

YOUTHFUL VOICES: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF SUCCESSFUL YOUTH

INTERVENTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

by

Yvonne D. Nelson

RUBY H. BRAYE, PhD, Faculty Mentor and Chair

KEITH GRANT, PhD, Committee Member

ALTHEA SUMPTER, PhD, Committee Member

William A. Reed, PhD, Acting Dean, School of Business and Technology

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Abstract

The absence of youth voice in the planning, design, delivery, and assessment stages of youth intervention and development programs is beginning to be recognized as a major flaw in determining the effectiveness of youth development programs. Early philosophers were erroneously guided by perspectives that viewed adolescence as a time of storm and stress for young adults. During the early stages of research in youth development, positive youth development (PYD) was viewed as the absence of negative or undesirable activities in adolescents. Modern proponents of youth development have yet to develop a widely accepted strategy or vocabulary for the evaluation of effective youth development programs, but they have advanced research ideas associated with the PYD theory. The PYD perspective is a tool for assessing the effectiveness of youth development programs. This exploratory case study explored the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs through the perspectives of 15 graduates who were subject matter experts on their former youth development program. The graduates were interviewed using a modified semistructured interview guide to ensure responses were obtained related to the central research question and four subquestions. The data collected were then member checked, analyzed for themes, and coded to allow common themes for each research question to surface. The analyzed data supported the need to incorporate youth voice in the planning, design, delivery, and assessment of youth intervention and development programs and resulted in the creation of the Developmental Intervention Model for the Assessment of Neighborhood Systems (DIMANS).

Dedication

This paper is dedicated to the countless number of individuals, churches, not-for-profit organizations, and for-profit entities that are interested in helping to preserve and to protect our future by looking for innovative and effective strategies to enhance the knowledge, skills, and abilities of all youth.

Acknowledgments

Without trust, we have nothing. Without struggle, there is often no gain. The struggle I have had to endure to get to this juncture in life has crossed many paths. My Earthly thanks begin with my parents, who I lost at the age of 11. I thank my mother, Lenora, the person who gives me strength, and my father Nathan, whom I barely remember. I thank my sisters and brothers who are still living, Claudette, Morris, Linda, Morgan, and especially Dolores, for always believing in me and helping me to be the person I have grown to be. I also thank my oldest brother “Sonny,” who provided guidance and support when we had to endure the loss of our mother. I would be remiss if I did not thank my children, Douglas, Jr. and Iman, my biological children, and my other children—all of whom are the real reason why I keep trying to make a difference in our world. I believe in all of you and I want you to achieve greater heights in life at an early age to allow you to enjoy life as you continue to mature. I would never have made it this far without the support and guidance of my dissertation chair, Dr. Rubye Braye. Thank you, Dr. Braye. And thanks to my committee members, Dr. Althea Sumpter and Dr. Keith Grant, for your expert advice and guidance also. A special thanks to the silent benefactor who made the start of this last leg of my journey possible. For those of you who were asked to read or comment on my work prior to its publication and for those of you who helped me in other ways, I thank you. And if you, for whatever reason, kept me in your prayers or have me in them now, I thank you too.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

A plethora of organizations with mission statements that entail making a positive difference in the lives of adolescents considered at risk of succeeding in life or school exist; however, the voices of program participants are often excluded from the initial planning and ongoing program assessment stages. A review of the literature revealed qualitative studies showing the importance of after-school programs have been conducted, but only a few of these studies relied on the perspective and experiences of the youth participants of these programs in making their assessments (Daud, 2006). The perspective and experiences of youth concerning activities of interest and the opinions of adolescent voices are missing from the planning and assessment stages of youth intervention and development programs. The benefits of involving young people in the design, planning, delivery, and assessment of programs is beginning to be recognized by increasing numbers of youth workers and organizations (J. Walker, Marczak, Blyth, & Borden, 2005; K. Walker, 2007).

Introduction to the Problem

Nonprofit associations, branches of for-profit businesses, and other entities sponsor a variety of programs that seek innovative ways to reach youth at risk of failing in life or school without assessing the perspectives of the youth the programs are

designed to help. To begin to solve the problems at-risk youth face, an ecological understanding of the needs, accessibility, and effectiveness of services from the perspective of these adolescent needs to be developed (Heinze, 2006). Many organizations base their mentoring efforts on what they believe will best serve the needs of individuals in their communities. In its own way, each program specializes in providing interventions designed to reduce the chance that at-risk youth will go astray. One of the original goals of these organizations was to protect youth from the enticing but dangerous activities readily available in their communities when school is not in session (Gardner & Brooks-Gunn, 2009). Another goal is to provide people with the skills, knowledge, and experience necessary to become productive citizens (Jackson, 2006).

Devastating effects were realized by many families when several major automobile, banking, and construction industries suffered setbacks beginning in 2008. These setbacks trickled down to smaller businesses, causing a negative ripple effect in job stability and future employment opportunities. Joblessness was high for many groups, but unemployment was particularly high for adolescents (Bellotti, Rosenberg, Sattar, Esposito, & Ziegler, 2010). Many jobs were eliminated as companies continued to scale back on services and production. These strategies had a negative impact on all workers, but particularly crippled employment opportunities for youthful job seekers. Reported at 4.4 million, the youth unemployment rate in July 2009 was among the highest recorded since 1948 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009). At essentially the same rate reported in 2009, the youth unemployment rate edged up over 19.1% in July 2010, representing the

highest youth unemployment rate recorded in the past 62 years (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010).

The result of the nation's economic crisis further crippled low-income families and negatively affected the lives of many other Americans (American Psychology Association, 2010).

In 2008, 19 percent of all children aged 0–17 (14.1 million; the highest rate since 1998) lived in poverty; the percentage of related children with family incomes below the poverty threshold was 19 percent; and 8 percent of related children (5.9 million; the highest percentage since 1998) lived in extreme poverty, defined as living in a family with income less than one-half of the poverty threshold. (Federal Interagency Forum, 2010, p. 6)

Compared with children living in families that are not in poverty, children living in poverty are more likely to have difficulty in school, become teen parents, and, as adults, earn less and be unemployed more frequently (Federal Interagency Forum, 2009). Children who live in homes without financial stability are less likely to become productive citizens than those who do not face risks daily or grow up in substandard living environments. Youth who reside in low-income or unsafe neighborhoods and experience poverty and economic hardship are at greater risk for poor social and emotional outcomes, injury or mortality, and entry into the juvenile justice system (American Psychology Association, 2010; Fauth, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2007).

Juvenile crime is a problem that has persisted in the past and, unless innovative strategies begin to be implemented, will more than likely continue to be a major concern in the future. Few people would argue that youth who frequently encounter negative situations risk an increased chance of going astray. Research has revealed that incarceration does not rehabilitate all juvenile offenders (Center on Juvenile and Criminal

Justice, n.d.). Often, juvenile offenders become repeat offenders. The American juvenile justice system was created to deal with young offenders, but its reactive scope may prevent it from being an effective remedy for keeping problematic youth out of trouble.

