). Strong communal networks in-turn, facilitate the positive development and well being of children and adolescents (Israel & Beaulieu, 2004).

Indeed, research has shown that compared to their urban counterparts, rural adolescents are characterized by a stronger sense of family and community, and the importance of connectedness and personal relationships (Bajema, Miller & Williams, 2002; Burnell, 2003).

Similarly, rural youth are more likely to be involved and committed to religious and other youth associations such as the 4-H and the National FFA organization (Chan & Elder, 2001).

Rural researchers (e.g., Israel & Beaulieu, 2004; Israel, Beaulieu & Hartless, 2001) have demonstrated that the strong interpersonal relationships and positive community interactive processes existing in rural communities are conduits for promoting positive youth development. With particular regard to academic achievement as an indicator of positive youth development, research has shown a positive link between community interactive processes and rural adolescents' academic achievement (Israel et al., 2001).

For example, social capital theorists (e.g., Coleman, 1988; Israel & Beaulieu, 2004; Putnam, 2000) view the interactive processes in rural communities as social capital resources that facilitate and enhance rural adolescents' educational outcomes. That is, adolescents' and their families' integration into the rural community (e.g., monitoring of students' activities by non-family adult members of the community, participation in religious organizations and attendance at religious activities, participation in community activities, and, other forms of shared feelings of belonging) constitute social capital resources that facilitate rural adolescents' cognitive and behavioral development and well being (Coleman, 1988; Lin, 1999; Oorschot, Arts & Glissen, 2006; Smith, Beaulieu & Seraphine, 1995).

While much has been documented regarding the positive effects of community interactive processes on rural adolescents' educational outcomes, a notable limitation in extant studies is that little is known about the mechanisms through which community interactive processes affect rural adolescents' educational outcomes. That is, there is paucity of research on factors that mediate the effects of community interactive processes on educational achievement. In most of the available studies (e.g., Smith et al., 1995) the relationship between community interactive processes and rural adolescents' educational achievement are conceived as direct. However, there is the possibility that community interactive processes act through other factors in order to influence rural adolescents' educational achievement. Therefore, the effect might be indirect, or a combination of both direct and indirect influences.

A possible process by which community interactive processes may influence educational achievement is via their (interactive processes) potency in enhancing positive self-concept and inhibiting delinquent or non-normative behavior in adolescents (McNeal, 1999; Newman, 2004; Parcel & Menaghan, 1993). However, these links have not been fully explored in educational and youth development research.

Given the observed limitation or gap in extant studies, the present study aims to investigate the mediating effects of self-esteem and delinquency on the relationship between community interactive processes and rural adolescents' educational achievement. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide further understanding and insight into delinquency and self-esteem as behavioral variables that may constitute sources of resilience for rural adolescents. Also, an understanding of self-esteem and delinquency as processes through which community interactive processes may influence rural adolescents' educational achievement and guide rural youth counselors and youth development personnel who focus on strategies of enhancing educational achievement.

Literature Review

Community interactive processes and rural adolescents' educational achievement

Community interactive processes are the interactions taking place among members of a local community or neighborhood. These include family-community interactions, participation in community activities, neighbor-neighbor interactions, attendance at religious programs and other nurturing activities of communities, and the efforts of the community members in restraining improper behavior in young people (Israel et al., 2001; Smith et al., 1995).

Community interactive processes have been conceptualized differently in literature. For instance, Oorschot et al. (2006) contend that community interactive processes consist of three distinct but interrelated elements. First, social networks which refers to the links or connections an individual and his/her family have with other members of the local community, for example, involvement and participation in voluntary organizations, and, socializing with families and friends. The second element is social interactions which are described as the social relationships that exist among members of the community and their relations with the institutions of the community (Coleman, 1988). The third element, social integration refers to the extent to which adolescents and their families are socially embedded into their communities, or, the "structure of opportunities for social interaction" (Smith et al., 1995, p. 368).

For Israel et al. (2001), community interactive processes consist of two dimensions; community action and, individual relationships among adults and youths. Community action is characterized by many "actions and actors, inclusiveness of interests represented and widespread involvement in decision making and implementation" (Israel et al., 2001, p. 48). Community actions that may influence adolescents' educational aspirations and achievement include the availability of facilities such as sports arenas, schools, 4-H, FFA and other youth programs, and the opportunities for adolescents to be involved in volunteering and community development projects. The relationship dimension of the community interactive processes refers to the interpersonal relations that take place between adults and youth, and among the youth. For example, the interest of non-family adult members in the welfare of adolescents and the efforts of local religious organizations in involving children in youth programs that facilitate cognitive development (Israel et al., 2001).

Their different conceptualizations notwithstanding, these researchers, (i.e., Oorschot et al., 2006 and Israel et al., 2001) share the agreement that community interactive processes produce positive influences on rural adolescents' educational outcomes. When rural adolescents are involved in religious and other youth organizations (e.g. FFA, 4-H and youth bible study groups), they form relationships with peers and non-family adults from whom they can access useful information and other social resources that can positively influence their educational achievement (Coleman, 1988; Newman, 2004). In particular, the church often provides rural adolescents with opportunities to develop interactions with, and receive social support from adults outside of the family. For example, a Sunday school teacher may be able to provide basic moral teachings and other information that may shape adolescents' norms, values and educational aspirations, motivate them to shun delinquency, thereby increasing their chances of staying in school (Coleman, 1988; Israel et al., 2001; Israel & Beaulieu, 2004).

Adolescents' interaction with the members of the community is not limited to their participation in religious and youth activities, but also includes their interactions with people in other social spheres such as on the streets, in the mall, schools, etc. As indicated by Morrow (2003)

adolescents are “active social agents who, at least in the micro-level, shape the structures and processes around them” (p. 4). Hence, the way adolescents relate to wider social networks and communities have important influences on their educational outcomes.

Parent-neighbor interactions are interactive processes that may influence rural adolescents’ educational outcomes. An example of parent-neighbor interactions is parent-neighbor oversight (Bankston & Zhou, 2002), or, watchful care which refers to the genuine care and interest of non-parent adults or neighbors in the academic progress and behavioral outcome of adolescents. This includes the willingness of neighbors to tell if they see another neighbor’s child get into trouble, or do something wrong. Parent-neighbor oversight could also refer to the willingness of neighbors to respond to other neighbor’s children in times of emergency (e.g., an accident), especially when the parents are absent. Coleman (1988) views practices such as parent-neighbor oversight as sources of social control that can serve to inhibit non-normative behavior in adolescence, hence exerting a positive influence on behavioral and educational outcomes.

Self-Esteem, Delinquency and Educational Achievement

As previously mentioned, community interactive processes may have indirect effects on educational achievement via boosting self-esteem and controlling delinquency and non-normative behaviors in adolescents (McNeal, 1999). Both self-esteem and delinquency have been found to have significant influences on educational achievement (Garg et al., 2002; Trusty et al., 2003).

With regards to self-esteem, researchers have reported that students who have positive self-worth and self-evaluation are more likely to perform better in school than those who hold negative appraisals of themselves (Covington, 1989; Farmer, 1985; Marjoribanks, 2002; Owens, 1994). Covington (1989) found that as the level of self-esteem increases, the achievement scores of the students in his study increased. Similarly, Schmidt and Padilla (2003) found good academic performance to be linked with improvements in self-esteem. Turning to the relationship between delinquency and academic outcomes, research has documented that students who participate in delinquent behaviors score lower grades and are more likely to drop out of school (Chen & Kaplan, 2003; Hill et al., 2004).

As suggested by literature (e.g., McNeal, 1999) self-esteem and delinquency could be mechanisms through which community interactive processes may influence educational achievement. For example, adolescents’ participation in religious activities often serve as social controls of non-normative behaviors, thereby increasing the likelihood to stay in school and the possibility of college attendance (Hill et al., 2004; McNeal, 1999). Likewise, strong social support from members of the community results in fewer behavior problems, thereby facilitating the high levels of academic achievement (Hill & Craft, 2003; Parcel & Menaghan, 1993).

Similarly, positive social interactions within the rural community enhance adolescents’ self-esteem (Dumont & Provost, 1999; Kilpatrick, Bell & Falk, 1999). Yabiku et al. (1999) explained that supportive social environments increases adolescents’ positive self-image by building in them a sense that they are “cared for, esteemed, .., valued” loved, wanted and appreciated by others (Vedder, Boekaerts & Seegers, 2005, p. 269). Community interactive processes also produce feelings of group solidarity and belonging, which in turn promotes the development of positive self worth in adolescents (Yabiku et al., 1999). That is, when adolescents feel the

genuine concern of non-family adult members of the community they feel part of a "caring group, a group that is interested in their well-being" (Yabiku et al., 1999, p. 1501).

Hypotheses

Using the literature reviewed as the backdrop, we developed and tested a structural model in which community interactive processes influence delinquency and self-esteem, which in turn influence rural adolescents' educational achievement. The specific hypotheses are two fold:

- First, community interactive processes will have a direct influence on rural adolescents' educational achievement.
- Second, community interactive processes will also have an indirect influence on rural adolescents' educational achievement via self-esteem and delinquency.

Data and Methods

Data Description

This study uses the first wave of data, collected between 1994 and 1995 by the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), a nationally representative study conducted by the North Carolina Population Center. Add Health is a school-based cluster sample. The participating schools were selected from a sampling frame of American high schools sorted by region, level of urbanicity, school type, racial composition and size. In addition to interviewing the students, a parent or guardian of each student was also interviewed. See Bearman, Jones, & Udry, (1997) for a detailed description of Add Health. Permission to use Add Health was obtained from the North Carolina Population Center and the Institutional Review Board at Purdue University.

The sample for this study consists of students in grades 10, 11 and 12 (Total= 1657) enrolled in the 14 schools described as rural in the Add Health data set. However, since academic performance is an important outcome variable in this study, students (n=18) who reported that their school did not give letter grades were excluded from the study because there was no way to calculate their GPA without their letter grades. Thus, the total number of participants was reduced to 1657, 36 percent of which are sophomores, 34 percent are juniors, and 30 percent are seniors. Also, 50.3 percent are boys while 49.7 percent are girls. About 81 percent of the students identified themselves as Caucasian, 14 percent as African Americans while the remaining 5 percent consists of other racial groups (e.g., Asians, Native Americans). The age of the students ranged from 15 to 20 years (mean age =17.47).

Measurement of Variables

Community interactive processes

The variable representing community interactive processes in this study is a latent construct measured by three indicators; first, parent-neighbor oversight, an additive scale consisting of the interviewed parents' responses to two items; (1) "if you saw a neighbor's child getting into trouble, would you tell your neighbor about it?" and, (2) "if a neighbor saw your child getting into trouble, would your neighbor tell you about it?" Response categories were "definitely would," "probably would," "might," "probably would not" and "definitely would."

The second indicator is adolescents' attendance at religious services which is a summated rating scale consisting of 2 items; "how often have you gone to religious services in the past year?" And, "how often have you attended religious youth programs in the past year." Response categories included "once a week or more", "less than once a week, but at least once a month,"

"less than once a month" and "never"). Third is adolescents' interaction with members of the community which is a continuous variable created by adding students' responses to three "true or false" questions; "You know most of the people in your neighborhood," "in the past month, you have stopped on the street to talk with someone who lives in your neighborhood," and, "people in this neighborhood look out for each other."

Delinquency

Delinquency is a latent variable measured by three composite variables, each of which is a summated rating scale:

- (1) a four item index of general delinquency (e.g., "in the past 12 months, how often did you damage any property?"), $\alpha = 0.65$
- (2) six items of fighting and violence (e.g. "got into a physical fight") $\alpha = 0.81$, and,
- (3) a three item index of stealing (e.g., "how often did you steal something worth less than \$50?"), $\alpha = 0.78$.

The response categories ranged from "never" to "five or more times."

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is a latent variable measured by four items very similar to Rosenberg's global self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, Schooler, & Schoenbach, 1989). It thus, does not include items regarding specific attributes such as academic, body or social self-esteem. The students were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statements: "You like yourself just the way you are," "you have a lot of good qualities," "you have a lot to be proud of," and, "you are just as good as other people." The answer categories ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Educational Achievement

Educational achievement is measured by each student's overall grade point average, GPA, calculated from their self-reported most recent English, history, science and mathematics classes.

Educational achievement was used as a latent construct with a single indicator (GPA). To achieve this, we assumed that GPA is a reliable measure of educational achievement.

Control Variables

The effects of race, age and parents' education on rural adolescents' educational achievement were controlled in the analysis.

Data Analysis

Analytic Strategy

The hypothesized model was tested with AMOS 6.0 (a structural equation modeling, SEM program), using covariance matrices and maximum likelihood estimation. Maximum likelihood estimation is a method used to estimate models with normally distributed endogenous variables. The descriptive statistics (See Table 1) shows that all the variables in this study are normally distributed with absolute values less than or equal to 3 for skewness and absolute values less than or equal to 10 for kurtosis as suggested by Livingston, (2004).

The method of structural equation modeling (SEM) is judged appropriate for this study because it is suited for analyses where the variables are latent constructs. In general, data analysis in SEM occurs in two stages. First, a factor analysis is conducted to investigate the loading of the

measured indicators on the latent constructs, and, second, path analysis is conducted to investigate the structural relationship among the latent constructs (Kline, 2005). These stages are discussed in detail in the result section.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Indicators in the Model N=1657

Variables	Mean	S.D	Skew	Kurtosis
Parent-neighbor oversight	8.35	1.37	-0.92	1.25
Adolescents' attendance at religious services	2.39	2.13	0.40	-1.21
Adolescents' interaction within the community	5.33	0.93	-1.25	0.48
Educational achievement	3.28	0.63	-1.32	1.90
DELQ1 (4 items of general delinquency)	1.20	2.22	1.46	2.17
DELQ2 (6 items of fighting and violence)	1.34	2.34	2.51	7.45
DELQ3 (3 items of stealing)	0.70	1.59	2.97	9.27
SE1 ("just as good as other people")	1.95	0.96	-0.52	-0.76
SE2 ("have lots of good qualities")	4.24	0.64	-0.59	0.93
SE3 ("have a lot to be proud of")	4.23	0.71	-1.01	2.05
SE4 ("like self as you are")	3.91	0.95	-0.82	0.24
Age	17.47	0.95	0.12	-0.53
Parents' education	5.10	1.95	0.06	0.64

S.D: Standard deviation

Model Identification, Assessment of Model Fit and Test of Significance of Direct and Indirect Effects

For proper analysis in AMOS, a specified model must be identified. That is, the degree of freedom (*df*) must be greater than zero (Arbuckle, 2005; Kline, 2005). As would be seen in the result section, the model estimated in this study had a positive and sufficient value. Likewise, the fit of the model was assessed by considering the model's RMSEA (Root Mean Square of Error Approximations), and fit indices, i.e., CFI (comparative fit index), IFI (incremental fit index), GFI (goodness of fit index), and NFI. According to Kline (2005), a non-significant chi square ($p > 0.05$) represents a good model fit. Likewise, reasonable RMSEA values are lower than or equal to 0.08., and, CFI, IFI, GFI and NFI values greater than 0.90 are adequate.

The AMOS program does not automatically include the standard errors or p-values of indirect effects in the output; hence the test of significance of indirect influences could be a problem. However, a researcher can overcome this difficulty by requesting AMOS to calculate the standard errors of indirect and mediating effects using the bootstrap method (Fan, 2003). The resulting output of bootstrap estimates in AMOS not only the standard errors and p-values of the total indirect effect, but, also the standard errors of each specific indirect effects. These values are then used to determine the significance of the indirect effects. For more on the bootstrap method see Fan (2003) and Preacher & Hayes (2007).