Youth intervention and development programs seek to improve the lives of children and adolescents at risk of failing in life or school by meeting their basic physical, developmental, and social needs (StateUniversity.com, 2010). The vision of most youth intervention and development programs is to prevent children from dropping out of school, engaging in risky behavior, and ultimately clashing head-on with the juvenile justice system, or death. Improving academic performance, preventing problem behavior, and protecting youth against exposure to community violence are several reasons the requests to increase the supply of neighborhood youth organizations continues to grow (Gardner & Brooks-Gunn, 2009). These organizations are preventive measures that strive to provide alternatives to the many scenarios that unsupervised youth can encounter. Only a limited amount of information is available regarding the usefulness of youth intervention programs based on the perspective of program graduates (Bulanda, 2008; Metzger, 2007; Princes, 2008). Gaining a better understanding of the specific factors that predict program satisfaction from the perspective of program participants will improve intervention and development programs and empower decision makers to advocate for improved services for at-risk youth (Heinze, 2006). Utilizing the perspectives of 15 program graduates, this study explored the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs in a large city in an East South Central state.

Background of the Study

Over the years, the lifestyle of the average working American family has changed. Economic recessions in the early 19th century pushed children out of factory work during the industrial revolution (Steinberg, 2009). “As society moved from a primarily agrarian to an industrialized basis, youth who had once worked on farms were displaced when the economic centers moved to the urban areas and factories replaced farms as work centers for families” (Hinton, Sims, Adams, & West, 2007, p. 468). For safety and other reasons, various laws were enacted that prevented children from laboring in industrial environments. These laws were meant to keep children safe, but in many instances, they also caused financial hardships on their families. Possibly the most devastating hardship was realized when caregivers discovered they could no longer depend on the food harvested from the farmland they had previously worked to feed their families. In essence, this meant they still had to support large numbers of children, but the children were of little or no financial help in supporting themselves as they had been in the past. In part because of the financial strain placed on these families, increasing numbers of women began working outside the home (Woodland, 2008). Children who once had daily chores on farms were suddenly faced with idle time, few or no structured activities, and limited or no adult supervision. “Children who had previously worked on family farms now found themselves displaced from the labor force with far too much free time and diminished supervision” (Hinton et al., 2007, p. 468).

Delinquency has been increasingly viewed as the result of numerous factors, the most prevalent being the lack of parental discipline (Brittian, 2010; StateUniversity.com, 2010). The effect of single and dual working-parent households left many youth with

several hours of unsupervised activities. A double-negative impact of unsupervised hours after school combined with a corresponding influx of drugs and other economic factors in many low-income neighborhoods is another major cause of delinquency (Woodland, 2008). Options to combat these problems were limited for the majority of these families, although many felt something had to be done to address this growing concern.

Intervention and development programs and youth organizations were introduced to the childcare landscape about 100 years ago (Gardner & Brooks-Gunn, 2009).

Estimates suggest that more than 7 million adolescents have unsupervised hours after their school day ends (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). After-school programs are designed to provide safe places for youth to go after school when no other adult supervision is available for them. The organizers of these programs often elect to forgo obtaining the perspectives of adolescent participants during the design, planning, delivery, and assessment stages. However, determining what participants desire and implementing programs that respond to their requests can increase program quality and participation (Russell, 2008).

Youth intervention and development programs attract at-risk youth with positive activities that promote alternative lifestyles that help them successfully transition into adulthood. These community-based programs offer youth who lack supportive family environments or feel marginalized from conventional school programs alternative settings for developing a positive sense of self and opportunities to develop personal relationships with nonfamilial adults and peers (Serido, Borden, & Perkins, 2009). To attract youth who may otherwise prefer to spend their out-of-school hours in nonproductive situations, youth intervention programs frequently offer activities that

include various types of athletics, dance, technological, and other themes of interest for the average adolescent. These components are frequently available in addition to academic enrichment and job skills training. Individual programs can provide youth with developmental activities, but the positive youth development (PYD) approach works best when adolescents are involved in creating a continuum of services and opportunities they need to grow into productive adulthood (Balsano, Phelps, Theokas, Lerner, & Lerner, 2009; National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth, n.d.).

The PYD perspective rose through the development and evaluation of interventions designed to counter increased numbers of substantial incidences of risk behaviors among youth (Lerner, 2005). Assessments or evaluations are useful tools for determining how effectively a youth intervention and development program is meeting its goals. Program assessments can be conducted by obtaining the perspective of program participants and other program stakeholders. Rather than perform assessments of program effectiveness, youth intervention and development programs often elect to channel the limited funding available to program operations that directly impact the youth being served. Organizations typically operate with limited funding that does not support evaluation (Miller, 2007). Lacking knowledge of how to improve operations from program assessments has resulted in a limited amount of information that determines what compels youth to attend youth intervention and development programs.

Heinze (2006) examined the factors that lead youth to return to, continue, or complete programs. The theory of PYD provides a framework that emphasizes a youth's ability to contribute to his or her own development and that of his or her community (Balsano et al., 2009; DeGenova, 2010). By relying on this type of framework, a deeper

understanding of the relationship between youth engagement and the outcomes resulting from program participation can be sought. This framework can be found in youth–adult partnerships (Y–APs). The Y–AP approach recognizes youth are assets, partners, and contributors to youth development organizations and their communities (Anderson & Sandmann, 2009). By exploring the perspectives of 15 graduates from youth intervention and development programs located in a large city in an East South Central state, this study presents practices that are helpful, not helpful, and could be changed to improve the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is that youth are often not invited to the table to share their ideas when program organizers begin to plan how to best design successful youth intervention and development programs that not only attract youth but keep them interested. To be effective, programming that meets the specific needs of adolescents should be supported and implemented (Heinze, 2006). It is important to provide youth with wholesome after-school activities to lessen their chances for exhibiting delinquent behaviors. If youth are not provided with positive outlets, they may find potentially damaging alternatives (Kress, 2006). Delinquent behaviors in juveniles can be controlled by providing youth with structured environments that respond to their individual needs (Feldman & Matjasko, 2005).

It would be useful to know if the perspectives of program graduates can be an effective indicator of youth intervention and development program effectiveness. Daud (2006) posited the biggest gap in the literature stems from researchers being neglectful of

the voices of program participants instead of seeing and utilizing them as their most significant resource. Research studies have occasionally addressed the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs, but the use of youth voices to assess program effectiveness is rare. This exploratory case study addressed the lack of literature exploring the perspectives of youth intervention and development program participants to identify improvements in the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programmatic.