Results

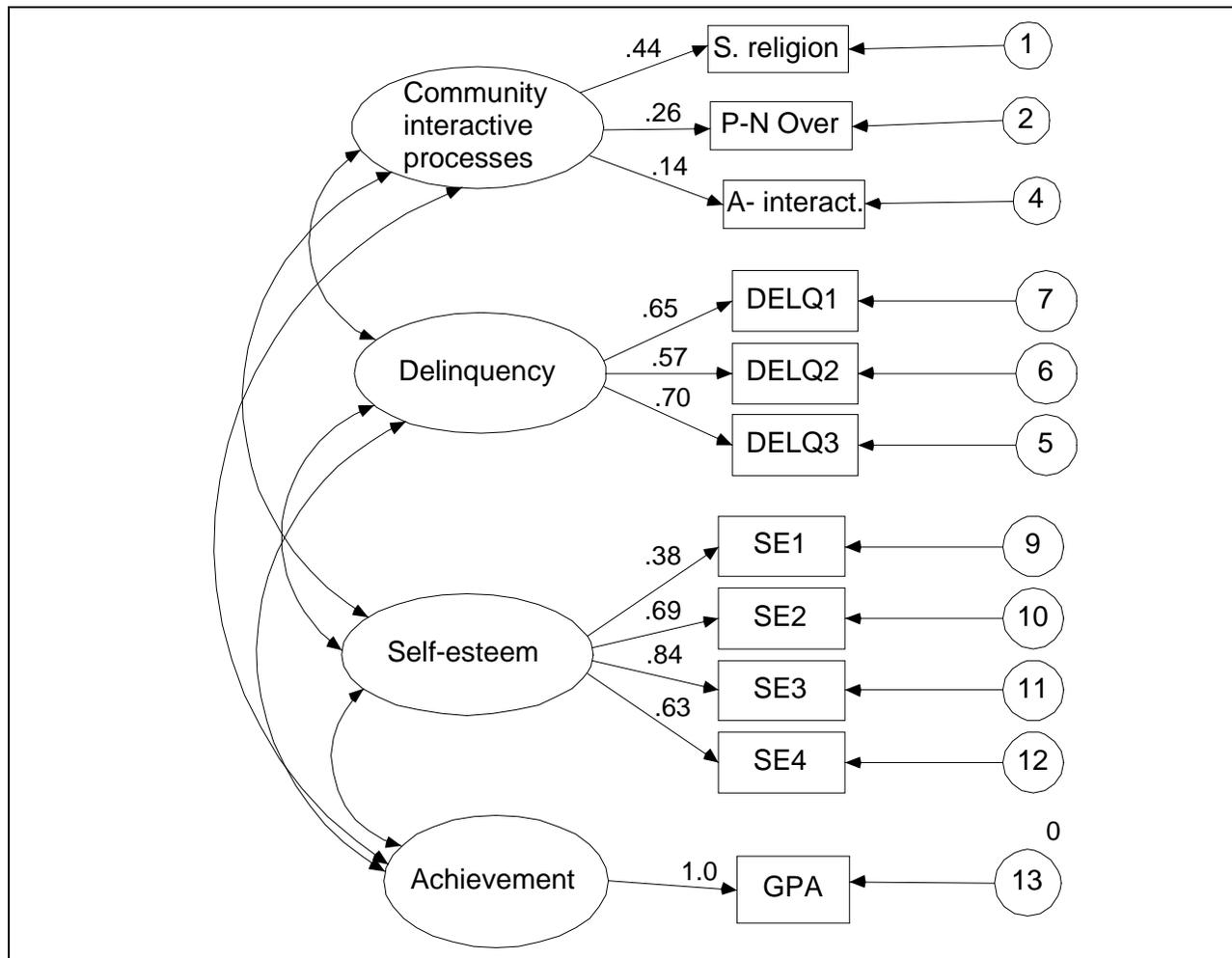
The analysis of the model occurred in two stages. The first stage involved the estimation of a measurement model (i.e., confirmatory factor analysis), and the second stage involved the test of the structural model. A significant level of 0.05 was used as the threshold.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A measurement model (Figure 1) was estimated to ensure that the observed indicators loaded appropriately on the latent constructs. The fit indices (listed at the bottom of the figure) indicate that the data fits the model adequately well. Also, the model was sufficiently identified with a degree of freedom of 29. The loadings of the observed indicators on the latent constructs in the model are shown in Table 2, while the correlations among the constructs are shown in Table 3. The result shows that all factors have significant loadings on their respective latent constructs and all correlations among the constructs are significant.

Figure 1.

Measurement Model for Confirmatory Factor Analysis



Fit Indices

$\chi^2 = 39$, $p < .05$; GFI = 0.98; NFI = 0.94

IFI = 0.96; CFI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.04

Table 2

Correlations among the Constructs

	1	2	3	4
1. Delinquency	.00	-.11*	-.24*	-.18*
2. Self-esteem		.00	.40*	.17*
3. Community interactive processes			.00	.32*
4. Educational achievement				.00

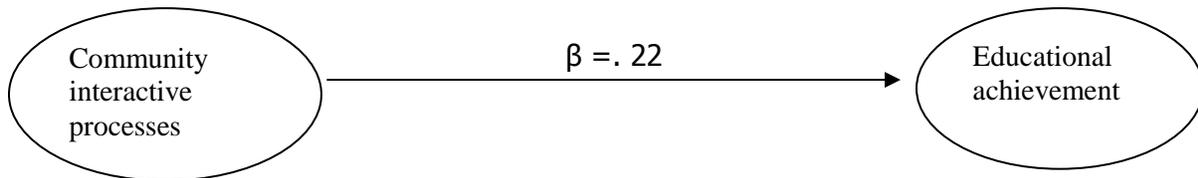
* = $p < .05$

Estimation of Structural Model

This stage involved the examination of the mediating effects of self-esteem and delinquency on the relationship between community interactive processes and achievement. The statistical significance of all tested effects was determined using a p-value of 0.05 as the threshold. First, the direct effect of community interactive processes (without delinquency and self-esteem as mediators) was calculated by estimating the structural model in Figure 2. The results revealed a significant effect of community interactive processes on educational achievement ($\beta = .22$, $p < .05$).

Figure 2

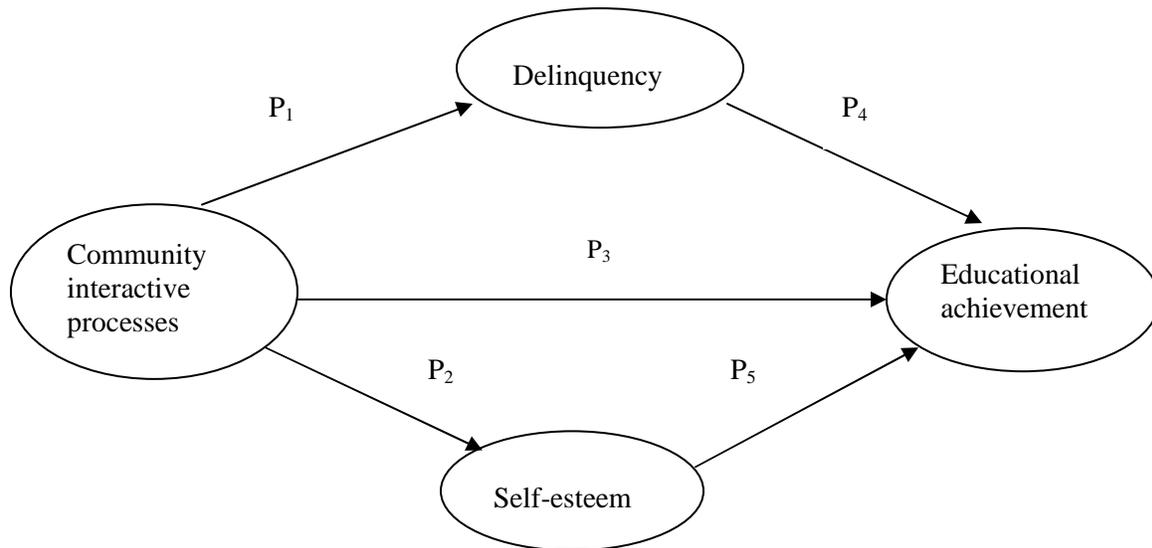
Direct effect of community interactive processes on educational achievement



Next, we estimated the hypothesized model depicted in Figure 3 (with self-esteem and delinquency as multiple mediators of the relationship between community interactive processes and educational achievement). The fit indices of the model (listed at the bottom of the figure) suggest that the data fits the model adequately.

Figure 3

Mediating effects of delinquency and self-esteem in the effects of community interactive processes on educational achievement



Fit Indices

$\chi^2 = 49, p < .05$; GFI = 0.98; NFI = 0.91
IFI = 0.93; CFI = 0.93; RMSEA = 0.05

Table 3 contains the values of the estimated paths (i.e., P_1, P_2, P_3, P_4 and P_5). The result shows that community interactive processes significantly influenced delinquency ($P_1: \beta = -.28, p < .05$) and self-esteem ($P_2: \beta = .27, p < .05$). Also, the direct effect of community interactive processes on educational achievement ($P_3: \beta = .22, p < .05$) was significant. Moreover, the direct effect of delinquency on educational achievement was significant ($P_4: \beta = -.07, p < .05$), while the direct effect of self-esteem on educational achievement was not significant ($P_5: \beta = .04, p > .05$).

The total indirect effect of community interactive processes on educational achievement through delinquency and self-esteem ($P_1P_4 + P_2P_5: \beta = .03, p > .05$) was not significant. However, when multiple mediators are involved in a model, the focus is not only on the total indirect effect, but, also on the specific indirect effects through each mediator (Preacher & Hayes, 2007). The analysis revealed that the specific indirect effect of community interactive processes via delinquency was significant ($P_1P_4: \beta = .02, p < .05$) while the indirect effect through self-esteem ($P_2P_5: \beta = .01, p > .05$) was not significant. The obvious reason for this is because the direct effect of self-esteem on educational achievement was not significant. The total effect of community interactive processes on educational achievement ($P_3 + P_1P_4 + P_2P_5: \beta = .22, p < .05$) was significant.

Table 3*Coefficients of Estimated Paths N=1657*

Estimated Paths	Un-standardized Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	Critical Ratio	p-value
P ₁	-.275	.094	2.92	p < .05
P ₂	.270	.081	3.33	p < .05
P ₃	.189	.077	2.45	p < .05
P ₄	-.072	.031	2.32	p < .05
P ₅	.041	.063	0.65	p > .05
P ₁ P ₄	.020	.009	2.22	p < .05
P ₂ P ₅	.011	.055	0.20	p > .05
P ₁ P ₄ + P ₂ P ₅	.031	.034	0.91	p > .05
P ₃ + P ₁ P ₄ + P ₂ P ₅	.220	.056	3.92	p < .05

P₁P₄ is the specific indirect effect of community interactive processes on achievement through delinquency

P₂P₅ is the specific indirect effect of community interactive processes on achievement through self-esteem

P₁P₄ + P₂P₅ = the total indirect effect of community interactive processes on achievement through delinquency and self-esteem.

P₃ + P₁P₄ + P₂P₅ = the total effect (direct & indirect) of community interactive processes on achievement.

Discussion

To recap, the present study explored self-esteem and delinquency as possible mediators of the relationship between community interactive processes and rural adolescents' educational achievement. In support of prior studies (e.g., Beaulieu et al., 2003), we found a significant positive direct link between community interactive processes and rural adolescents' educational achievement. The findings suggest that the social support that rural adolescents receive by attending religious services, their integration and interaction with other members of the community and parent-neighbor oversight facilitated their academic success.

The analysis revealed a significant negative effect of community interactive processes on delinquency. This finding lends some support to the position of previous studies (e.g., Coleman, 1988) that community interactive processes are social resources that may reduce or curb non-normative behaviors in adolescents, thereby facilitating high levels of achievement. That is, rural adolescents' perceived social support from other members of the community produces feelings of group solidarity and belonging, and social acceptance, which promotes social compliance. We also found a significant inverse relationship between delinquency and educational achievement suggesting that delinquency reduces academic achievement, or, that social compliance enhances rural adolescents' educational achievement.

In addition, we found a significant positive link between community interactive processes and rural adolescents' self-esteem. This is consistent with the argument of Dumont and Provost (1999) that adolescents' participation in community activities and other forms of community interactive processes are social resources that facilitate positive self-worth. Hence, there is evidence to believe that rural adolescents' interaction and integration within the community promotes positive self-evaluation and self-appreciation.

However, our hypothesis that self-esteem and delinquency would mediate the relationship between community social capital and educational achievement was only partially supported by the data. On one hand, we found the specific indirect effect of community interactive processes via delinquency to be significant, That is, delinquency mediates the relationship between community interactive processes and educational achievement. This suggests that adolescents' integration and participation in community interactive processes inhibit non-normative behavior, which in turn facilitates educational achievement. Our findings also lend support to the report of earlier studies that non-delinquent adolescents are likely to score higher grades than their delinquent peers (Chen & Kaplan, 2003), and, that community interactive processes are social resources that inhibit deviant behaviors (Coleman, 1988).

On the other hand, we did not find a significant effect of self-esteem on educational achievement. In our study self-esteem does not mediate the relationship between community interactive processes and rural adolescents' educational achievement. Our finding is not consistent with Owens' (1994) position that adolescents with positive self-worth perform better in school than those with negative or low self-appraisals.

Implications for Youth Stakeholders and Conclusion

The findings of this the study make a compelling case that communities are conduits for boosting self-esteem, facilitating normative behaviors, and enhancing academic performance in rural adolescents. In addition, the study contributes to the understanding of the mechanisms of community interactive processes and their effect on rural adolescents' educational achievement. When rural communities provide nurturing environments for their adolescents, the reward is not only going to be academically successful youngsters, but also, self-confident, social-compliant and well behaved young people who can be trusted to take leadership positions.

Likewise, there are some implications for rural youth development workers and program planners (e.g., those interested in after-school programs) who are interested in programs and factors that can enhance adolescents' educational achievement. Youth development efforts at the community level may need to include programs that facilitate community interactive processes and serve as avenues to boost self-esteem and reduce delinquent behaviors in adolescents. Lastly, the study suggests that further research is needed to explore possible avenues through which community interactive processes affect rural adolescents' educational outcomes. For example, supportive community environments may decrease the incidents of psychological depression, thereby improving achievements.

This study is not without some limitations. For example, the analyses were limited to the full sample. Further studies might explore differences between boys and girls and among racial/ethnic groups and possible interaction between gender and race/ethnicity. The limitations notwithstanding, the results of this study reaffirm the important role of communities as vital influences on adolescent's behavioral and academic outcomes. In particular, the study suggests that disadvantages in community interactive processes and social capital resources make involvement in delinquency more possible, thereby hindering educational achievement.

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Working With Female Juvenile Delinquents: What Youth Practitioners Need to Know

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Abstract: This article is organized in a way to help youth practitioners recognize the most pertinent issues faced by female juveniles and to provide help in guiding professional interactions, communication and decision-making. The guidelines discussed are suggestions for practice based on an empirical review of the literature. Recent research has identified ten characteristics of female juvenile offenders to consider when working with this population. These areas include: (a) impaired cognitive functioning, (b) low academic achievement, (c) weak language skills, (d) peer relationships, (e) onset of menarche, (f) early sexual experiences, (g) mental illness, (h) victimization (i) low self-esteem and (j) race.

Introduction

A little more than a decade ago, the rate of female juvenile delinquency was not considered an issue of much concern. Most of the delinquent acts of females in previous decades primarily involved running away and sexual misconduct. However, Mullis, Cornille, Mullis, and Huber (2004) report an alarming trend for female juveniles between 1989 and 1993 that includes the following statistics: "court cases involving juvenile females with delinquency increased by 31% compared to a 21% increase for juvenile males [and] arrests for violent crimes increased 55% for juvenile females and by 33% for juvenile males" (p. 206). The prevalence of female delinquents in the juvenile justice system has continued to increase dramatically. According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2003) there was a 59% increase in the number of females involved with the juvenile justice system between 1990 and 1999.

In addition, the earlier a juvenile begins a life of offending, the longer the juvenile tends to offend turning into a chronic offender that extends into adulthood. According to Stone (2003),

for minor delinquency, offending begins around age 7, peaks at ages 9 to 13, rises steadily to age 17 for boys and 15 for girls, and then drops. Nonviolent, serious delinquency also begins around age 7 and peaks at age 9. For boys, it peaks again around age 12 and continues rising through age 19. For girls, it peaks again from ages 13 to 15, then declines. Violent offending for boys begins around age 7, then increases steadily from ages 8 to 19. For girls, violent offending peaks around age 13, then declines.

At some point a youth practitioner will be called upon to work with the female juvenile delinquent. It is important to understand the characteristics of these juveniles and the issues that are most salient in working with them. Youth practitioners should be able to provide helpful strategies to these female juveniles as they work their way through these significant issues.

This article is organized in a way to help youth practitioners recognize the most pertinent issues faced by female juveniles and to provide help in guiding professional interactions, communication and decision-making. The guidelines that follow are suggestions for practice based on an empirical review of the literature.

Current research has identified ten characteristics of female juvenile offenders that were considered when developing practice guidelines for working with this population (Heckel et al., 1981; Lenssen et al., 2000; Leve, et al., 2004; Mullis et al., 2004; OJJDP, 1998; Weiler, 1999). The ten areas included:

- (a) impaired cognitive functioning,
- (b) low academic achievement,
- (c) weak language skills,
- (d) peer relationships,
- (e) onset of menarche,
- (f) early sexual experiences,
- (g) mental illness,
- (h) victimization,
- (i) low self-esteem and
- (j) race.

Method

The methodology for developing the practice guidelines for working with female juveniles began with performing a careful search of the literature. To ascertain the degree in which empirical studies have focused on female juvenile delinquent characteristics, an extensive search of electronic databases was performed. A basic search for female juvenile characteristics was performed in the literature on the Academic Search Premier, ERIC (EBSCO), Behavioral Science Collection and MedLine databases which resulted in several resources, three of which were selected for the purposes of this article (Lenssen et al., 2000; Mullis et al., 2004; OJJDP, 1998).

After identifying ten characteristics of female juvenile delinquents, a more advanced search was performed. Each search contained all ten female delinquent characteristics paired with female juvenile delinquent, female juvenile offender or female delinquent and practice, intervention or prevention methods. The advanced search extended to electronic databases including the Social

Work Abstracts and Social Services Review and the Internet. This search yielded the following results that address the practice guidelines developed in this article.

Practices Involving Female Juvenile Delinquent Characteristics

Understanding the pattern of delinquency and where to begin working with female juvenile delinquents is a very complicated process. Some researchers have found that female delinquents have a lack of problem-solving skills and a tendency to avoid challenges, which can hinder healthy psychological and emotional functioning (Fejes-Mendoza and Miller, 1992). In addition, since there is an extremely high rate of physical and sexual abuse among female juvenile delinquents, this abuse contributes to a number of other delinquent acts as well as being intertwined with poor self-image, sexual attitudes, relationship with family, career and educational goals and further healthy development (Dembo, Williams, & Schmeidler, 1993; Siegel & Senna, 2000).

Even though working with female juvenile delinquent can be a complex process, research has identified characteristics common in female juvenile delinquents that can be helpful for youth practitioners in practice. The following are examples of how these common characteristics can be used as practice guidelines. However, the practice guidelines are meant to be just that, practice guidelines. It is still up to the practitioner to use discretion in choosing when and how to implement the suggested practices.

Impaired Cognitive Functioning. Scott (2003) suggests that impaired cognitive functioning is relative especially to a juvenile's ability to reason and understand. Decision-making capacities typically increase through childhood into adolescence but the decision-making abilities of juveniles is not equivalent to that of adults. Scott (2003) reports that "capacities to process information and to think hypothetically develop into adolescence, and cognitive performance improves generally due to knowledge gained in specific domains" (p. 302).

Youth practitioners can help juveniles develop decision-making skills in an effort to discourage participation in crime. Although research has not identified the best way in teaching decision-making skills to juveniles, Fischhoff, Crowell, and Kipke (1999) provide some tangible principles that include:

- teaching young people about how their emotions may influence their thinking and behavior
- encouraging young people to search for new information when making decisions and helping them to avoid overestimating their knowledge and capabilities
- providing accurate information to teens about the actual number of young people engaging in risky behaviors to counteract media messages
- utilizing concrete situations and decision problems that reflect young people's interests and have relevance to their lives
- using a general heuristic framework to help teenagers learn how to think critically about decision problems (e.g., "GOFER"-goals, options, facts, effects, and review; "going through the GOOP"-goals, options, outcomes, and probabilities)
- assisting young people to recognize their own biases
- providing adolescents with opportunities to practice and rehearse decision-making skills
- having teenagers work in pairs or small groups on relevant decision problems
- helping young people understand how their choices affect others.

Low Academic Achievement. Female delinquents commonly have a record of poor academic performance. According to Booker-Loper (2000) "In one examination of incarcerated women, nearly half of the respondents had been expelled from school, and a disproportionate number had learning disabilities" (p. 13).

There is a high correlation among juvenile offenders with low academic achievement and offending as well as high recidivism rates. Youth practitioners can help female juveniles who are underachieving academically first by identifying the problem. It is very important to realize if underachievement is a result of a learning disability, frequent truancy, lack of opportunity or poor schooling.

According to Malmgren and Leone (2000), "a disproportionate number of incarcerated youth demonstrate poor reading skills...youth in correctional facilities read, on average, at the fourth grade level" (p. 239). Furthermore, "successful integration of delinquent youth into society requires that they possess reading skills that enable them to find and maintain competitive employment" (Malmgren & Leone, 2000, p. 246). It is very important for youth practitioners to assess academic abilities to determine if remediation, tutoring or other educational programs would be beneficial in allowing the female juvenile to progress educationally.

Weak Language Skills. Research has found that language skill deficits are correlated with antisocial behavior. It is hypothesized that language deficits lead to antisocial behavior because language deficits result in poor behavioral self-regulation (Berk & Potts, 1991; Burke, Crenshaw, Green, and Strocchia-Riveria, 1989). Gincola and Mezzich (2000) report that "Vygotsky and others asserted that this activity [children talking to themselves] is actually 'verbalized thought' that serves a self-regulatory function over behavior by guiding the child through his/her tasks. Accordingly, as language abilities mature and self-regulatory skills strengthen, audible verbalizations are no longer needed and are thus transformed into internalized verbal thought (i.e. internal speech) that exerts a regulatory role over behavior" (p. 360).

Because of findings between language skill deficits and antisocial behavior, youth practitioners will want to be mindful of cognitive interventions that strengthen the executive cognitive functioning in adolescents. These activities might include interventions that focus on social skills and on altering attitudes and behaviors that lead to violence through empathy, impulse control and anger management.

Peer Relationships. Current points of view realize peer groups influence juvenile behavior in connection with being a system of influence. Peer relations affect the parent-adolescent relationship. Dysfunction in the family generates opportunities for negative influence in deviant peer groups (Mullis et al., 2004). Relations with antisocial peers notably predict and preserve antisocial behaviors during adolescence (Walker-Barnes & Mason, 2001). Likewise, adolescents who spend time with antisocial peers enhance their chances to be involved in crime, substance abuse and truancy (Engles & Bogt, 2001).

There is much research to indicate that there are more favorable outcomes for female juveniles who have supportive parental and family systems. Youth workers can encourage, facilitate and work with juveniles and their families to promote a supportive family system. In addition, youth workers can encourage adolescent autonomy and individuation in peer group selection and participation as well as helping the juveniles realize how the peer group they associate with makes a difference in the decisions and outcomes in their lives.

Onset of Menarche and Early Sexual Experiences. Early pubertal development has been linked to female juvenile delinquency. According to Haynie (2003) female delinquency and the female juvenile's pubertal development could be linked to delinquency in two ways: "First, the visible physical changes in appearance that result from puberty may signal to others that one is ready to take on more adult like roles... Second, girls experiencing puberty may find themselves in social context where there are greater opportunities to participate in delinquency..." (p. 356).

Youth practitioners should be cognizant of the female juvenile's relationship with her parents, encouraging cohesion and involvement (Bronte-Tinkew, Moore, & Carrano, 2006). Research has found that continuous conflict in the parent-juvenile relationship and too much autonomy from the family in early adolescence propels juveniles toward delinquency (Haynie, 2003). Youth practitioners should also be concerned with the female juvenile's involvement in romantic behavior, which could lead to more exposure to deviant behavior. Lastly, youth practitioners should be aware that early pubertal development in female juveniles typically signals to others (parents and peers) that the juvenile is no longer a child and is ready for more adult-like behavior even though they may lack the necessary experience, reasoning and understanding to make those adult-like decisions.

Mental Illness. Much research has brought to light the high incidents of mental illness among youth, both males and females, in juvenile custody (Kataoka et al. 2001; Keplen, Abram, McClelland, Dulcan, & Mericle, 2002; Ulzen & Hamilton, 1998; Shelton, 2001). The research has found a high occurrence of psychological disorder in females in the juvenile justice system and these psychological disorders have a strong association with offender status (Dixon, Howie, & Starling, 2004). Even though mental health status has surfaced as the leading factor linked with offending behavior, it remains a very low priority. In a recent study of 100 female juvenile offenders and 100 female juvenile non-offenders, Dixon, Howie, and Starling (2004) found that "rates of psychopathology were higher for offenders than for non-offenders with particularly high levels of conduct disorder (91% vs. 1%), substance abuse disorder (85% vs. 5%), depression (55% vs. 25%) and posttraumatic stress disorder (37% vs. 4%)" (p. 1150).

When working with a female juvenile offender, it is important for a youth practitioner to provide extensive screening and specific assessments to determine if and how much mental health is impaired. Youth practitioners should provide a comprehensive assessment and treat all symptoms of mental disorder present but should pay particularly close attention to juveniles with posttraumatic stress disorders (PTSD). An undiagnosed juvenile with PTSD may actually be mismatched with a treatment plan that could be rendered ineffective and could lead to re-offending (Mayfield-Arnold et al., 2003).

Victimization. Goodkind, Ng & Sarri (2006) state that most of the involvement with the juvenile justice system by girls is typically due to assault and drug offenses. These authors suggest that the reason behind these offenses may very well be attributed to abuse suffered by the girls. These authors also state "experiences of abuse are particularly high among young women in the juvenile justice system, with estimates of up to 92% having experienced at least one form of emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse, including 56% reporting sexual abuse" (Goodkind et al., 2006).

In addition, Kazdin (2003) reports "delinquent youths have relatively high (32 percent) rates of PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder] [and] this results from the increased likelihood of exposure to physical abuse, sexual abuse, and domestic violence when compared to exposure

to these experiences in non-delinquent samples. Exposure to trauma can lead to an increase in aggressive and antisocial behavior and ADHD” (p. 49). Mayfield-Arnold et al. (2003) also found that female juveniles who had been sexually abused had higher rates of depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts.

Research on outcomes with sexually abused females suggests that cognitive-behavioral therapy has had the most potential in regards to types of treatment, especially when it focuses on specific abuse issues (Mayfield-Arnold et al., 2003). Youth practitioners should be mindful that many female juvenile delinquents are reluctant to disclose any sort of physical and/or sexual abuse and should offer repetitive inquiry throughout the treatment process in order to ensure self-disclosure when abuse has been present.

Low Self Esteem. Research over several decades has addressed the connection between low self-esteem and delinquency. For example, Kelley (1978) found a correlation between delinquency and low self-esteem. He found that as programs in schools were applied to increase the level of self-esteem, the frequency of delinquent behavior declined. Also, in a longitudinal study of 3,000 seventh graders Kaplan (1975) found that students with lower levels of self-esteem were more likely to assume deviant behavior patterns. Lastly, Davis (1991) identified ten factors that promoted violence, with the most common being poor self-image. It was found that juveniles participated in violence as a way to counterbalance their feelings of insecurity and low self-esteem.

According to Eccles and Gootman (2002) an important way in which to promote positive self-esteem is through providing opportunities to belong. More recently, it has been argued that juveniles do not receive the support they need from adults to facilitate a focus on their individual talents, which would provide confidence-giving success (Juvenile Justice FYI, 2006). Youth practitioners could help juveniles in finding mentoring programs that would foster the identification and development of talent as well as avenues for community involvement through volunteering or employment.

In addition, physical activity has been found to have positive effects in deterring delinquency and increasing self-esteem. According to a Brown University Child and Adolescent Behavior Newsletter (2006) “Physically active adolescents not only improve their health but also reduce their chances of getting into trouble. Teens who participate in a wide range of physical activities, particularly with their parents or at community recreation centers, are less likely to engage in sex, substance use, violence and delinquency than their sedentary peers who spend more time watching television or videos. Physically active teens were also less likely to have low self-esteem, and more likely to score better grades than their sedentary counterparts” (p. 2).

Race. What is known about juvenile delinquency in general, is that there is definitely a racial disparity in the juvenile justice system. Lum (2004) reports that “minority youth are more likely than their white counterparts to be arrested, held in jail, sent to juvenile or adult court for trial, convicted and given longer prison terms, leading to a situation in which the impact is magnified with each additional step into the juvenile justice system” (p. 224).

A nationally published report written by Eileen Poe-Yamagata and Michael A. Jones, senior researchers with the National Council on Crime and Delinquency and reported on by Lum (2004) found that African Americans under the age of 18 make up:

- 15 percent of their age group,
- 26 percent of those young people arrested,

- 31 percent of those sent to juvenile court,
- 44 percent of those detained in juvenile jails,
- 32 percent of all juveniles tried in adult criminal courts,
- 40 percent of those sent to juvenile prisons, and
- 58 percent of all juveniles confined in adult prisons (p. 225).

In addition, Lum states, "black and Hispanic youths are treated more severely than white teenagers charged with comparable crimes at every step of the juvenile system..." (p. 224). He goes on to report that white adolescents charged with violent offenses have, on average a 193 day incarceration period after trial as compared to blacks who have an average incarceration period of 254 days after trial while Hispanic adolescents experience an average incarceration period of 305 days after trial.

Because the African American community highly values religion, involving the church could be a major strength for the adolescents of this community. Past research on the impact of religion on African American adolescent and psychosocial development indicates that religion acts as a buffer against the effects of neighborhood crime and serious involvement in crime (Johnson, Jeng, DeLi & Larson, 2000).

When working with African American families, youth workers need to be aware of the culture that surrounds this population as well as the most salient parenting practices that allow for well-adjusted black adolescents. According to Lum (2004) African American families have a sense of shared responsibility for raising children. Not only does the parent influence the children's behavior but aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents have very influential roles as well. However, "the most valued ties for many African Americans are the mother-child and sibling relationships" (Lum, 2004, p. 72).