Exploring the positive and negative perspectives and experiences of participants concerning ways intervention and development programs can minimize barriers and increase efficacy may uncover what constitutes the best practices in the field of youth intervention and development (Heinze, 2006). The main thrust of the present investigation was to explore, from the perspective of youth intervention and development program graduates, what is helpful, not helpful, and could be changed to improve the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this exploratory case study was to understand the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs from the perspective of program graduates. At this stage in the research, a tentative definition of an effective youth intervention and development program is one that employs the PYD theory. To be effective, youth intervention and development programming must meet the prescribed needs of participants and promote their healthy development into adulthood (Heinze, 2006). Providing avenues for youth voice to be heard in the design, planning, delivery,

and assessment of youth intervention and development programs may be one effective PYD strategy for determining the prescribed needs of program participants. Since this strategy is rarely employed, it is likely that existing youth intervention and development programming is poorly matched to the unique characteristics and needs of youth at risk of failing in life or school (Heinze, 2006).

For this study, program effectiveness was explored through the perspectives of 15 graduates of two existing youth intervention and development programs. The graduates' perspectives were sought through telephone interviews designed to explore which elements they perceived were helpful, not helpful, and could be changed to improve the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs. Currently, there is a lack of literature answering this question using this method. This type of approach has the potential to increase the appeal of youth intervention and development programs to a wider audience while maximizing the benefits of attending for participants (Serido et al., 2009; K. Walker, 2007). Youth who have a voice in the design, planning, delivery, and assessment of youth intervention and development programmatic may begin to view these programs as being beneficial to their development, which may make youth more inclined to return, continue, and complete these types of programs.

Rationale

“Qualitative methods are often used in program evaluations because they tell the program’s story by capturing and communicating participants’ stories” (Patton, 2005, p. 1634). The perspectives of intervention and development program graduates may be an important component for determining program effectiveness since these perspectives may

be a reliable source of general information regarding strategies programs can employ to improve services. Understanding the perspectives of program graduates is useful when these perspectives provide additional insight into the program's processes and outcomes for the individuals charged with making program decisions (Patton, 2005).

A gap exists in the literature concerning the effectiveness of after-school programs that utilize youth-led methods (Bulanda, 2008) from the perspective of program graduates. This study was conducted to explore the lack of literature available regarding the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs from the perspective of program graduates. Qualitative studies emphasize the people who make up the statistics, providing a deepened understanding of their experiences (Patton, 2005). The expected findings may contribute new knowledge to the field of youth intervention and development. Programs that are designed for youth are often not designed by youth. The theory of PYD suggests youth need opportunities to interact critically, experientially, and reflectively within the contexts of their social and environmental ecologies (White, 2009).

The opinions of youth concerning youth intervention and development programs need to be actively sought, and youth need to be given the opportunity to participate in the program assessment process (Bulanda, 2008). Youth-led reviews may provide information on the effectiveness of the youth intervention and development programs. A review of the literature revealed the voice of the youth who attend youth intervention and development programs was absent from the review of the effectiveness of many programs. Youth hold the key to solving the participation puzzle because they know where to find and how to talk to nonparticipants, the media required to reach teens, and

are in the best position to create and deliver messages and invitations to get involved (Saito, 2006). Outcomes from organizations that utilize youth voice reveal the strategy of employing youth voice is effective in the design, planning, delivery, and assessment of youth intervention and development programs. Organizations and communities that involve youth in the development of activities and programs have more positive environments and youth outcomes (Bulanda, 2008; Dallaire, 2009; Daud, 2006).

This research was conducted to explore what is helpful, not helpful, and could be changed to improve the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs from the perspective of program participants. Gaining a better understanding of specific factors that predict satisfaction from the perspective of the consumer may result in findings that improve evaluations of youth intervention and development projects and empower decision makers to improve services for at-risk youth (Heinze, 2006).

Research Questions

This study employed a qualitative exploratory case study methodology to explore the understanding of what is helpful, not helpful, and could be changed to improve the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs from the perspective of program participants. The following research questions guided this study.

Central Research Question

What are the perspectives of graduates of youth intervention and development programs that may be used to understand program effectiveness?

The central research question explored the perspectives of graduates of youth intervention and development programs regarding program effectiveness. This question

was designed to explore program effectiveness from the perspective of program graduates, not the effectiveness of the program based on other factors.

Research Subquestions

1. How did the program meet graduate needs?
2. How did the program help graduates?
3. What aspects of the program were not helpful?
4. What aspects of the program could be changed to improve program effectiveness?

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the literature that connects the importance of utilizing youth voice to that of effective youth intervention and development program design by serving as a source that explores information central to improving the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs based on the perspectives of program participants. Youth can develop positive relationships in community programs, strengthen their voice, and receive more benefits from program participation when they are empowered and inspired (Gong & Wright, 2007; Serido et al., 2009). Not fully understanding what is attractive to adolescents makes designing programs that interest them a challenge; however, giving youth a voice in the program design, planning, delivery, and assessment empowers them to feel ownership in the process. Young people embrace and appreciate opportunities to contribute their voice, and they feel like valued members of their communities when they have these types of opportunities (Evans, 2007).

Youth need to feel connected to feel they belong. To be effective, youth intervention and development organizations must have programs that are attractive to adolescents. When youth are not attracted by what youth intervention and development programs have to offer, they may replace these activities with those that cause them to exhibit delinquent behaviors. Adolescent participation in high-risk or illegal behaviors can have severe, long-term consequences for the individual, his or her family, and for society (Federal Interagency Forum, 2010). It is important for society to provide youth with wholesome activities that can keep them away from delinquent behaviors. Youth intervention and development programs are designed to provide at-risk youth with positive alternatives to delinquent behaviors. Youth development of skills and competence may be enhanced by providing opportunities for youth involvement in decision making, guiding and directing activities, and helping others (Heinze, 2006).

By examining the perspectives of graduates of youth intervention and development programs concerning what is helpful, not helpful, and could be changed to improve the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs, this study may be important to the design of current and future youth intervention and development programs.

Definition of Terms

The absence of a commonly accepted vocabulary in the field of PYD is the primary obstacle encountered when attempting to investigate the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs (Lerner et al., 2006). To ensure readers of this

study fully understand the terms employed, the following definitions and acronyms are provided.

Adolescence. The life span period where the majority of a person's biological, cognitive, psychological, and social characteristics are changing from childlike to adult-like (Lerner, 2005).

After-school program. Programs designed to provide a safe place and structured activities for youth after school lets out (Apsler, 2009); structured extracurricular activities and youth programs that meet after school and/or on weekends (Fauth et al., 2007).

At-risk youth. Children who do not make good decisions based on the expectations of society (Edwards, Mumford, & Serra-Roldan, 2007); persons living in poverty and/or exposed to other social problems that create a high probability for drug abuse, teen pregnancy, child abuse, violence, and school failure (Dallaire, 2009).

Developmental intentionality theory. A framework, informed by research, theory, and practice, that captures the relationship between developmental outcomes, youth engagement, and intentionality in the philosophy, design, daily implementation, and delivery of youth intervention and development programs that create effective learning opportunities for youth (J. Walker et al., 2005).