Lum (2004) reports on six specific parenting practices that are linked to an African American child's success and include:

1. *Child focused love* or concern for their children and interest in their activities
2. *Setting limits and discipline* or clear expectations and rules in the home in terms of learning respect
3. *High expectations* or achievement at the highest level possible and advocacy when educational placement was below where the [it] is believed [they] should have been placed
4. Open, consistent, and strong communication or talking [in which] clear values and expectations as well as listening and advice [are] given
5. *Positive racial and gender identification* or transcending stereotypes and bias about being an African American and succeeding by using skills judiciously
6. *Drawing upon community resources* or supportive arenas such as the church, extended family, and occasionally the school; and use of relatives, neighbors, and high school teachers as role models, mentors and advocates at key junctures (p. 72).

Conclusion

It would be an understatement to assert that research on female juvenile delinquents and their needs have been essentially neglected in the research arena up until the recent past. There has no doubt been an outcry from youth practitioners for evidenced-based interventions to be

developed for use in working with female juvenile delinquents. Although interventions and practices have not yet been established, researchers are beginning to understand and address this need.

This article was an attempt at pulling together the most pertinent information available for youth practitioners to have a guideline for practice with this population. Ten characteristics of female juvenile delinquents were identified and specific practice strategies for working with female juveniles who display these characteristics were discussed. While this article is intended to provide a road map of results found in the literature, it is still up to the practitioner to use discretion in choosing when and how to implement the suggested practices.

Lack of research and lack of gender-specific interventions in working with this population is a definite implication for further research. Research is beginning to address the concern for females in the juvenile justice system because many times females are treated in the same way as their male counterparts. Not only are these practices ineffective, they could prove more damaging to females in the long run when they are ushered through the system without effective interventions and this could quite possibly lead to chronic offending.

This paper also addresses the implication for policy change. The juvenile justice system does not see gender in regards to treatment of juveniles. The decisive juvenile justice issues that will persuade the formulation of youth policy into the 21st century entails the needs and strengths of youth and the role of legislators in taking on the problem of youth violence and victimization.

Policy changes that bring about understanding and action into these issues could help slow the rate of female juvenile offending. This could only be beneficial for individuals, neighborhoods, communities and states that suffer physical and financial losses due to female violent offenses.

When policy makers, researchers and youth practitioners join together to understand the needs of female juveniles and provide treatments that are effective, then the rate of female juvenile violent offenses will be reduced.

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Engaging Adolescents as Community Organizers

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Engaging Adolescents as Community Organizers

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Abstract: VOX Teen Communications, a non-profit youth development organization in Atlanta, GA, positions adolescents as leaders in their community. Empowerment theory and a participatory approach are tools often utilized to achieve youth leadership. Teens participated in a community organizing project to create a "for-teens", "by-teens" resource guide Web site (www.teenresourceatl.org). This guide evaluates agencies, Web sites and hotlines on their "teen-friendliness" when providing services to youth in need. The empowerment-based program allowed the teens to take ownership of the project, resulting in a high level of commitment. Anticipated successes of the program include better access to help for teens in need; positioning teens as both users of the guide and leaders of the project; increased confidence and skill-level of the teen participants; and better informed service providers in the community.

Engaging Adolescents as Community Organizers

Youth development program directors face many challenges in designing successful programs, not the least of which is the active and continued participation of youth in the programs. Teenagers are exposed to a multitude of competing activities which they can prioritize over development programs, such as academics, sports, friends, family, television, radio, drugs, alcohol and video games. By shifting the power dynamic between youth and their reality to one in which they have more control over the decisions that affect their reality, empowerment has been suggested as an appropriate and effective approach to youth development (Fusoni, 2005; Wallerstein, 1994). A participatory approach to developing youth programs has also been suggested as a way to improve both research (Minkler, 2005; Wing, 1998) and health promotion programs (Minkler, 2005).

Empowerment theory purports that dialogue leads to consciousness raising (Freire, 1970). Programs based in empowerment theory can lead to individual enlightenment and increased awareness of the right to access existing resources and the rights and responsibilities of creating useful resources and reducing detrimental resources, such as social and structural institutions that promote risky behavior (Breton, 1994). For example, participants of an

empowerment-based photovoice project showed increased self-competence, emergent critical awareness of their environment, and cultivation of resources for social and political action (Foster-Fishman, 2005).

A participatory approach to program development seeks the expert knowledge of the affected population in decision-making. Equitable partnerships are formed early in the issue identification stage and remain through the evaluation stage (Southeast Community Research Center, 2006). Participatory approaches hold that program directors bring expert knowledge of program development to the table and that youth bring expert knowledge about their concerns (Wallerstein, 1994).

Empowerment theory and a participatory approach often work in union. One possibility is that a participatory approach results in empowered individuals who have realized their self-worth. A second possibility is that an empowerment approach increases skills and self-confidence participants need to be active leaders. Programs representing either of these possibilities subscribe to an important principle of both approaches, Paulo Freire's *praxis*. Praxis is defined by Freire as "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 1970, p. 51). Reflection and action should be iterative throughout an effective program.

This article presents a case example of a successful adolescent development program aimed at informing youth about important health issues. The example displays the effective ways in which participatory and empowerment methods are used iteratively to develop a teen resource guide in Atlanta, GA.

Case Example

VOX Teen Communications (formerly Youth Communication: Metro Atlanta) is an Atlanta-based youth development organization founded in 1993. Teens come to VOX to create peer-to-peer information sources (a newspaper, Web site and other publications), full of real-life experiences and resources for connection to their audience of 80,000 peers. In this process, they reframe their own perceptions, learn more about themselves and their roles in the community, and educate their readers on important issues and resources for help and self-improvement.

In 2002, a group of teen participants at VOX Teen Communications indicated that there was a lack of information about resources available for adolescent self-help, specifically on sensitive topics such as sexual behavior and drug use. They created and implemented a needs assessment among more than 120 of their peers to determine if a need for self-help resource information existed and current methods teens use to access those resources. The assessment showed that 45% of youth surveyed in Atlanta did not have a way to get help for their personal problems, and of the 55% who did, their resources may not have been reliable or objective (Study organized by VOX in 2002-03).

As a result of the needs assessment, VOX's teen participants proposed creating a teen resource guide using their skills as writers and researchers. The guide would include basic information about issues affecting adolescents, derived from the needs assessment conducted among peers. The teens also decided to include descriptions of agencies, hotlines and Web sites that provide assistance related to selected issues. Unique to this guide is a teen-friendliness evaluation of each of the resources provided. The teen planners decided that examples of teen-friendliness include service hours in relation to school hours, minimal fees for services, and staff sensitivity to teen needs.

The project was temporarily postponed as the original teen leaders graduated and left the area. In the fall of 2005, a new group of teen participants requested to be involved in a community organizing project. A trained adult volunteer organizer was contacted to assist with development of the project. In the first meeting, facilitated by the volunteer, teens developed visual definitions of community organizing, i.e., drawings. The teens' definitions were compared to definitions developed by academics (Minkler and Wallerstein, 1999; Walter, 1999) and the internet and analyzed for differences and similarities. Next, teens enumerated steps they believed to be important for community organizing. These were compared to steps developed by the volunteer facilitator. These activities were used to achieve the objectives of the first meeting: to show the participants that they are capable of defining and owning their own community organizing project, thus creating ownership of the project, and to critically reflect on the nature of community organizing as a strategy for developing the resource guide

The next three workshops focused on goal setting, and were conducted through interactive methods based in adult-education principles, such as activities that emotionally connected participants to the subject matter and activities that are explicitly relevant to the identified issues. For an overview of adult learning principles, see "Principles of Adult Education" (<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/adults-2.htm>).

Teen-identified objectives for the project included:

- a) to create a list of community concerns;
- b) to narrow the list based on teen-identified criteria, such as relevance to peers and feasibility of project completion, and;
- c) to prioritize a primary concern.

The 12 teens participants prioritized a lack of reliable information on self-help resources for Atlanta teens as their chief concern. This issue led to the development of the project goal: "to provide reliable information for area teens on prioritized teen concerns." Subsequent project development occurred as follows:

- After initial workshops, the teens identified a resource guide as a potentially effective way of achieving the project goal.
- The teens then made a decision through consensus to endorse the resource guide as the strategy for achieving their goal.
- After developing the project's goals and objectives, teens reflected on their definitions of community organizing and decided to include a long-term goal: to use information from the resource guide to inform service providers about how to improve services provided to adolescent clients.

Thus, teen-identified goals and objectives fit with some goals of empowerment theory: creating useful resources and eliminating deficient resources.

- Next, participants created a timeline of implementation, which included continual reflection (evaluation).
- Teens then brainstormed ideas for the physical appearance and method of dissemination for the resource guide, determining that an internet-based guide was ideal because it would be accessible to most teens and would be easy to update.

One of the identified project concerns included reaching peers who do not have access to the internet, such as homeless teenagers. The proposed solution: to educate their peers through a

marketing campaign that would include suggestions of locations with free Internet access, such as the public library.

To keep with empowerment theory and participatory approaches, it was necessary to reflect on the process at this point and before further implementation occurred. A Freireian dialogue session was constructed with the teens to reflect on the development process and context. The use of a trigger or "code" is suggested by Freire to reflect the reality of participants back to them and thus prompt dialogue (1970). In this case, adult facilitators developed a poster that included teenage health statistics surrounded by photos of teenagers' faces. A directed discussion using the SHOWED method, as described in Wallerstein (1994), was facilitated by a trained adult volunteer facilitator in which teens reflected on the underlying social issues of their project. The session was a great success, with teenagers identifying a host of social, historical, political, generational, and cultural reasons for the lack of reliable information for teens. Content from the dialogue was then recommended by participants as important aspects to include in the development of the resource guide.

Next, teen and adult staff and volunteer personnel decided that collaborations would be necessary to facilitate leadership development and gain access to resources that would assist project implementation. Thus, partnerships were formed with local service organizations that have done similar work, including the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta and the Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (G-CAPP). Both of these organizations have existing databases that were created by and for adults. The teens obtained this information from the existing resources and critically examined the content for teen user-friendliness. Information from these databases provided a useful method in identifying a vast number of resources potentially available to Atlanta teenagers.

After obtaining information from the databases, teens evaluated many of the resources listed on their teen-friendliness. Resources were evaluated based on:

1. Times the resources are available. For example, an agency only open during school hours would not be teen-friendly.
2. Public transportation accessibility. The teen creators of the resource guide wanted to provide their peers with resources that are accessible without owning a car or depending on someone else for transportation.
3. Confidentiality. Several of the issues the guide provides help on are sensitive, such as pregnancy or drug addiction. Therefore, the guide's creators prioritized the need for teens seeking help to feel confident that they could do so without parental permission or the fear of others finding out about their problem.
4. No or low fees. The guide's creators did not want cost to prevent their peers from getting help and therefore believe that no or low payments are teen-friendly.

Additional partnerships were formed with adults who work in various professions relevant to the resource guide development. These adults serve as volunteers to assist with training and supporting the teens in community organizing, project management, investigative journalism, marketing and web site design.

In addition to continued *praxis* (i.e., reflection and action), teens have been involved in evaluating the project. Participants identified desired outcomes and suggested methods of measuring each. For example, to measure increased access to resources for adolescents, the

teen program managers decided to evaluate numbers of hits to the Web site and a Web-based survey about whether the guide and the information teen users received from it was helpful.

While the project described here continues to develop, launch of the web-based teen resource guide occurred in January 2007 It can be viewed at www.teenresourceatl.org.

Conclusion

This program illustrates a successful way to use *praxis*, the iterative processes of action and reflection, through a combined empowerment theory-based and participatory approach to non-profit youth program development. The participatory approach used in the development of the teen resource guide involved equitable partnerships in every step of this project where feasible. An empowerment-based approach enabled teens to develop confidence and serve as project leaders with adult support, resulting in increased participation, development of positive resources and reduction of detrimental resources. Teens identified issues, objectives, goals, and implementation strategies, making their decisions by consensus. By using these approaches, several benefits were observed.

- First, the teens became users of their own intervention, the resources guide.
- Second, because the guide is based in the teens' experiences, its format and content will more likely resonate with other area teens.
- Third, an overall sense of empowerment was achieved as teens created new knowledge surrounding the issue of reliable and relevant information for teen issues.

Teenage participants demonstrated individual empowerment through the acquisition of new skills including research, web design, marketing, community organizing, writing, editing, and professional communication among collaborating partners.

This example recommends that youth development program directors adopt a participatory and empowerment-based approach to program development and implementation. Specifically, we recommend:

1. transferring power to the teen participants so that power is shared more equitably;
2. including teens in project development at the earliest stages possible;
3. providing frequent opportunities for *praxis* (reflection and action);
4. supporting youth with training from adult experts, then providing youth opportunities for hands-on application of their new skills;
5. making decisions through consensus in order to gain group ownership; and
6. collaborating with local available resources

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4-H “Survivor” Camp: A Real-to-Life Experience in Living on Your Own

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4-H "Survivor" Camp: A Real-to-Life Experience in Living on Your Own

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Abstract: In recent years many school district budgets have been reduced. Essential life skill classes, such as home economics and personal finance, have been eliminated leaving youth unprepared to live on their own. 4-H Survivor Camp was developed to meet this need. Survivor Camp provides the opportunity for youth to learn and practice basic life skills needed to make a successful transition from high school to young adulthood. The camp is based on seven core lessons: Living on a Budget, Renting an Apartment, Living with a Roommate, Food Preparation, Career Preparation, Self Awareness and Personal Reflection. Evaluation results show that youth who have participated in the program feel more prepared to face the realities of living on their own. The value of this curriculum is that it is adaptable for youth anywhere and in a variety of settings. This article discusses the real-to-life experiences taught at the camp and the related life skills reinforced.

Introduction

Something's missing from high school. Parents and teachers say it, and students do too. (*The Oregonian*, 2007). Chris, a student at Wilsonville High School in Portland, Oregon, responded to *The Oregonian's* survey question of what students wished they had learned in high school. "As a high school senior, I'm looking forward to going to college, but I've become painfully aware that I don't really have the necessary skills to survive out there in the world. I wish that somewhere among all those years of English, math, and science there were classes in home economics, (so I could learn how to cook), personal finance (so I could learn how to save money and pay my taxes), and automotive repair (so I could understand what's going wrong with my car)."

It's not just in Portland, Oregon that educators are aware of the lack of life skills necessary to ease the transition from high school to young adulthood. A survey from the *Financial Literacy News*, 2002, found that high school students lack financial knowledge and skills necessary to make wise financial decisions. Spencer (2003) states that even though youth may be employed

and receive a salary, they lack the knowledge and ability to make the lifestyle choices necessary for successful money management. Teen years can be a training ground for responsible money management, but O'Neill (1992) describes these years as a time of "premature affluence" where spending is primarily on non-essentials and limited planning takes place.

A decade ago it was traditional for high school curricula to contain courses that provided youth with essential life skills needed to successfully live on their own. As pressure on schools has increased to test children and quantify learning, practical life skills are being dropped from the curriculum.

Some states are responding to this situation by creating or adapting materials for life skill education. Colorado State University specialists and 4-H Agents started a partnership with leading organizations in the state that shared a common goal to enhance the financial skills of youth (McKenna, 1999). Idaho 4-H Extension Educators adapted Illinois' "Welcome to the Real World" curriculum that explores career opportunities and finances (Spencer, 2003). The South Carolina Extension Service designed the "Money 2000" program for families; then wrote an adaptation for a youth audience called "Money My Way" (Porter, 1999). All of these programs address financial management and/or career planning goals. These types of activities will reinforce life skills such as decision-making, planning/organization, and wise use of resources.