Intervention/development programs. Programs in which youth experience a high degree of ownership and empowerment, and develop leadership and planning skills (Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005).

Out-of-school time programs. After-school and summer school programs that supplement the education of low-achieving students (Lauer et al., 2009).

Positive youth development (PYD) theory. A policy perspective that emphasizes providing services and opportunities to support adolescents to develop a sense of a competence, usefulness, belonging, and empowerment (National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth, n.d.); a natural developmental process whereby youth are supportive of self and community; a philosophy or frame for youth programming involving community- or youth-based organizations that youth develop positively; or a specific set of programming guidelines that involve specific mentoring activities, skill building, and leadership skills (P. E. King et al., 2005).

Youth development. A process that all young people go through on the way to adulthood (Dallaire, 2009).

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

The objective of this exploratory case study was to understand, from the perspective of program graduates, what is helpful, not helpful, and could be changed to improve the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs. Several assumptions were made during the undertaking of this study. These assumptions relate to the programs, the graduates, and the researcher.

Assumptions related to the program and graduates were that youth intervention and development programs would have

- Program graduates in the specified age range.
- Graduates who would be willing to participate in this research.
- Graduates who would provide truthful responses to the questions posed.

The assumption was made that the semistructured interview guide modified for use in this study has validity and would measure the desired constructs. The assumption was made that any conclusions reached would be bias-free, generated from the findings as opposed to those of personal preferences or experiences, and replicable.

Limitations

The limitation regarding the small number of graduate participants of youth intervention and development programs in a large city in an East South Central state utilized for the study caused concern since such a small number of participants may degrade the quality of the study. Additional limitations include

1. Budget constraints and a specified completion time.
2. The method of collecting data being limited to field notes, documents, and interviews.
3. The ability of the participant to reconstruct events.
4. The fact that the study had a singular focus.

Although the research employed a purposive and relatively small number of participants, it may still serve as a starting point for other researchers (Jackson, 2006).

Conceptual Framework

The objective of this study was to assess the perspective of program graduates concerning the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs located in a large city in an East South Central state. Participant perspectives were obtained using a qualitative exploratory case study research methodology. There are several worldviews that can guide qualitative research. Paradigms or worldviews are accepted examples of

scientific practice that provide models that define coherent traditions of scientific research (Kuhn, 1996). Creswell (2003) identified four paradigms—(a) postpositivism, (b) constructivism, (c) advocacy/participatory, and (d) pragmatism—that shape the practice of research. Of the four worldviews, the constructivism framework was chosen as the philosophical assumption for this study as a way to understand the world through the perspectives of and the need to rely on the views of participants (Creswell, 2007).

This research relied on the views of the participants to investigate the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs. Constructivist research addresses the processes of interaction among individuals by focusing on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants (Creswell, 2007). The subject matter experts are the graduates, and their specific context or setting is the youth intervention and development program they attended. The intent of this study was to make sense of or to interpret the meanings the participants have about their settings (Creswell, 2003).

The graduate's perspectives of the effectiveness of the youth intervention and development programs they attended were studied. A graduate's perspective may be influenced by external factors to include his or her school and other community constructs, family members, and friends. The conceptual framework (see Figure 1) was provided to assist the reader in understanding how the variables, theory, and proposed research interact in a manner that assists the graduates in becoming productive citizens.

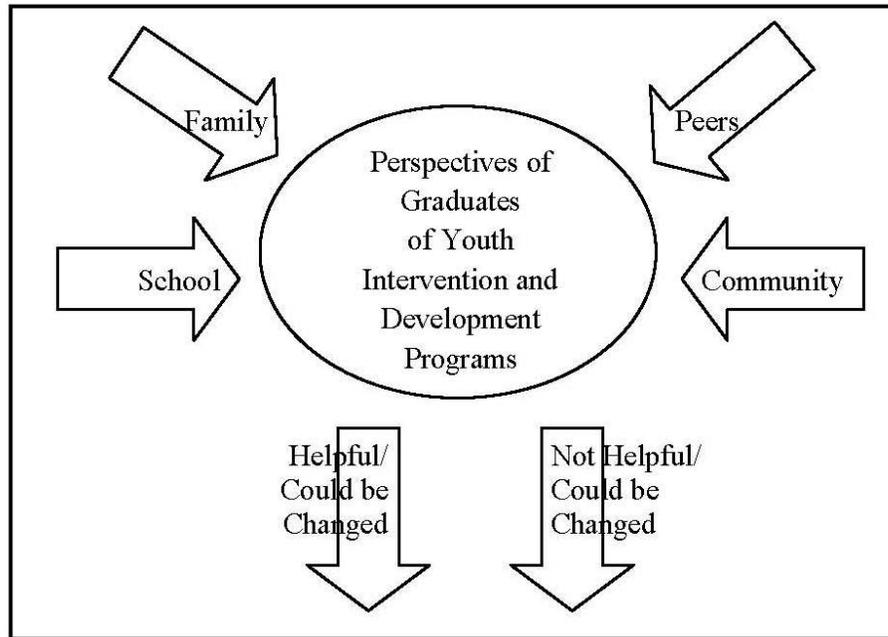


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

The remainder of the study consists of four chapters. Chapter 2 is devoted to a review of the literature regarding the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs. This chapter introduces the reader to the subject through a review of prior research and discussion of literature related to the PYD theory. Specifically, it discusses the history of PYD, provides an overview of numerous studies on the topic of youth intervention and development, explores the theory of developmental intentionality, and investigates the assessment of youth intervention and development programs through youth voice. It also discusses the research design.

Chapter 3 justifies the use of the selected qualitative method to be employed in conducting the research. It presents the theoretical underpinnings of the framework, the

selected research design and rationale for its selection, information pertaining to participant characteristics, instrumentation, field and pilot testing, data collection, and data analysis procedures. The chapter includes a section on the role of the researcher, validity and reliability, and ethical issues.

Chapter 4 presents the findings. This chapter is a review of the data collected and a detailed explanation of the analyzed results. Chapter 5 compares this study to studies previously performed and provides comments on same. In addition to addressing how well the research questions posed were answered by the data collected, the chapter includes recommendations for future research and for research in related areas.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature concerning youth intervention and development programs revealed program developers and researchers frequently overlook obtaining the perspective of program participants in the design, planning, delivery, and assessment of program effectiveness. The objective of this study was to explore the perspectives of successful graduates concerning the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs located in a large city in an East South Central state. Samplings of studies that address PYD were reviewed to determine the best method for conducting this research.

This chapter reviews the history of the juvenile justice system and the history of PYD, reviews a multitude of youth development and intervention program studies, provides a brief overview of the theory of developmental intentionality, and introduces the assessment of after-school/out-of-school time programs that employ youth voice. Using keywords that included, but were not limited to, *youth intervention and development programs*, *youth evaluation*, *youth perspective*, and *youth assessment or voice*, a vast amount of literature was surveyed through searches of Google Scholar and followed up by assessing journals and articles available in ABI/INFORM Global, PsycBOOKS, PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, ProQuest Psychological Journals, and similar sources through the Capella University library and other source libraries. The chapter includes a detailed description of the chosen theoretical perspective and methodology and

how it was evaluated to be relevant for identifying issues related to those being studied. Finally, using previous research, the chapter justifies the chosen selection procedures and data collection methods. Although it is not the subject of this study, it is the author's belief that a thorough understanding of the need for juvenile intervention and development programs must begin with, at a minimum, a brief discussion of the American juvenile justice system.

History of the Juvenile Justice System in America

The juvenile justice system was created to protect the public by providing a system that responds to children who are maturing into adulthood (Steinberg, 2009). The system was created to deal with young offenders, but it may not be the most effective remedy for dealing with all problematic youth. Research shows that incarceration does not rehabilitate all juvenile offenders (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, n.d.). Contrary to the belief of some, juveniles are not deterred from criminal activity for fear of having to serve time for the crimes they commit. Little evidence exists to support the claim that adolescents are deterred from criminal activity by the threat of prison or because their detention experiences were viewed as lessons to avoid future negative activity (E. S. Scott & Steinberg, 2008).

During the colonial period, youth offenders were prosecuted in criminal court as if they were adults and given no special privileges as youth. Children who were convicted of crimes that required serving time were committed to the same jails and prisons to which adults were sentenced (O'Neil, 2005). The first known American effort to systematically deal with problematic youth was established in the early 1800s in New

York. The effort was aimed at addressing concerns with the overcrowded conditions in jails and the corruption youth experienced when confined with adult felons (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, n.d.). The solution was the building of a facility exclusively for the housing of delinquent children. Known as the New York House of Refuge, it was established by the Society for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency in 1825 (American Bar Association [ABA], n.d.). This model that separated juveniles from jails that housed adults and persons with mental illnesses was initially thought to provide a better environment for delinquent youth. It was hoped that separating problematic youth from offending adults would help in the effort to rehabilitate them instead of providing them with additional strategies to commit crimes.

By the 1840s, more than 53 refuge facilities had been built around the country, but reports of overcrowding, deplorable conditions, and brutality in the houses of refuge began to surface (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, n.d.). These facilities turned out to be no better for the youth they existed to serve and protect than the jails and prisons from which the youth had been removed. “By mid-century, these privately operated youth prisons were under criticism for various abuses” (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006, p. 94). It was soon discovered that the strategies these facilities were using for refuge and reform were not effective for the delinquent youth confined within their walls.

To correct the problem, the focus on the positive development of delinquents turned from refuge and reform to training and vocation. Massachusetts opened the first state-operated training school for boys in 1847 (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, n.d.). This new method for rehabilitating delinquents involved teaching them vocations. Chicago followed suit, opening the Chicago Reform School in 1855 (ABA, n.d.).

Massachusetts followed the model of its state-operated vocational school for boys with a training center for girls in 1856 (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, n.d.). Similar facilities were established in other states, but the need for an effective intervention method for juvenile delinquents persisted. In 1899, Jane Addams and her Hull House colleagues established what is commonly accepted as America's first juvenile court (Steinberg, 2009).

After years of development and months of compromise, the Illinois legislature passed on April 14, 1899, a law permitting counties in the state to designate one or more of their circuit court judges to hear all cases involving dependent, neglected, and delinquent children younger than age 16. (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006, p. 95)

Authorized by the Illinois Juvenile Court Act of 1899, the first fully and clearly declared juvenile court was founded on July 1 of the same year, with the Honorable R. S. Tuthill presiding (Mack, 1909). The juvenile court was a division of the Illinois Circuit Court that had jurisdiction over juvenile cases that were to be held in a special courtroom that would be designated as "the juvenile court room" (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006, p. 95) and referred to as the "Juvenile Court" (p. 95). The focus of the court was on rehabilitation of the offender rather than reform or punishment.

Even at the inception of the juvenile court, not all juveniles were brought under its jurisdiction (Applegate, Davis, & Cullen, 2009). Some juveniles were not seen as good candidates for rehabilitative measures. The focus of the juvenile court was on the offender, not the offense (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, n.d.). The court acted as a surrogate parent for delinquents. Rulings provided dispositions based on what the court felt were the rehabilitative needs of the offender instead of issuing punitive sentences based on the seriousness of the offense committed (Hinton et al., 2007).

The rationale behind the state intervening in the lives of children in a manner different from that of adults was governed by the British doctrine of *parens patriae*—the state as parent (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). It was of the court’s opinion that delinquent youth were not or could not be controlled by their guardians and it was up to society to step in and assume that role. Amendments made in 1901 extended the court’s jurisdiction to include crimes that only applied to children, crimes like truancy and running away (O’Neil, 2005).

During the first decade of the 20th century, 32 states passed legislation providing for juvenile probation (O’Neil, 2005). The idea of establishing courts for juvenile delinquents continued to gain popularity. By 1912, 22 states had established full-fledged juvenile courts. By 1915, every state with the exception of two had instituted some type of children’s court (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006), but outcries and criticisms of the fairness and effectiveness in juvenile court proceedings had begun to arise. The juvenile court was created so that hearings could be open to the public; however, the community grew concerned about the openness of juvenile hearings to the general public at large. By 1920, publication about juvenile court proceedings was permitted in all but seven of the 45 states (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006).

In 1925, a functioning juvenile court existed in every state except Maine and Wyoming (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). With the exception of these two states, crimes committed by adolescents in every state were heard in separate courtrooms and by special juvenile court judges. For the first time in American history, there were significant differences in the juvenile and criminal court systems (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, n.d.). Every state except for Maine and Wyoming was determined to make an

effort to ensure children received the best defense and care possible. To further this goal, the Standard Juvenile Court Act was first issued in 1925 but revised several times in an effort to ensure children in state custody would receive the same or better care than that given by responsible parents (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006).

The number of crimes committed by adolescents and the length of the sentences they received for their crimes continued to increase. Public concern over the effectiveness of the juvenile justice system based on the perceived lack of effectiveness and the number of juveniles who were indefinitely detained grew in the 1950s and 1960s (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, n.d.). The public wanted different sentences for children who had served their time or learned their lesson. They felt that adolescents who were exhibiting positive progress needed to be given back some of their freedom. To address public concern, Congress passed the Federal Youth Corrections Act prescribing the use of parole in the administration of juvenile corrections in 1951 (W. R. Scott, Deschenes, Hopkins, Newman, & McLaughlin, 2006).