Other life skills, just as important, can be incorporated into a curriculum or 4-H event to prepare youth for a successful transition to adulthood. The goal of youth programming is to provide developmentally appropriate opportunities for young people to experience life skills, to practice them, and apply them throughout their lifetime (Hendricks, 1998).

Program Description

4-H Survivor Camp was implemented to teach a number of life skills utilizing hands-on activities in a setting that allows each participant to immediately "practice" a newly introduced skill. This immediate reinforcement prepares youth for the transitional period from high school to adulthood. Youth attending the 3 day camp begin the weekend with designated roommates and a pre-assigned job, representative of the type of position they would qualify for with a high school education. Youth receive a paycheck for one month and prepare a budget reflecting anticipated expenses. As apartment groups, youth work together throughout the weekend to shop for an apartment utilizing classified ads, negotiate with landlords and utility companies, and pay routine bills as well as those unexpected expenses that occur. In addition, youth participate in activities that teach skills in balancing their checkbooks, searching and interviewing for jobs, planning and cooking nutritious meals (from scratch), and problem solving financial and social issues related to real life events.

Need Identified

Initially, the idea for a life skill camp of this caliber emerged from data collected at two focus groups conducted in Union County, Oregon. The county is located in the north eastern corner of Oregon, has a population of approximately 25,000 people and covers 2000 square miles. Principle industries are agriculture, timber, government education and manufacturing. The focus groups were held to formulate future programming needs for the county. Session participants were 4-H leaders, parents and older youth members. A key of concern issue identified in the process was the lack of basic life skill training being provided by local school districts or other youth organizations. With the reduction of education budgets, traditional classes in home economics, personal finance, and vocational classes were being eliminated in

the school system. Attendees at the sessions appealed to the 4-H agent to help their children prepare to live on their own.

Through personal interviews with local school administrators and teachers throughout eastern Oregon, the need for life skill training was explored and validated as a real concern. To meet this concern the three 4-H agents from adjoining eastern Oregon counties wrote the curriculum, 4-H Survivor Camp.

Target Audience

Survivor camp is a 3-day camping event for 9th – 12th grade youth. Youth are recruited by marketing the camp in 4-H newsletters and flyers distributed to teachers and counselors in high schools and alternative education facilities. Camp is open to all youth of target age throughout the state but enrollment is limited to 30 participants.

Recruitment Tools

The TV show "Survivor" provided a theme name and added a touch of excitement that proves successful in enticing youth to attend camp. The show also provided the model for the development of the program to help youth develop skills in dealing with real-life situations. 4-H Survivor Camp is scheduled in the winter months as a marketing tool and to add an element of adventure. An isolated camp location was selected, i.e., cell phones didn't work there, etc., to build on the "survivor" theme of living on one's own.

Educational Goals

The educational goals of Survivor Camp are structured to provide "practice" opportunities that resemble real-to-life experiences. The seven core lessons of the Survivor Camp curriculum are based on these educational goals. Below is a list of those experiences and the related life skill they teach:

- **Living on a Budget.** Creating budgets based on pre-assigned jobs, and then balancing a paycheck with "unexpected" bills. [decision-making, planning, organization, wise use of resources, keeping records]
- **Renting an Apartment.** Finding apartments in newspapers, reading/signing lease agreements, and negotiating with landlords. [teamwork, cooperation, negotiating]
- **Living with a Roommate.** [conflict management, sharing, communication]
- **Food Preparation.** Cooking nutritious meals from scratch. [lifestyle choices, goal setting, self-responsibility, financial management]
- **Career Preparation.** Interviewing with a potential employer for a job and preparing an effective resume. [social skills, self-esteem, communication]
- **Self Awareness.** Become aware of personal strengths and values. [critical thinking, appreciation for others, empathy, caring]
- **Personal Reflection.** Reflecting on the day's activities through an evening "Tribal Council." [caring, empathy, learning to learn, accepting differences, problem-solving, critical thinking]

Utilizing a resident camping model provides the opportunity for youth to live in apartment groups with roommates and experience the stresses of living with non-family members. All Survivor Camp activities take place at the facility which encourages youth to focus on the challenge of "surviving" the weekend with the tools provided. Local businessmen are brought in to teach job search sessions and conduct mock interviews. 4-H Alumni are used as panel

members for a roommate discussion session. Alumni share their personal experiences in living with roommates and how they worked through issues.

Team-building activities, instead of competitive ones, are interspersed throughout camp to create bonding, trust and cooperation among the participants. "Tribal Councils" an end-of-the-day reflection time around a campfire, are used as an additional evaluation tool. Each youth expresses their feelings about the day and how they solved situations, whether it was roommate issues or financial "disaster bills."

Program Evaluation

One hundred twenty-eight participants in five different sessions completed an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved pre and post test survey. Results were analyzed utilizing SPSS. A rating scale of 1-5 was utilized to determine the effectiveness of the real-life activities for introducing participants to the realities of living on their own. A score of 1 means "not true at all," a score of 5 means "extremely true." Before and after ratings were analyzed using a paired t test. The analysis revealed a significant, positive change for each item ($p < .01$). In particular, living in an apartment setting, using a camp setting, and participating in mock interviews provided the most real-life simulations for learning (Table 1).

Table 1

Participants' Rating of the Effectiveness of the Survivor Camp Model

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std Deviation
Living in an apartment setting with non-family members gave me skills for negotiating & compromising with roommates	128	1	5	4.35	.7763
Reflection during the tribal council was a good way for me to understand what I was learning at Survivor Camp	128	1	5	4.09	.9539
Using a camp setting to teach life skills is more effective than a classroom setting	128	1	5	4.62	.5868
Paying my bills and creating my own budget helped me to understand how to allocate limited financial resources	128	1	5	3.95	.8527
Participating in a mock interview prepared me for a real job interview	128	1	5	4.35	.8845
Learning about different personality traits has helped me to be more understanding of others	128	1	5	4.34	.8898
I feel comfortable searching newspaper ads to find and rent apartments	128	1	5	4.06	.8539
Planning and cooking meals for myself and others taught me how to share and delegate job tasks	128	1	5	4.27	.8334

Comments from youth who participated include:

- *I thought the landlord was responsible for turning on the electricity.*
- *I thought I was ready to leave home but after attending camp, I realized there are a lot of things I need to know.*
- *I didn't realize it would be so hard to budget my paycheck.*
- *I didn't realize it cost my parents so much money.*
- *After listening to Jake & Teresa (4-H alumni panel) I don't think I want to live with my friends, I think I'll stay at home when I go to college.*

- *I'm so glad they had this camp. I want to come back again next year.*

One youth was surprised by the realization that all people aren't raised with the same values. His comments were "but why would a roommate say they would pay their share of expenses and then not do it."

Feedback collected through informal interviews with parents indicated their appreciation for the educational opportunity. The parents observed a change in their children's values towards money, their knowledge of the cost of providing for a household, the need to get a college education, and social diversity among their peers. Youth realize it is important to put careful thought into who they live with as a roommate. Participants often said they will think twice of living with their friends and will be sure to discuss how expenses will be divided.

Conclusion and Application

4-H Survivor Camp is positively impacting high school youth as they prepare to move into the next phase of their life. This program is designed to empower youth with life skills such as financial management, organization, and wise use of resources. 4-H Survivor Camp utilizes the 4-H experiential model where youth are encouraged to "plan, do and reflect" on situations that occur in everyday adult life.

Curriculum materials consist of seven core lessons that are strategically taught in a camp setting to provide youth with an experience of living on their own. The camp setting adds to the fun of the program but individual lessons can be taught independently in classroom settings. Survivor Camp curriculum has been shared with five other 4-H programs located throughout the United States as well as other youth organizations. Copies of the curriculum may be obtained by contacting the authors via email addresses.

This curriculum is applicable for alternative education, home school programs and other youth organizations. Each lesson can be used independently in a classroom setting to meet the objectives of the instructor.

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The Youth Empowered for Success Program: A Multi-faceted Approach to Youth Leadership Development and School Culture Change in Southern Arizona

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Abstract: Arizona's first Teen Institute (TI) program, Youth Empowered for Success, began in July 2004. It is the first TI-based project to focus on nurturing resilience via Health Realization (Pransky, 2007). The YES program's design to "create conditions for success" in high schools is discussed. YES utilizes a strengths-based, multi-faceted approach of (1) teaching participants how to access their innate resilience and common sense (Health Realization), (2) training them in community development for school culture change and (3) helping them develop meaningful partnerships with adults. YES also expands upon the TI model by providing staff support for community development throughout the academic year. It is hypothesized that these efforts ultimately will increase overall well-being and reduce the incidence of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use (ATOD) as well as depression and suicide among youth.

Introduction

Teen Institutes (TIs) have been demonstrated to be an effective approach to both developing youth leadership and preventing substance abuse among participants (National Association of Teen Institutes, 2007). The TI model, which began in Ohio in 1965, now includes more than 50 TIs offered in 21 states (Nation Association of Teen Institutes, 2007).

Arizona's first TI program, Youth Empowered for Success, began in July 2004. YES is designed to empower high-school youth to become leaders capable of creating "conditions for success"

within their schools. YES comprises two primary components: Teen Institute and the School-Based Cultural Change program.

The project is a collaborative effort developed and sponsored by the Community Partnership of Southern Arizona (CPSA), with funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration through the Arizona Department of Health Services. CPSA contracts with several agencies to provide direct service for the project.

YES has developed a comprehensive approach of drawing out participants' innate resilience while training them in community development for school culture change and helping them develop meaningful partnerships with adults. Group learning about innate resilience, via Health Realization, forms the core of each summer's week-long YES Teen Institute, which is attended by youth-adult teams from participating schools. Then YES provides ongoing staff support throughout the academic year. The YES teams develop and implement school-wide strategic plans to address conditions that may interfere with students' bonding to school. At the same time, team members reinforce and share their learning about Health Realization via discussion and processing of experiences.

As teams' efforts have a positive impact on conditions within the schools, it is anticipated that school bonding and commitment will increase among students. School bonding, or connectedness, has been shown to help prevent substance abuse and a variety of other negative behaviors, as well as being protective against depression and suicide (Bosworth, 2000).

The focus on accessing resilience via Health Realization is unique to YES. Historically, TIs have provided information on drugs and problem behaviors and training in prevention strategies without an explicit philosophical framework.

As of the 2006-07 academic year, 25 high schools in Southeastern Arizona have established active YES Teams. Schools participating in YES range from urban and suburban facilities with more than 2,000 students to rural schools with fewer than 60. YES Teams are found on the Tohono O'odham and San Carlos Apache tribal nations and in historically Mormon or Mexican-American communities, as well as in Arizona's second largest metropolitan area, Tucson.

Resilience, Health Realization and Youth Development

YES is built upon resilience research, using three strategies:

- Health Realization
- Youth-Adult Partnerships and
- Community Development

A large body of research has demonstrated the relationship between resilience/protective factors and youth behavior (Benard, 2004; Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992; Scales & Leffert, 1999; Werner & Smith, 1992). Health Realization was selected as YES' philosophical base and vehicle for personal change after a review of the literature describing research-based programs known to support resilience. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services' Center for Mental Health Services suggests that Health Realization is a flexible approach appropriate both for individuals and groups (Davis, 1999). Health Realization also is implemented via the

community psychology model, in which a small group of committed leaders spreads the understanding to its peer group, an approach consistent with the YES' design.

Health Realization

Health Realization is based on three assumptions concerning the nature of human psychological functioning (Kelley, 2004):

- Thought is the source of human experience.
- Regardless of their current state, all people have the innate capacity for healthy psychological functioning.
- There are two modes of thought, one related to memory and the other to healthy, common-sense, wiser intelligence.

Health Realization holds that "as understanding [of these principles] increases, the youth naturally become more hopeful and resilient even during difficult times and insecure moods" (Mills, 1997).

Youth-Adult Partnerships

YES incorporates Youth-Adult Partnerships (Y-APs) in both the learning and community development components – as well as in the overall program design. Research provides evidence that youth benefit from such partnerships, and Y-APs offer a viable strategy for community development and fostering social change (Camino, 2000a; Camino, 2000b; Camino & Zeldin, 2002). Research also suggests that Y-APs where youth are involved in decision-making contribute to protective factors that help young people "achieve mastery, compassion, and health" (Shepard et. al., 2000).

Community Development

The third part of YES' foundation, community development to address school culture and conditions, is an adaptation of the Youth Opportunity Planning Process (Lofquist, 1990) and BreakAway (Lynn & Lofquist, 2002). This component of YES was crafted in consultation with "BreakAway" author/developer David D. Lynn. Y-APs are intrinsic to this process, which provides a flexible framework for youth to make an impact on their school community. Meaningful participation such as this is an important factor contributing to youth resiliency (Benard, 2004).

Proponents of all these approaches and strategies share a belief that youth have innate resilience and wisdom and are valuable resources, with the capacity to make a positive impact in their communities. The YES program incorporates this belief into its overall framework and each of its program components.

YES Teen Institute

The first YES Teen Institute (YES/TI) was held in 2004 at the University of Arizona, attracting 86 youth and adults from 15 high schools throughout Southeastern Arizona. Since then, YES/TI has been held annually on college and university campuses and has grown to approximately 100 youth from 25 high schools. The number of CPSA-funded staff at YES/TI grew from more than 20 at the first event to almost 30 in 2006. CPSA-funded staff were supplemented by members of the Arizona National Guard's Drug Demand Reduction Team, the Cochise County Juvenile Justice System, and individual schools. In addition, adult and youth alumni serve as volunteer staff at YES/TI.

Subjects, in teams of at least 4 students and one staff member and parent from each school, participate in the week-long YES/TI over the summer. Youth are selected with input from school staff and other students to represent diverse social groups within the school. Each youth and adult participates in three different groups at YES/TI:

- Learning Groups, in which they explore the principles of Health Realization;
- Family Groups, in which they receive emotional support and process lessons and insights from the week; and
- School Teams, in which they learn skills for community development.

Each of these groups meets daily, allowing participants to interact in a positive, structured way with youth and adults from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences.

All participants attend Community Meetings with inspirational speakers each morning of YES/TI. Daily Learning Groups use an experiential approach to convey understanding of Health Realization principles, from a curriculum developed by YES in consultation with author/practitioner Jack Pransky, Ph.D. Adults and youth meet separately in daily Family Groups of about 10 participants. The remainder of the week is filled with structured recreational activities and social events. On the last day, a closing Community Meeting is held that includes a slide-show and video (produced by a separate team of students from a local high school) of the week's activities.

Most activities are led by Youth Mentors who are YES/TI alumni selected by their peers as role models and leaders. These Youth Mentors help plan and provide input into the design of YES/TI each year. Youth Mentors who graduate from high school and adult alumni of YES/TI also may become volunteer or stipended staff at YES/TI and/or in the School-Based Cultural Change component.

The School-Based Cultural Change Program

School-Based Cultural Change using community development is the second component of the YES project.

Upon returning to school after YES/TI, the youth-adult YES Teams plan and conduct (with YES staff support) a school-wide process to identify areas of concern to students, administrators and faculty. They then recruit other youth and adults, including those from social groups not already represented, to join the team for action planning and implementation of strategies to address identified issues and conditions. Each school team receives a small stipend to fund activities and work towards achieving a "quick success," a small, achievable objective that helps build confidence as they progress towards their goal. Additional action planning is conducted as needed during the year.