Juvenile court proceedings witnessed drastic changes due to cases heard in the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1960s (ABA, n.d.). Prior to this time, juvenile courts did not see the need to provide children with the safeguards associated with criminal prosecutions (O'Neil, 2005). Laws at the time allowed juveniles to be detained and incarcerated without knowing the charges against them, given the fair right to a trial or a lawyer for representation. In a series of decisions beginning in the 1960s, the U.S. Supreme Court required that juvenile courts become more like criminal courts (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). Juveniles had rights regardless of their age. These new decisions addressed those rights. Juveniles would be afforded (a) formal hearings when sent to

adult courts, (b) the right to receive notice of the charges against them; (c) legal representation, and (d) that proof beyond a reasonable doubt had been established (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, n.d.). These changes provided adolescents with the same rights as adults, but they also had a somewhat negative effect on the way courts handled youth cases. These changes that gave youth the same rights as adults moved the court away from its foundation as an institution dedicated to the rehabilitation of wayward children (O'Neil, 2005).

In contrast to the objective to convict and punish in criminal courts those who commit wrongful acts, juvenile courts originally functioned as public social agencies that sought the right solution to the problem of juvenile delinquency (ABA, n.d.). Prior to the mid-1960s, the federal government played no significant role in the administration of juvenile justice (O'Neil, 2005). Crime was not going away and the public demanded something be done to reduce juvenile criminal activity.

Soon after being elected president in 1965, Lyndon Johnson would see the need and call for crime controls (Feucht & Zedlewski, 2007). In 1967, alternative methods for treating troubled youth outside the traditional system were addressed in the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice (Cocozza et al., 2005). Shortly thereafter, Congress passed the Juvenile Delinquency Prevention and Control Act of 1968 (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). The Act recommended that juveniles charged with noncriminal offenses be handled outside the court system. Although this was seen as a positive step in the direction of youth intervention and development, times were changing and crimes committed by juveniles were becoming more violent.

By 1970, state legislatures had changed the law to allow juvenile offender cases to be moved into criminal court based on the age and/or seriousness of the offense committed (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). Fortunately, the public outcry for eliminating this negative activity from a youth's future was taken seriously. The trend toward extending the due process rights of adult criminal trials to juvenile court proceedings slowed the following year (ABA, n.d.).

The early 1970s witnessed continued reports of abuses in training and vocational schools and large numbers of juveniles being held in adult facilities. To address these and other issues, Congress passed the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, which created the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). One of the major charges for the Office was to right the wrongs of the juvenile justice system. To address this issue, the Act included a preamble outlining many of the failures in the overall provisions of the juvenile justice system of the time (O'Neil, 2005).

The Act created government funding to support programs to combat delinquency. The Formula Grants Program was a major funding source for states. As a condition for state participation in the Formula Grants Program, the Act required states to de-institutionalize the status of offenders and nonoffenders and to separate juvenile from adult offenders (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). The Act also encouraged states to implement programs for youth at risk of becoming delinquent (W. R. Scott et al., 2006). This was the first federal government initiative that was a fully proactive measure designed to support youth intervention and development. Congress amended the Act in

1980, requiring juveniles to be removed from adult detention facilities (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006).

Policymakers, legislators, youth workers, and communities seemingly were addressing the problem of youth delinquency from different standpoints. Between 1978 and 1981, lawmakers in nearly half the states enacted some form of tougher legislation concerning repeat juvenile offenders, while the federal agenda and the voices of reformers were calling for the opposite. Change was slow, and opposition from the various forces was strong. By the early 1980s, there was a decrease in the number of offenders being held in detention facilities and institutions. The public perceived that juvenile crime was on the rise and felt the juvenile justice system was too lenient (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, n.d.). It was assumed that amendments to the 1974 Act weakened the de-institutionalization mandate. There was a belief that the juvenile justice system was too soft on delinquents who were thought to be as much a threat as their adult criminal counterparts. With tougher laws enacted, there was more than a 50% increase in the detention rates of juveniles between 1977 and 1985; as a result, the Act was amended to require states to address the disproportionate confinement of minority juveniles in 1988 (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006).

The tough laws on juvenile offenders accelerated in the 1990s (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, n.d.). In response to public concern over crimes committed by children and adolescents, states began making various changes to the laws that governed their juvenile justice systems. Faced with a sharp rise in violent crime and the perspective that youth were committing more heinous crimes, the country responded by changing the focus from rehabilitation to a get-tough policy in the juvenile courts (Chung, Little,

Steinberg, & Altschuler, 2005). This was the same strategy employed prior to the advent of the juvenile court system. As a result of various cases heard prior to this period, the courts turned away from rehabilitative measures to those that resembled the procedures of criminal court (O'Neil, 2005).

Although punishment is an important component of the system's response to delinquency, it alone is unlikely to improve the futures of offending youth (Chung et al., 2005). Criminal court proceedings provide stricter sentences that are designed to punish adult offenders. Juvenile offenders were being transferred into the criminal justice system using transfer provisions (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, n.d.). The transfer provisions made it possible for juvenile offenders to be given harsher sentences.

The idea of giving juveniles harsher sentences caught on. Legislatures in 18 states enacted or expanded transfer provisions between 1998 and 2002 (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). Some differences between the criminal and juvenile systems have diminished in recent years, but the juvenile justice system remains a unique entity, guided by its own philosophy and legislation, and implemented by its own set of agencies (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006).

Modern Juvenile Diversions

As originally implemented and continuously revised over the years since its inception, the American juvenile justice system has not been considered efficient, as evidenced by the continual changes made by policymakers and legislators. Prior to the mid-1960s, there were no criteria in place to measure crime. There was a lack of operational data on the police, courts, and other justice agencies across American

jurisdictions (Feucht & Zedlewski, 2007). Society was plagued with increasing incidents of juvenile-related crimes. Pressure was mounting for new ways of dealing with troubled youth. Twentieth-century changes included individualized diagnosis and treatment, new methods of rehabilitative therapy, and improved educational programming, but the training schools of the mid-19th century and the placing of large numbers of juvenile offenders in one institution still persist (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, n.d.).

The structure of the American juvenile court system reveals there are at least 51 different state-operated juvenile justice systems, versus one federally operated system, in the United States. Each state system has its own history, set of laws and policies, and delivers services to juvenile delinquents in its own way (M. King, 2006). Information on the individually operated systems can be found on the State Juvenile Justice Profiles website. The website provides easy access to state profiles, national overviews, statistical information, organization and administration details, summaries of delinquency services offered, and other statutes on individually operated state juvenile justice systems. The website has an evolving array of information about each state's laws, policies, and practices, including useful links to individuals and other agencies (M. King, 2006). At the time of this research, the site could be accessed online at State Juvenile Justice Profiles.