Throughout the process, YES Teams receive support from YES staff called "coaches," who weave in reminders of Health Realization and ensure the teams process lessons learned from their projects. Though most team projects focus on issues such as breaking down barriers among social groups, abstaining from drug use and staying in school, their true value is in bringing together youth from disparate social groups on projects that benefit all students.

Most YES Teams meet weekly. In January, teams from all 25 schools come together for a 4-hour Health Realization refresher, sharing of project successes and celebration of their progress.

Program Eligibility

High schools are eligible to participate in YES for as long as YES coincides with their principals' top five priorities. This is ascertained by completion of an annual Letter of Agreement with each principal and by ongoing communication between school administration and YES staff. Youth participants for YES/TI are chosen by YES staff in consultation with youth and adults at the schools, based on their natural leadership abilities and their representation of various social groups. Any interested youth in a participating school may join YES' School-Based Cultural Change component. Adult participants are chosen based on their commitment to working as partners with youth, their positive attitude, their leadership qualities, and commitment to working with the team for at least the upcoming school year.

Youth may continue to participate in YES as team members and/or Youth Mentors throughout high school, and as Youth Mentors after graduation. Youth Mentors – youth who have attended previous YES/TIs, have continued their involvement with the program over one or more years and have been selected as mentors by their peers – play an important role in planning and implementing all YES events. They receive additional training in Health Realization and group facilitation skills; help facilitate Learning Groups and other activities at YES/TI; and help plan and act as emcees at YES/TI and the annual Celebration.

Program Evaluation

Jaycox et al. (2006) assert that youth development and substance-abuse prevention programs are beginning to recognize a need for flexibility in effective evaluation design and implementation. The YES program evaluation has been conducted every year and has evolved along with the program, with promising results.

Evaluation design

Survey measures were selected or developed collaboratively by the evaluation team and program developers from CPSA. Surveys were designed to assess the perceived impact of YES activities on a variety of constructs associated with *Protective Factors*, including resilience, self-efficacy, planning skills, knowledge of Health Realization, emotional well-being and perceptions of positive school climate and drug-use risks and norms. The last two constructs were measured using CSAP-recommended Core Measures.

It was determined that a mix of pre/post and retrospective surveys would best balance the challenges of survey administration with the need to assess program outcomes. A retrospective pre-test design was adopted for several reasons:

1. Youth could reflect on key concepts after obtaining basic knowledge of the subjects
2. It is less disruptive to school and learning environments where time and resources are factors
3. It provides results comparable to traditional methods (Pratt, McGuigan & Katzev, 2000).

Table 1

YES evaluation implemented in 2006-07

Group surveyed	Dates surveyed	Scales used in outcome analysis
"Core Team" (YES/TI participants) N=47 [^]	July 2006 April/May 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience* • Self-efficacy* • Planning skills* • Health Realization knowledge gain* • Perception of positive school climate* • Emotional well-being • Perception of drug-use risk • Perception of norms for drug use
"Action Team" (Joined in August 2006 or later) N=52	April/May 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience* • Self-efficacy* • Planning skills* • Health Realization knowledge gain* • Perception of positive school climate*

[^] Number of matched surveys * retrospective pre-test used

Retrospective data were collected from YES Team members who participated in the Teen Institute ("Core Team") in July 2006, at the end of YES/TI, and also in April/May 2007. Participants were asked to think back "before" YES/TI to answer the retrospective questions, and then to answer based on their feelings "today." "Before" answers were used as a baseline to analyze change over time. An identical format was used for the April/May wave of data collection, with "today" answers used for comparison. The same approach was not appropriate with the scales for emotional well-being and perceptions of drug-use risk and norms because they already ask the participant to think back over the previous 30 days. Data for those scales were obtained by comparing standard pre-test answers collected after YES/TI to post-test answers obtained in April/May 2007.

Youth who joined YES during the school year ("Action Team") were surveyed in April/May 2007 only. To answer the retrospective items, participants were asked to think back "before" their involvement in YES activities, and then to answer based on their feelings "today." Scales that could not be administered this way (emotional well-being and perceptions of drug-use risk and norms) were not used to evaluate the Action Team's outcomes.

Results

Change over time for the YES Core Team reached statistical significance for resilience, self-efficacy, planning skills, knowledge of Health Realization, perception of positive school climate and perception of drug-use risks. Non-significant changes were seen on other scales, which were relatively high at pre-test. Outcome results for the Core Team are shown in the table below. A 4-point Likert scale was used.

Table 2

YES Core Team outcomes, 2006-07

Scale/construct	N	July 2006	April/ May 2007	Mean change	Mean % change	Significance (2-tailed)
Resilience	44	3.30	3.67	0.37	11.27	0.000
Self-efficacy	46	2.96	3.35	0.39	13.37	0.000
Planning skills	43	2.89	3.44	0.55	19.04	0.000
Knowledge of Health Realization	43	2.92	3.47	0.55	18.67	0.000
Emotional well-being	46	3.58	3.45	-0.13	-3.55	0.215
Perception of positive school climate	43	2.67	2.88	0.21	7.88	0.009
Perception of drug-use risks	46	3.53	3.64	0.11	3.12	0.044
Perception of norms for drug use	46	3.72	3.64	-0.08	-2.19	0.137

Note: $p \leq .05$

The Action Team also reported significant positive change in all constructs that were measured, via the retrospective pre-test and post-test. Results are shown below, again based on a 4-point Likert scale.

Table 3

YES Action Team outcomes, 2006-07

Scale/construct	N	"Before" mean	"Today" mean	Mean change	Mean % change	Significance (2-tailed)
Resilience	44	3.36	3.60	0.24	7.17	0.00
Self-efficacy	48	2.90	3.11	0.21	7.28	0.00
Planning skills	48	3.05	3.48	0.43	14.13	0.00
Knowledge of Health Realization	48	2.98	3.41	0.43	14.13	0.00
Perception of positive school climate	44	2.64	2.84	0.20	7.70	0.00

Note: $p \leq .05$ **Conclusions**

Overall, the data suggest the YES program has a positive effect upon its participants, especially in the areas of Health Realization knowledge and planning skills. The school-based cultural change component of the YES project remains to be evaluated.

YES: Present and Future

Through the YES program, prevention-themed messages can reach many youth, as important life skills are developed. In addition, YES' addition of Health Realization to the Teen Institute model and its focus on changing conditions in the schools, rather than merely starting new programs, increases the likelihood of sustained individual and system change with impacts that will affect all students in participating high schools now and into the future. As students' efforts have a positive impact on conditions within the schools, it is anticipated that bonding and commitment will increase among students. School bonding, or connectedness, has been shown to help prevent substance abuse and a variety of other negative behaviors, as well as being protective against depression and suicide (Bosworth, 2000).

CPSA and its partners currently are compiling an implementation manual for YES as a basis for future replication. Ultimately, CPSA plans to pursue YES' inclusion in the National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices.

In sum, Youth Empowered for Success has developed a promising, comprehensive approach built upon a belief in every participant's innate resilience and common sense. Based on lessons learned from evaluation, we hope to refine the YES project while maintaining its core philosophy and emphasis on nurturing individual strengths and capacities while providing tools to create conditions for success in high schools.

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Covering our Bases: A Military 4-H Youth Development Program

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Covering our Bases: A Military 4-H Youth Development Program

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Abstract: Land-grant universities, through the 4-H program, have offered support and partnership to the military since World War I. More recently, the U. S. Army, Air Force, and 4-H have partnered to provide military installation youth programs involving over 7,000 youth in 4-H clubs in the United States and abroad. Military youth and families, not affiliated with Base or Post installations, were extended similar support as an aftermath of September 11, 2001. All youth involved through military outreach are enrolled as 4-H members through their respective counties integrating them into local, state, regional, and national 4-H activities and events. Authors share their experience developing relationships with their Air Force partner in implementing positive youth development programs, and explain how these actions resulted in successful funding for increased outreach.

Introduction

Partnership between Cooperative Extension and the U.S. military dates back to at least World War I, with Congress appropriating funding for Extension to increase food production from America's farmers. The war brought about labor shortages, and 4-H club work in rural areas became a way to increase production. At the beginning of World War I, 4-H club membership totaled 169,000. By 1918, the year after the United States entered the war, membership had reached 500,000 (Reck, 1951).

World War II brought new and different challenges to 4-H and to our nation. With food in short supply and much of the male population at war, the Extension Service began a 4-H campaign to "Feed a Fighter." 4-H youth preserved enough food to care for one million fighting men for three years (Reck, 1951). Midway through the war, the Extension Service, in cooperation with the Maritime Commission, worked with 4-H youth to sell war bonds. The goal of the bond sale was to raise \$2,000,000 to build a Liberty ship – which would be named after a 4-H or Extension pioneer. Forty ships went to sea as a result of this effort. On a smaller scale, one 4-H club collected five tons of milkweed floss to help with the construction of 1,100 life vests.

As the history of our nation evolves, the partnership between Extension and the military endures and strengthens to meet the ever-changing needs of society. In 1995, a formal agreement was formed among National 4-H Headquarters, the U.S. Army Child and Youth Services, and the U.S. Air Force Family Members Program to provide 4-H on military installations around the world. In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the initiative now provides similar support to military youth of National Guard and Reserve families who are dispersed in rural, urban and suburban communities across the nation. Nationally, the military 4-H partnership has established 450 4-H clubs, involving 12,000 youth and 900 Army staff at 95 installations worldwide (Military 4-H, 2006).

While the authors enjoy positive relationships with military partners in Army, Air Force, National Guard and Reserve, this article focuses specifically on the partnership between 4-H and Air Force. Air Force Base Youth Center staff in this western state estimate that over 50% of youth enrolled at the Center have at least one parent currently deployed. Issues of deployment and family separation are dominant aspects of military service, with the National Council on Family Relations (2004) recommending an increase in prevention and outreach efforts. 4-H and other youth serving agencies can serve an integral role in connecting deployed families with community support systems and resources.

Highlights of the 4-H/Air Force Program

The initial seed planted in the present 4-H/Air Force partnership was a result of one of the author's personal experiences of having a son deployed to Iraq. Experiencing the stress of deployment and how it affects families, she began seeking opportunities to work with military youth. The first outreach effort was an overnight outdoor camping experience conducted at the Base Youth Center. The partnership continued to develop through various activities such as 4-H skill-a-thons, service projects, and community based activities. Through this growing partnership, the request was made by the Base to help them supplement temporary summer staff with 4-H interns. The internship proved to be a "win-win" collaboration. Four 4-H interns were hired for 12 weeks in the summer to help with youth activities and to conduct weekly 4-H clubs at the Military Base. Through this collaboration over 150 youth have become 4-H members and are encouraged to participate in a variety of 4-H projects, activities, and events. The 4-H summer intern program is now entering its fourth year – and promises to continue.

Afterschool Club. As a result of the internship program, a weekly afterschool 4-H club was initiated on Base and continues to thrive. Youth participate in many projects, with the rocketry project one of the recent favorites. Youth not only built and tested their own rockets, but entered them in the county fair, and provided a rocket launching demonstration for fair goers. A special exhibit area is provided within the 4-H area of the county fair for military youth to display their projects. County fair exhibits provide not only recognition but visibility and a positive impact on relations between the Base and the community. A key aspect of the 4-H clubs is collaboration with Boys and Girls Clubs, also offered on Base. Together, we provide service projects involving military youth in a variety of experiences connecting them with the community. Base Youth Center staff are also involved beyond the club level, by serving on the County Fair Board, Extension Advisory Councils, and as youth mentors. These experiences provide a bridge between the Base and the community.

Operation Purple. 4-H was invited to provide five camp counselors for a camp titled Operation Purple Camp as a result of our involvement in the summer and afterschool programs. Camp is

available to youth of personnel from all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces at no cost to campers, courtesy of grants from the National Military Families Association and Sears, Roebuck and Company. The week long camps focus on helping youth deal with deployment-related issues in a safe, fun environment where they can process their feelings with others in similar situations. Over 10,000 military youth have participated in Operation Purple Camp since its inception in 2004. States interested in hosting a camp are encouraged to review current proposal guidelines at the National Military Family Association website, www.nmfa.org.

The impact of Purple Camp was felt not only by youth participants but a 4-H intern as well. One of the interns had experienced "near deployment" of a parent, and was able to relate very well with the campers, while also helping her process feelings which she had been suppressing. Leonhard and Ferrari (2006) suggest the greatest benefit of Purple Camp is for campers to meet other youth who are experiencing similar emotions and challenges of deployment, and to realize they are not alone.

FitFactor. A new component of the Military 4-H afterschool program is the inclusion of 4-H FitFactor, with 108 youth currently enrolled in weekly experiential learning activities pertaining to healthy and fit lifestyles. FitFactor is an online AF program designed to help youth track physical fitness, nutrition, and healthy lifestyle activities by earning participation points. These points help youth reach different levels of achievement and qualify for awards. 4-H has partnered with certified fitness trainers, dance instructors and professional athletes to provide research based activities, nutrition education, and healthy lifestyle activities. Weekly 4-H activities are conducted to introduce youth to various types of physical and recreational activities. Community leaders and volunteers provide these activities in a safe and inclusive learning environment. Some of the highlights include yoga, kickboxing, tumbling, Polynesian dancing, line dancing, hip hop, Pilates, and a youth boot camp.

Following the physical activities, youth are involved in short nutrition-based education activities. These activities help them learn about making wise food choices by learning about the Food Pyramid and making fun nutritious snacks. Youth have not only been able to gain a more fit lifestyle but they have also had the experience of entering their points into the national FitFactor database to track their individual and group progress. The community has been involved not only in helping with fitness instruction and donating snack items, but through media promotion and recognition.

Impacts

While it is difficult to determine the full impact of the military 4-H program, cumulative evidence indicates positive developments in youth as well as with partnering agencies. Impacts are evident in grants awarded, program recognition, media coverage, and community participation and support. Through support of our military partners over the last few years, USU Extension 4-H has increased outreach to military families from 3 clubs and 18 youth, to 16 clubs and 428 youth, with 124 youth in Army families; 190 Air Force; and 114 National Guard (Jones et al., 2006). Over the course of three years, the AF Base summer intern program has involved 17 young adult interns and reached almost 600 youth. Grant funding has provided over \$160,000 for implementation of military programs over the last four years, with invitations to become involved in additional national and locally based funding streams.

Beyond the numbers, some of the most important impacts have been noted in building relationships and credibility with our military and community partners. Media coverage of 4-H activities on Base and with the County Fair has delivered the message of positive youth

development outreach to households along one of the most populated areas of this western state. Based on surveys and anecdotal evidence, youth and teen leaders alike feel that 4-H affords them the opportunity to be part of an expanded family across the nation and the world.

Summary and Implications for Extension

USU Extension's military 4-H program has experienced some of the challenges noted in a study conducted by Ferrari and Lauxman (2005). They suggested that major challenges in developing and sustaining military 4-H partnerships are making and maintaining contacts due to a high rate of military staff turnover, time constraints, learning and navigating military culture, and defining clear expectations of all partners. Utah has also experienced what the study considers to be some of the greatest benefits of the partnerships - a sense of making a difference in the lives of youth and within the community, providing meaningful opportunities to youth and families not previously being served by Extension, increased visibility for Extension, and funding to implement effective programs.

Ferrari (2005) voices thoughts that are shared by many within the military 4-H network. The need to address family instability has become the norm as more and more families are affected by multiple deployments. Extension, through the support of USDA, Army and Air Force, is strengthening its role as convener and facilitator of community collaborations to make programs more accessible to those who need them. Families and communities benefit as Extension and 4-H make a difference in the lives of youth. Perhaps one of the greatest benefits of military 4-H programming is that youth are able to take the 4-H experience wherever their families happen to be stationed on military installations around the world.