Although punishment is an important component of the various justice systems' response to juvenile offending, it alone is unlikely to improve the futures of delinquent youth (Chung et al., 2005). Improving the futures of delinquent youth begins with understanding the world in which they live. O'Neil (2005) asserted that American society should first define the concept of childhood and then set out to determine what constitutes an effective intervention strategy for combating juvenile delinquency. Society should be

willing to take the appropriate measures to control the efforts of current generations and to eliminate the onset of future generations of juvenile delinquents. Mack (1909) posited:

The most important concept is to prevent children from reaching a condition of needing to be dealt with in court because adults have been neglectful in destroying the evils leading them into careers of delinquency and implanting positive measures and preventative strategies in their place. (p. 122)

The time to plant positive seeds in youth is before they are adolescents and prior to the development of delinquent tendencies. Providing specific experiences is not enough to shape the development of youth. Youth must be guided from a menu of experiences in the ways to engage in the development experiences they select in life and to whom they can trust to turn for advice (Blyth, 2006). Providing youth with alternatives to delinquent activities allows them to have choices in their own development. An understanding of the history of PYD may be necessary to gain a deepened appreciation for the phases of youth development.

Historical Progress of Positive Youth Development

Youth development can be traced across three phases. The phases include the initial scientific research, the developmental theories, and advanced theories associated with PYD. Each phase is briefly discussed as follows.

Adolescence is the lifespan period during which most of a person's biological, cognitive, psychological, and social characteristics are changing in an interrelated manner from what is considered childlike to adult-like (Brittian, 2010; Lerner, 2005).

Adolescence, in essence, constitutes the period of time when a child develops into an adult. As youth enter their second decade of life, they have different interests and needs,

and a growing desire to have more influence over certain aspects of their life, including what should be done with discretionary time not spent in school (Saito, 2006). What youth do with these discretionary hours and their relationship to PYD constitutes an important developmental phase in their lives.

Adolescents have and will always be the generational cohorts who must be prepared to assume the quality of leadership of self, family, community, and society to maintain and improve human life (Lerner & Overton, 2008). Adolescents need to be groomed for responsibility in adulthood. It is important to take the social problems of delinquent adolescents into consideration because the futures of rising generations are dependent upon the development of wise solutions to these issues (Mack, 1909).

Three Phases of Youth Development

One could argue, probably successfully, that the underpinnings of several individuals, including John Locke, Charles Darwin, and Friedrich Froebel, had significant influence on how youth development was viewed at the turn of the 19th century (StateUniversity.com, 2010). These individuals believed children were good human beings who only developed corrupt ways when placed in corrupt environments.

Granville Stanley Hall (1904) conducted a scientific study of adolescent development and published his findings in *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education*. This two-volume work was the first text published on adolescence (Lerner, 2005). Hall's work became the foundation for the study of youth development, and his theory concerning the development of youth was adopted by several other researchers during this first phase of

youth development. Hall's perspective influenced the way researchers, teachers, parents, youth workers, and public policymakers viewed youth in this developmental period for decades (Lerner, Lerner, & Phelps, 2008). The theory that undergirded Hall's work saw the period of adolescence as one marked by storm and stress (Lerner, 2005). Hall believed that all youth were troubled individuals. Because of his work, for many decades, adolescence was erroneously considered to be a dark period for youth. The theoretical lens Hall used to depict the essential quality of youth development ultimately started the field of youth development down the wrong path (Lerner et al., 2008). The first 85 years devoted to the study of adolescents were almost exclusively framed by a deficit perspective (Lerner, 2005).

By the 1960s, researchers had begun to debate Hall's theory of adolescent development. This second phase of the study of adolescence debated Hall's theory that most adolescents had a stormy second decade of life (Lerner, 2005). Two of the most influential writers during this period were Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin (StateUniversity.com, 2010). Cloward and Ohlin debated Hall's theory in their 1960 book titled *Delinquency and Opportunity* (Cullen, 2008). Cloward and Ohlin posited that adolescent delinquency resulted from a frustration with the lack of opportunities available to them (StateUniversity.com, 2010). Adolescents, especially youth in low-income families, have limited opportunities to experience many of the positive things life has to offer. Providing these youth with increased opportunities could serve to prevent delinquent behaviors from forming (StateUniversity.com, 2010).

During this second phase of developmental theories on youth development, two major contributions to research were identified. These contributions (a) popularized and

legitimated the field of youth development as an important area of scholarship, which helped the field to mature; and (b) provided empirical evidence to support the next phase of development (Lerner, 2005).

The 1990s witnessed the emergence of a new vision and vocabulary for discussing adolescents (Lerner et al., 2008). Prior to this time, there were few widely accepted strategies associated with the field of youth intervention and development. The absence of an accepted vocabulary was a key obstacle in the evaluation of the effectiveness of programs (Lerner et al., 2006). Terminology in the field of youth intervention and development was loosely guided. Prior to this time, most researchers viewed positive adolescent behavior as the absence of delinquent behaviors. If positive development was discussed prior to the 1990s, it was implicitly or explicitly regarded as the absence of negative or undesirable behaviors (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Semsal, 2006).

Investigations into what the absence of negative or undesirable behaviors meant in adolescence began to surface. The third phase of development in the field of adolescence included advancing theories and research ideas associated with the PYD perspective (Lerner, 2005). The PYD perspective is a tool for assessing the effectiveness of youth development programs. The tool helped to eradicate the lack of terminology that plagued the first and second phases of youth intervention and positive development. The perspective was expanded by developmental scientists interested in developmental systems theory (Lerner, 2005).

The way society responds to juvenile offenders should be informed by the lessons of developmental changes that occur during childhood and adolescence in the capabilities

and characteristics that are relevant to competence, responsibility, and treatment (Steinberg, 2009). The maturity level of a youth is not equivalent to that of an adult. Youth do not normally have the responsibilities that adults have and therefore should not receive the same treatment adults receive. These things must be developed over a period of time. PYD is a perspective that emphasizes that youth need support, guidance, and opportunities during adolescence to develop self-assurance and create a successful and healthy lifestyle (Ansell et al., 2008; Balsano et al., 2009; Saito, 2009). Youth workers who provide support, guidance, and opportunities to adolescents help them to develop into productive adults.

There are numerous definitions for PYD, but the major elements of opportunities, competencies, connections, supports, and contributions are predominantly common themes in all successful youth development programs (Ansell et al., 2008). This work requires the united and aroused efforts of the whole community being determined to keep children from becoming criminals and a willingness to change the path of those who are treading in the wrong direction (Mack, 1909).

Positive Youth Development and Intervention Program Studies

The PYD perspective is a cutting-edge approach to enhancing adolescent development and assisting them in reaching their full potential (Kress, 2006; Zarrett & Lerner, 2008). PYD rests on the belief that all youth have the ability to and will develop into productive adults if placed in nurturing environments. PYD researchers see adolescents as resources to be developed (Balsano et al., 2009; Floyd, 2007; P. E. King et

al., 2005; Saito, 2009). The perspective builds on the construct known as the five Cs and a developmental path that leads to a sixth C, or contributions to self, family, community, and the institutions of a civil society (M. King, 2006; Lerner, 2007; Lerner et al., 2008). Adolescents who exhibit the five Cs and contribution are said to be developing positive behaviors that will help them to become productive adults. Youth who demonstrate competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring (the five Cs) and contribution are exhibiting PYD (M. King, 2006; Lerner, 2005, 2007).