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Evaluating an Initiative to Increase Youth Participation in School and Community Gardening Activities

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Evaluating an Initiative to Increase Youth Participation in School and Community Gardening Activities

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Abstract: Across the country, youth gardening opportunities are rapidly increasing, as is the need for documentation on successful strategies for working with young people. This paper describes the evaluation of the Greener Voices project, a three-year initiative created to increase youth participation in gardening activities through consultation, resources, and information provided to adult leaders at six sites across New York and Pennsylvania. The evaluation is highlighted to encourage others to think about ways to incorporate evaluation into gardening programs. Useful strategies include starting early with evaluation planning, using an underlying program theory or logic model, collecting data through multiple methods, coordinating evaluation and program planning, building theory into evaluation, and publicizing findings. Documenting lessons learned can contribute to the knowledge base in the youth gardening field.

Introduction

Across the country, youth gardening opportunities are rapidly increasing. While studies have documented the positive impacts of gardening (e.g., Klemmer, Waliczek, & Zajicek, 2005; Lohr & Pearson-Mims, 2005; Pothukuchi, 2004), more information is needed about effective ways of working with youth in these settings to optimize the potential for learning and development. This paper describes the evaluation of Greener Voices, a three-year initiative created to increase youth participation in gardening activities. The initiative consisted of ongoing consultation, print and website resources, and meetings with adult leaders at six sites across New York and Pennsylvania. The sites included school- and community-based gardens in urban, rural, and suburban areas at varying stages of implementation and involved approximately 500 children

from preschool through older adolescent and 10 adult leaders. We highlight our evaluation as a way to share useful strategies with others planning to incorporate evaluation into gardening and related projects.

Starting Early

The evaluation began when the project proposal first was written and objectives were formulated. The project was viewed as a collaborative between a horticulture educator/project manager and a human development/evaluation specialist. At the project's inception, weekly discussions immediately began, and data gathering started within one month. These activities continued throughout the project, with outreach strategies and data collection in years one and two and dissemination efforts in year three.

Using a Program Theory

The evaluation was guided by an underlying program theory, or logic model. The model implied that the implemented activities would change adults' thinking about youth participation, which would change practices in working with youth, and ultimately, increased levels of actual participation. Initially, the evaluation was to examine selected youth developmental outcomes, but this would prove difficult given the age range and the changing group of youth over time at most sites. Therefore, the evaluation questions focused on the usefulness of the outreach efforts, changes in practices, and the extent of youth participation. Examples of questions are provided in the Appendix.

The project was influenced by the theory and practice of engaging young people in community development, and especially by the work of Roger Hart. Hart developed a visual model of participation with an eight-level continuum ranging from "tokenism," to fully "child-initiated and directed" (Hart, 1992; 1997). Based on over ten years' experience in the children's garden arena, the project director believed many adult leaders struggled with how to engage children and youth in planning and decision-making. It was expected that the resources, especially the visual model, would help to increase participation.

Using Multiple Methods

Given the diversity of sites and participants, several evaluation methods were used. Documentation completed by adult leaders included a baseline survey about garden activities and monthly log sheets about their use of project resources and participation challenges. Annual site visits provided the opportunity to observe children and youth in decision-making and planning roles, and to learn more about their involvement. At one site, for example, the phone rang in the office, and with no prompting from an adult, a youth answered the phone, responded professionally, and then hung up. It was noted as an example of a young person who had a considerable degree of engagement, ownership, and comfort level with the program and an overall "climate" in which youth were allowed to assume some responsibilities normally handled by adults. In another case, the visit culminated in a meeting with an entire grade level of 4th graders. At least three-quarters of the 120 children waved their arms for the opportunity to respond to questions. Students described in detail the garden planning process. When asked, "Who usually designs gardens for children?" the entire grade level shouted "kids!" rather than "grown-ups," or "teachers," which were expected. This suggested genuine involvement.

Youth at two sites completed written surveys about their experiences. The sites were assessed both by the adult leaders and Greener Voices staff as engaging youth at fairly high levels of

participation. This was reflected in the survey responses that indicated participation in planning, serving on committees, and other key activities. At the first site, which took place at an elementary school and involved 10 and 11-year-old youth, approximately 60% of the youth talked with adult leaders about their ideas and helped plan activities, 40% helped make decisions about activities, and 30% were members of small planning at work groups. At the second site, which took place at a neighborhood center and involved adolescents, over 75% had discussions with adult leaders about project activities, and over 50% helped make important decisions, solved problems, and took the lead in carrying out activities. One quarter of the youth made decisions about money and managed and directed activities.

Structured interviews with the 10 site leaders at the end of year two provided information to indicate the project was successful. Outreach efforts were helpful, attitudes and practices had changed at most of the sites, and both youth and adults engaged in new roles (Eames-Sheavly, et al., 2007; Lekies, et al., 2007). The other methods used supported these findings.

Coordinating Evaluation and Project Planning

A continuous process was in place in which project activities shaped evaluation activities, and evaluation findings shaped future project activities. For example, as the visual model of participation became an increasingly important strategy in the second year, additional evaluation efforts were made to examine its use and effectiveness. As evaluation findings indicated that some adults did not see preschool-aged children as capable of contributing, information on engaging young children was added to the project website. The project website was completed as an outreach effort for adult leaders of youth gardening programs and included information on the Greener Voices project, evaluation findings, garden-based learning resources, and suggestions for practice.

Building Theory into Evaluation

We used the evaluation as an opportunity to test a hypothesis of how young people develop interests in gardening. Using youth survey data from one site, a quantitative analysis indicated that gender, length of time with a garden, active participation, and gardening skills are related to gardening interest (Lekies & Eames-Sheavly, 2007). Thus, we saw evaluation as a chance to learn about our own program, as well as contribute to the overall knowledge base on youth gardening.

Publicizing the Findings

Finally, we disseminated our learnings to larger audiences across the country through journal articles and the project website. We felt it was important to share what we learned so that others can learn from our experiences, pursue evaluations of their own, and ultimately, improve the experience of gardening for youth.

Concluding Comment

We encourage all youth gardening projects to document their efforts. Lessons learned from sites across the country, with youth of different ages, with adult leaders of diverse backgrounds, and with various objectives are much needed for this exciting and rapidly-growing field.

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Appendix

Adult interview guide. We developed a guide for the site visit interviews that would provide in-depth perspectives from the adult leaders. Questions covered project activities, child and youth involvement, a self-assessment of participation based on Hart's Ladder of Participation, changes in educator and volunteer perspectives on participation, changes in activities, impacts on the children and youth, and barriers and challenges to participation. Sample questions included:

Please describe your project and the ways children/youth have been involved.

Using the Ladder of Participation, where do you think the project rests? Is this where you intended the project to be? What is your goal?

How have you and any other adults have been involved (initiating the project, obtaining funding, supervision, and planning)?

Would you say your thinking about participation has changed from the start of the Greener Voices project (about 1½ to 2 years ago)? If yes, in what ways? What has contributed to this?

As a result, have you done anything differently? Were there ways in which you tried to change or increase participation? If yes, please explain.

How did the children and youth respond to your efforts to change or increase their participation? Have they done anything differently as a result? Please note any successes and difficulties.

What about your co-workers and volunteers? How do these adults view the level, ability, and success of children's participation in the project?

How have they reacted to any changes you have wanted to make regarding children's participation? Have they done anything differently? Please note any successes and difficulties.

Youth survey. We also developed a survey for youth that was completed at the end of the summer. Two versions were developed—one for younger and one for older youth. Questions focused on project activities, skills they learned, and future interests in gardening. Sample questions from the younger youth survey included:

Did you do any of these things for your project?

- I planted seeds
- I watered the plants and flowers
- I picked vegetables when they were ripe
- I helped with composting
- I talked with the adult leaders about my ideas
- I helped plan things to do
- I helped decide the things we should do
- I helped find answers to problems
- I helped raise money for the garden

I helped decide what do with money for the garden
I was a member of a small planning work group
I showed other kids how to do things, like planting

Please check all the things you learned from your work with the garden:

How to plant a garden
How to look after a garden
How to tell the difference between the plants and weeds
How to get rid of insects and pests
How to use different tools in the garden

Think about before you started working in the garden and today.

Do you like gardens and plants more now?
Do you like being outside with nature more now?
Do you want to do more gardening projects?

More information about the interview guide and surveys are available from the authors.

Latino Youth Participation in Community Programs

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Latino Youth Participation in Community Programs

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Abstract: Twelve Latino parents were interviewed regarding what attracted their children to community activities and ways to increase participation of Latino youth in activities. According to the parents interviewed, children participated in activities which they enjoyed, activities that made them productive and kept them out of trouble, helped them gain skills that would benefit their future, and activities that involved the entire family. Implications for programming for Latino youth are provided.

Introduction

The United States is becoming culturally more diverse with the Hispanic/Latino population currently the largest minority group in the United States (El Nasser, 2003). According to Census Data, while the United States population grew by 13% from 1990 to 2000 the Latino population grew by 58% (Guzman, 2001). The Latino population continued to grow disproportionately after the 2000 census, increasing by 14% from 2000 to 2004, while the non-Latino population grew by only 2% (Pew Research Center, 2005). The growth rate of Latino immigrant population in the United States has impacted many aspects of society. Both, rural and urban communities have experienced growth in Latino immigrants, with many rural communities experiencing rapid growth because of employment opportunities in food processing plants and harvesting of crops (Berry & Kirschner, 2002). Some parts of the United States have larger Latino populations than others. For example, Latinos, especially young families, now constitute 24% of the population in western states (Berry & Kirschner, 2002). In addition, the Latino population in the United States is younger than the population as a whole, with approximately one-third of the Latino population being under 18 years of age.

As this growth in the Latino immigrant population in the United States continues, there will be an increasing need for youth leaders and community leaders to provide culturally appropriate programming to help families and youth. Much information and programming for Latinos is not culturally relevant. Therefore, there is a need for research to be conducted within a cultural

context (DeMaria, 2005; Doherty & Anderson, 2004; Ooms & Wilson, 2004; Willey & Ebata, 2004).

One might ask: "Why is it important to address the issue of family life from the perspective of the immigrant population's culture?" There are two responses to this question. First, if there is a cultural clash between educational information provided and the values of a population, they will usually not attend educational programs (Ernst, 1990). Currently, Latino youth are underrepresented in community programs (Wimer, et al., 2006). If they do attend, they will not benefit from the information provided (Ernst, 1990) and harm may result if individuals embrace programming ideas that destroy components of their cultural heritage.

Secondly, there is evidence that relying upon one's cultural heritage, the way one's people deal with struggles, is the most effective way for people to be resilient and capable of handling difficulties (Delgado, 1998). McGoldrick and Giordano (1996) also assert that those who try to completely assimilate into the dominant culture, rather than maintaining a connection to their cultural values, are likely to have difficulties in dealing with life's problems.

In addition, there is evidence that not completely assimilating, by being bicultural and continuing to maintain one's original cultural values, contributes to positive mental health (Falicov, 1998; LaFramboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993). Consequently, it is important to draw on and reinforce the existing family values that are evident in the Latino culture when including youth in community programs (DeBord & Reguero de Atilas, 1999; Ooms & Wilson, 2004; Powell, 1988; Vega, 1990).

Social science literature informs us about features and cultural themes of the Latino culture that are part of family life, but there is very little research data available about what makes Latino families work (McGoldrick, Preto, Hines, & Lee, 1991; Wiley & Ebata, 2004). We, therefore, relied primarily on descriptions of cultural themes in the literature to guide our research and interpret findings.

The concept of *familism* is a dominant theme in Latino culture (Falicov, 1998; Santiago-Rivera, et al., 2002). *Familism* refers to the close relationships that are promoted and exist among Latino family members, which includes interdependence and cooperation among family members with a willingness to sacrifice individual needs for the welfare of the group or family (Falicov, 1998; Santiago-Rivera, et al., 2002). Family affiliation is so important that *parenthood* is considered to be more important than *partnerhood* (Falicov, 1998). Intergenerational connections, such as the relationship of a parent to a child, often take precedence over the marital relationship, with the children having a higher priority than the marriage (Falicov, 1998; Penn, Hernández, & Bermúdez, 1997). Researchers have found that *familism* is an enduring trait even when families become highly acculturated (Santiago-Rivera, et al., 2002). Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (1995) concluded that "family" was the most important value among both first and second generation Latino adolescents, as compared to European American adolescents who did not rate family as highly.

Personalismo, which is valuing warm, friendly, and somewhat informal, interpersonal relationships, is also an important value in Latino culture. This focus on warm and positive interpersonal relationships is especially important among family members. Having a positive relationship with a person may be more important than the task at hand (Santiago-Rivera, et al., 2002).

The research literature about developmental assets and the effects of these assets on positive youth development is also relevant to the topic of community programs for youth. Developmental assets is a strengths-based framework designed by the Search Institute that focuses on building 40 assets that help youth to be successful across family, neighborhood, and school settings (Leffert, Benson, Scales, Sharma, Drake, & Blyth, 1998). Questionnaires have been given to youth in grades 6 through 12 to measure the 40 assets and thriving indicators. In one study, the survey was given across ethnic groups. For Latino and European American youth, the asset, "*time in youth programs*," contributed to the variance in five of the seven thriving indicators (school success, leadership, physical health, helping others, and overcoming adversity). Time in youth programs, planning and decision making, cultural competence, and self-esteem contributed to the thriving index for these groups. For Latino youth, assets that were especially important related to family support, responsibility, interpersonal competence, and the presence of a caring community or neighborhood (Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000). Therefore, it is important to provide programming to Latino youth that provides opportunities to develop these assets.

In summary, it is important that we recognize the need to create and attract the growing Latino youth population to community programming. Youth programming can be greatly beneficial in helping Latino youth succeed in school and the community. It is also important that programming be provided within the context and strengths of Latino culture. This is necessary in order to attract and retain youth, as well as providing youth with a positive attitude about their cultural heritage. This study addresses why Latino youth are currently participating in community programming and what additional things need to be done to increase participation of these youth in community programming.

Methods

We conducted an exploratory, qualitative study asking 12 Latino parents what was attracting their Latino youth to programs in which they were involved, and what additional things would make programming attractive to them and their children. Those selected for interviews were parents of Latino youth ages 10 to 14 years. Half of the parents already had one or more of their children involved in Extension youth programs, while the other half did not have their children involved in Extension programs, but may have been involved in other community youth activities.

Open-ended questions were asked about why children were participating in programs and what could be done to attract more Latino youth to such programs. The interviews were conducted in Spanish and took place somewhere that was convenient for the parent. The interviews were tape-recorded and translated and transcribed. The data was analyzed by looking for themes that addressed the research questions.

The study was conducted in a rural community in a western state. Although we were interested in interviewing parents, we found that mothers were more available than fathers. Eleven of the participants were mothers and one was a father. The median household income of the participants was \$25,000 per year with most husbands in the household being involved in labor and construction. The Latino parent had from two to five children, ranging in age from 5 months to 19 years.

Findings

The parents who participated in this study provided information about what attracted their children to activities in which they were currently participating. These parents also provided suggestions for ways to increase participation of all Latino youth.

Reasons for Current Participation

Four themes emerged about parents' criteria for their children's activities. Parents wanted their children to choose activities that they enjoyed, were productive and kept them out of trouble, helped them to gain skills which would benefit their future, and activities that would involve the entire family.

Their children's happiness was most important to parents and parents wanted their children to choose activities which they enjoyed. A parent stated, "We have kids and we try to make them happy. In reality, they are going to [choose] what they need, or what they want to learn." Activities were viewed as beneficial when their children continued to be interested in them

The important thing is that they like it and they participate and they feel good. It won't do any good if I say I want them to do this. If they don't like it, they aren't going to feel good and they aren't going to do it.

Some parents drew upon their children's interest in activities to motivate them to succeed in school. One parent would permit her son to participate in sports if he did not fall behind in his studies.

According to the parents who were interviewed, they wanted their children to participate in meaningful activities and to avoid idleness. Parents supported sports activities where their children could spend time doing something good. Rather than having their children participating in unproductive activities like watching television or playing video games, parents wanted their children to stay busy and, "they did not have time to put bad things into their heads."

Productive activities also included activities that helped children acquire academic and social skills which gave them confidence and competence that would be beneficial for their future. Because many Latino children needed help with school work, parents who knew little or no English themselves sought out community programs for academic assistance for their children. One parent was especially appreciative of a program that helped her daughter develop confidence in school because her daughter improved her reading skills.

Parents were also appreciative of programs that helped their children practice social skills. One parent who was concerned about her children's social skills reported that her children had learned to interact with other people and be more talkative through participation in community programs. Another parent said community programs had helped her son learn to share and get along with his younger siblings and other children.

Parents enjoyed having their children participate in activities that involved the entire family. Activities that involved family members going in different directions were not helpful for families who were making efforts to create family time. One parent talked about a youth activity that involved a weekly family time by saying, "We learned as a family. At least once a week we could all be together. It has helped us a lot to share a little more time."

Ways to Increase Participation

We asked participants how we could increase Latino youth participation in programming. Participants suggested programs should advertise and provide programming in Spanish, extend personal invitations, and welcome all people regardless of their ethnicity.

Participants indicated they would be better informed about and more interested in programs if they were advertised in Spanish:

If [fliers] are in Spanish they are going to attract more attention, because I am going to participate. If it's in English, I don't pay attention. If it's in English it doesn't catch my attention. It's easier in Spanish.

Parents indicated that advertisements should be large enough to be noticed and should be in places Latinos frequent, such as schools, libraries, stores such as Wal-Mart, laundromats, factories where many Latino's work, parks, and Latino-owned businesses. Announcements could be broadcast on a Spanish radio station because, according to one parent, not many people have access to television in Spanish.

In addition to advertising in Spanish, parents suggested that community leaders should offer programming in Spanish:

Many Latinos don't speak the language well or sometimes we don't understand everything so it would be very important that someone speak Spanish to be able to express everything that we want.

It was also important to personally contact Latinos so they know that they are welcome to participate in community programs. Participants described how they sometimes attended public events and, because of their ethnicity, they felt not welcome. One parent said, "You have to invite them, you have to tell them that there is a program that helps them." Parents made it clear that it was best to invite Latinos through a phone call or a personal visit. This personal invitation is how they would be informed about the program and also know that they were welcome. Furthermore, parents wanted reminders about their children's activities through a personal telephone call or a note sent home with their children. Because Latinos usually learned about programs through involved Latino friends, parents said that if community leaders gave them information about programs, they would pass the word on to their friends.

Parents also expressed desire to be involved in their children's activities by saying, "You can't just send them and leave them there, but [you need to] be there, knowing what they are doing and how it is going to serve them." Participants also indicated that community leaders can encourage parents to be involved in their children's activities by inviting them. One parent stated, "Just let us know that there is this type of activity and we can come, invite us, invite the children." Parents will attend activities when they know about them. Although many parents went to their children's activities, others could not because of other commitments such as work. One parent said, "I think that for me to participate my time is too limited. I almost never have a day off." When parents worked and were unavailable to bring children to an event, it was important that transportation be provided for their children.

Most parents seemed to think that any location for activities would be fine as long as the place was appropriate, they were not imposing on someone else, and there was adequate space that all could be seated comfortably. One parent said, "It can be at the park, at a lake, at home, it

can be sidewalk in the street. It can be far or it can be close, no problem. If I know the people I feel more comfortable." When one parent was asked how to help the Latino community become more involved, she conversed openly about the discrimination that she had encountered by saying:

Yes, you feel it, when they are discriminating against you. It's like you as an American go to a party and all of the Hispanics are in one corner talking and you alone at a table, what are you going to think. What do you feel?

Having experienced discrimination themselves, parents wanted to include all people, and suggested activities in which people of all ethnicities could share time together. One way to involve parents and show respect for their culture is to encourage them to share their cultural knowledge and skills. One parent suggested that she and other mothers could help by making food to sell to raise money for her children's activities. She was very enthusiastic about her ideas and willing to help out in whatever way she could.

Conclusions and Implications

Results from this study bring insight into how community leaders can direct their recruitment and programming in ways that are culturally appropriate and responsive to the needs of the Latino population. The importance that Latino parents placed on their children's activities supported literature about the Latino culture that states that intergenerational connections, such as the relationship of a parent to a child, take high precedence in the family (Falicov, 1998; Penn, Hernández, & Bermúdez, 1997).

Many parents wanted their children to learn skills and be able to participate in activities that could involve their family. This supports other research that states that *familism* is an enduring trait even when families become highly acculturated (Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, and Gaollardo-Cooper, 2002). This closeness among family members can be viewed as a source of strength in Latino families because it can be a resource in providing financial or social support in times of crises (Santiago-Rivera, et al., 2002). Rather than trying to replace the family, community leaders should offer programming that builds upon Latino's family values and involves family members. Programming that does not seem to be family oriented may not be attractive to the Latino population because they do not want their children involved in activities that may supersede the family connections. Community program leaders also need to analyze the values that are transmitted by their programs to see if they are in line with Latino family values.

The lack of information and the lack of communication between the Latino and majority population was identified as an enormous barrier to Latino participation in community programs. Many Latinos do not understand English very well and lack the social networks that would help them to hear about programs to help their children. Even if they had heard about programs, some did not participate because they had not personally received the information.

Personalismo, which is valuing warm, friendly, and somewhat informal, interpersonal relationships, is important in Latino culture (Santiago-Rivera, et al., 2002). Having a positive relationship with a person may be more important than the task at hand (Santiago-Rivera, et al., 2002) and this may be true in fostering relationships that encourage the Latino community to participate in community programs. If they lacked the personal connection with people in the community, they may have felt isolated and discriminated against. It is imperative that

community leaders welcome, include, and build relationships with all people in their programs. They should do so without making them feel like they are being patronized and should focus on the personal relationship and the needs of the individual. One way to help parents feel welcome is to invite them to share their knowledge and skills to help out in whatever way they can. When people feel needed they are more likely to feel included and welcome.

It is important that community leaders meet the needs of the Latino community by: (a) advertising and programming in the Spanish language (b) offering personal invitations (c) helping them feel welcome through building personal relationships and helping them to feel needed by drawing upon their strengths and talents. If Latinos are informed, invited, and included, they will come. As one parent said, "If you invite the Latino community then, yes, we participate."

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Learn to Live: Simple and Practical Activities to Promote Health, Nutrition and Physical Fitness in the K-8 Curriculum

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Learn to Live: Simple and Practical Activities to Promote Health, Nutrition and Physical fitness in the K-8 Curriculum

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Abstract: Current health education and physical fitness programs have failed to prevent the youth obesity epidemic. The diminishing emphasis placed on such programs due to curricular and budgetary constraints results in few opportunities to promote students' active participation in regular physical activity and health education programs. Findings indicate that a successful program to promote healthy nutrition, an active lifestyle, and regular physical exercise requires that the information is easily accessible, and presented in a clear and concise format. Readers are introduced to a comprehensive program, easily adjustable throughout the K-8 curriculum. It is designed to complement regular classroom activities by introducing a series of stand-alone lessons and activities to educate students on the benefits of regular exercise and healthy lifestyle. This program can be used in any community and can offer the youth population the information they need to create healthy habits that will last a lifetime.

Introduction

In the United States, over 18% of children ages 6-11 are obese; a number which is rising rapidly each year (American Obesity Association, 2002). If these children continue to be overweight throughout their childhood and adolescence, they will have a 70% chance of being overweight or obese as adults (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2006). It is well known that overweight children are at risk of developing health problems such as diabetes as well as self-esteem issues (Gidding et al., 1996). Several studies have pointed out that as obese children mature into overweight adults, they will be at risk for cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, stroke, and diabetes (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2006). The growing rate of childhood obesity has illustrated that dealing with obesity needs to start with our youth.

Many schools have reduced class time for physical education programs due to budgetary constraints and school policies (American Heart Association, 2006). As explained later, these schools will benefit from a supplementary health program because they are not meeting the government requirements for physical education and health. A study done by Cornell University found that even if schools offer physical education classes, their students may not be exercising sufficiently. Students are not motivated to participate in physical education programs nor do they understand the importance of them since they are not educated about these issues (Crawley, 2006). It is imperative to the success of a health program that students be taught the reasons that physical activity and a nutritious diet are important parts of life. There is a need for an education program that promotes a healthy lifestyle and regular physical exercise to youth in schools.

The National Institute of Health has compiled a list of key strategies to fight the youth obesity epidemic. These strategies include:

- addressing physical activity and nutrition through a coordinated school curriculum,
- implementing a high-quality health promotion program, and
- including courses in health and physical education.

A program that addresses these key strategies through a series of stand-alone lessons to compliment regular classroom activities had been proposed. These activities will focus on creating healthy habits, emphasizing nutrition, physical fitness, and simple physiology. Easily implemented by any educator, these lessons will teach the fundamentals of a healthy lifestyle, thereby offering an important strategy in the fight against childhood obesity.

Resource Design

Implementation of a successful health education program requires information to be easily accessible and presented in a clear and concise format. In the absence of any available comprehensive and low-cost program, the *Learn to Live* curriculum was developed last year. *Learn to Live* is a complete program, easily adjustable throughout grades K-8, and it includes a series of stand-alone lessons designed to complement regular classroom activities. Lessons are developed to include the Hawaii Department of Education Standards concerning health, nutrition and physical education, and include "hands-on" activities to encourage students to be interested and involved.

Our review of the available literature indicates that programs that combine education with hands-on activities yield best results in terms of student comprehension and retention. Accordingly, *Learn to Live* is unique because it combines nutrition, physical, fitness, tobacco education, germ awareness, simple physiology, and numerous other relevant topics into one complete package. Furthermore, the "Learn to Live" program is cost effective because any teacher can use it in his or her classroom, eliminating the need to hire additional educators to implement the lessons.

The goal of the *Learn to Live* program is to fight the obesity epidemic by educating students about the importance of a healthy lifestyle from a young age. This is accomplished through three main strategies:

- 1) Providing youth with the information needed to create healthy habits that will last a

lifetime.

- 2) Helping schools meet the Department of Education Standards for health, nutrition and physical education.
- 3) Instilling an interest in physical fitness and movement activities back into our youth.

Learn to Live Program

The program is designed to be simple and it can be easily used by any educator. The format includes materials that can be adjusted if need be, to fit the school or classroom in which it is being used. A binder, complete with all lesson plans, activity descriptions, handouts and evaluations, to be stationed in a central location for those who might utilize the materials. A library, or an organization which promotes community wellness, are possible locations for the materials to be reserved.

Each lesson is structured in the following order:

- title and topic area,
- Department of Education Standards covered,
- length of time needed,
- materials required,
- an overview of the lesson,
- a brief purpose statement and
- the lesson itself.

Information is presented clearly and is in a complete format, enabling teachers who have no expertise in the area to teach the lesson. Each topic includes hands-on activities suitable to a specific age level and thorough instructions for completion of the activity. Age-appropriate evaluations for the students following the lecture and activities allow feedback that could be useful if adjustments to the lesson are needed.

An example of a lesson used in the three age groups is Fun with Food. The lesson plan is altered to accommodate each age group, although the material covered is similar for each. Specific Department of Education Standards within the categories of fine arts, science, math, health, and physical education are addressed in the lesson. The K-2 Fun with Food plan begins with a discussion of the different food groups while the students color the sections of the new food guide pyramid. The activity involves creating a "healthy meal" place mat where students will draw food items from the varying food groups that they studied, to create a balanced meal. The placemat, which can be laminated using clear packaging tape, can then be used by the student either for lunch at school or taken home for his or her place at the family's dining room table. The lesson comes to an end with a "Five Food Groups" song, with the lyrics provided, sung to the tune of Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star to help the students remember what they have learned. The students also are asked to complete an evaluation, which will provide the educator with useful feedback.

The same lesson for grades 3-5 includes a discussion about the food pyramid in more depth than the K-2 lesson by exploring the importance of serving sizes and healthy food choices. The activity requires students to make their own food pyramid with healthy foods so that they realize what should be eaten in abundance and foods that should be enjoyed in moderation. Evaluations are straightforward and include questions such as "How many food groups are there and can you name them all?" to assess students comprehension of the lesson.

The 6-8th grade lesson goes into the most depth and begins to approach the concept of calories. The lesson begins with a discussion about what a calorie is, how many we should be eating, and how many of each type of food we should be consuming. The activity included in this lesson is to burn a cashew in a homemade calorimeter, which will measure the amount of heat produced and can determine how many calories the nut contains. This fairly simple yet exciting scientific experiment allows students to have hands-on experience to determine the amount of calories in a certain type of food. The evaluations for the 6-8th graders involve more opened ended questions such as, "Discuss something that you learned today that you did not know before." Each of the lesson plans is unique but follows a format similar to the others.

The format of the program allows teachers to supplement their daily classroom activities with important instruction about health, nutrition and physical fitness without much added time and effort. While there is an abundant amount of information available regarding these subject areas, typically, an instructor must schedule many hours of research and lesson planning to create one lesson. The *Learn to Live* program lesson plans are available online through Tutu's House, a non-profit organization aimed at community wellness. The website can be found at www.tutushouse.org

Target Audience

The *Learn to Live* program targets educators of kindergarten through eighth grade students. The lesson plans are divided into three groups; kindergarten through second grade, third through fifth grade and sixth through eighth grade. The groups are consistent with the Hawaii Department of Education Standards for Health, Nutrition and Physical Education but can be adapted to meet other state standards. The standards for each group are different so creating lesson plans to target specific age groups keeps the material age-appropriate as well as satisfying government requirements.

Impact of the Curriculum Resource

A first trial of this program proved very successful when implemented at a school in Hawaii. The students actively participated in discussions and surveys showed that the students comprehended the material. Conducting a similar program within schools will promote students' active participation in regular physical fitness and health education programs. Stand-alone lessons will allow teachers to fit health, nutrition and physical fitness activities into normal classroom schedules with little difficulty. Providing youth with information needed to create healthy habits will have a significant impact on the way they approach physical education classes and their health in general. In this report we introduce the *Live to Learn* curriculum for free adoption by educators across the country. The teachers who choose to adopt the curriculum will be asked to return a survey designed to evaluate the ease of implementation, quality and depth of information, adaptability to different classes, etc. The results will be shared in a subsequent report.

Summary

The *Learn to Live* program has the potential to benefit youth around the country. It is accessible to teachers and will help schools to meet the government requirements for Health and Physical Fitness. A recent study done by the American Obesity Association (2002) found that 30% of parents are either somewhat or very concerned about their child's weight, physical activity, and health. As the childhood obesity epidemic continues to grow, it is essential to the

well being of our youth population to implement a program that will teach them the importance of good health starting at a young age. Children who learn about nutrition and physical education through exciting hands-on activities and discussion will gain knowledge that will foster healthy habits for a lifetime.

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