Adolescents need multiple opportunities to experience growth. It was discovered that adolescents who spend time in several out-of-school time programs fare better developmentally than those who participate in one or fewer activities (Zarrett & Lerner, 2008). Youth must be provided with experiences that will allow them to enter adulthood with sufficient maturity to make decisions, create informed personal relationships, and maintain gainful employment (Chung et al., 2005). Programs that promote PYD strive to reinforce the benefits of positive development in youth. The PYD perspective has effectively countered and helped to diminish the deficit model of youth development that previously dominated theory and research (Phelps et al., 2009). Youth development programs that employ the PYD perspective are believed to have successful interventions.

Several research methods have been employed in an effort to investigate the effectiveness of out-of-school time/after-school program activities in decreasing delinquent behaviors and increasing positive outcomes of youth who attend these types of intervention and development programs. The most significant method uses a longitudinal approach that tracks youth development over a significant period of time (Phelps et al., 2009). The longitudinal design is a distinct form of research design that is used in social

research because of the time and cost involved (Bryman, 2008). This approach, which requires a significant amount of time and resources, has been tested a limited number of times in the field of youth development. With a longitudinal design, a population is initially surveyed and subsequently resurveyed at least one additional time (Bryman, 2008).

Longitudinal Studies on PYD

Research on a 10-year study began in 2002 with funding from the National 4-H Council (*The 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development*, n.d.). The 4-H study employed a longitudinal sequential design to test the theoretical model about the role of developmental assets and individual actions in the promotion of PYD as conceptualized by the five Cs and contribution (M. King, 2006; Lerner, 2005, 2007). Several researchers (Lerner, 2005; Lerner, Lerner, et al., 2005; Lerner et al., 2008, 2009; Phelps et al., 2009) who helped to develop the study have and continue to write about the findings from the research performed over the 10-year time span designated as the research period.

Longitudinal research designs are useful when studying large numbers of participants over multiple periods of time. The first wave of the study period began with the 2002–2003 school year (*The 4-H Study*, n.d.). The initial cohort (Wave 1) for the 4-H study consisted of about 1,700 fifth-grade youth and their parents who were from 40 cities and towns in 13 states (Lerner, 2005). This population represented youth from a variety of racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds (Lerner et al., 2006). Subsequent years studied approximately the same number of youth from multiple locations and who were one grade higher than those studied the previous year. These additional youth became members of a new longitudinal cohort and were then followed longitudinally

throughout the rest of the study (Lerner, 2005). This procedure ensured there would be a continuous population to research. The study's population included youth who were both involved and not involved in youth development programs and who were, on average, between 10.9 (girls) and 11.1 (boys) years of age (Lerner et al., 2006).

Wave 1 data were collected in 57 public and private schools with various socioeconomic characteristics and four after-school programs located in urban communities that primarily served low-income minority children and their families (Lerner et al., 2006). It was believed the chosen context best suited the nature of the study for determining the characteristics of youth who exhibited PYD. Youth from 53 schools and five after-school programs in 18 states were utilized at Wave 2 (Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2007).

An extensive review of the literature was conducted to identify measures to serve as indicators of each of the Cs (Lerner et al., 2006). Using measures from previous research helps to establish measurement validity. In qualitative research, measurement or construct validity is the ability of a measure devised of a concept to reflect the concept it is reported to be denoting (Bryman, 2008). Utilizing previously established measures can provide research with an initial level of validity. Gestsdóttir and Lerner (2007) relied on the Self-Perception Profile for Children, the Profiles of Student Life–Attitudes and Behavior Survey, the Peer Support Scale, the Eisenberg Sympathy Scale, and the Center for Epidemiological Studies–Depression Scale to index several of the Cs of PYD.

A pilot test was used to determine the ability of the participants to identify components of the Cs in their responses. According to Bryman (2008), a small number of participants comparable to the population from which the full study will be taken should

be pretested to ensure participants' understanding and receive meaningful responses to the questions. The chosen indicators were pilot tested using a group of 339 youth from five cities and towns in Massachusetts (Lerner et al., 2006).

Specification of the measurement model of the five Cs and contribution proceeded through multiple steps that included identifying the constructs, pilot testing, and then revising the survey as needed (M. King, 2006; Lerner, 2007; Lerner et al., 2006). Items were deleted from both Waves 1 and 2 (Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2007). When the measurement no longer required revisions, the questionnaires were ready to be given to the participants. Questions composed of measures to test the empirical validity of the concepts pertinent to the Cs of PYD were embedded in separate questionnaires designed for the youth and the parents (Lerner et al., 2006). The resulting data were used in various ways to obtain reliable results.

Descriptive analyses were followed by hierarchical multiple regression analyses in the study performed by Lerner et al. (2006). The results provided empirical support for a one-time pattern of covariation among the constructs of the theoretically specified relationship between PYD and the five Cs and contribution (M. King, 2006; Lerner, 2007; Lerner et al., 2006). Both theoretical and empirical evidence supported the fact that PYD can be promoted by focusing on the Cs (Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2007).

The findings suggested that obtaining a full picture of youth development requires a longer research period (Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2007). Longitudinal studies require data from the population being researched to be collected more than one time. More useful data may be available upon reviewing additional waves of the 4-H study of PYD. The analysis of future waves will help to further refine the model of the five Cs and

contribution in PYD (M. King, 2006; Lerner, 2007; Lerner et al., 2006). When conducted over a period of time as designed, longitudinal designs normally allow for insight into the time order of variables and allow for causal inferences to be made (Bryman, 2008).

Additional longitudinal research to determine the personal and social assets that promote positive development and well-being in youth is needed (Dallaire, 2009).

The association between youth development program participation and the positive development of youth requires additional investigation (Lerner et al., 2006). Studies of this type represent a first step toward creating an understanding of how youth develop during the adolescent years and the relationship between this development and PYD (Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2007). Additional research is needed to look at this relationship and how youth voice and other factors can enhance PYD. Many youth programs emphasize the importance of youth voice in PYD, but youth experience few opportunities to practice using their voices in this context (Serido et al., 2009).

Youth Voice in PYD

Kortsch, Kurtines, and Montgomery (2008) and Kurtines, Montgomery, Ferrer-Wreder, et al. (2008) documented the value of qualitative methods in giving voice to the feelings and experiences of adolescents in a study of the Miami Youth Development Project's Changing Lives Program (CLP). The Miami Youth Development Project, a grassroots effort to foster the development of community-supported PYD individual and group counseling intervention programs for youth in disempowering contexts, began in the early 1990s (Kurtines, Ferrer-Wreder, et al., 2008). The study employed a multistage longitudinal comparative design. The multistage longitudinal design allowed for multiple surveys. The comparative design required the participants to fall into controlled and

noncontrolled groups. The quantitative design allowed for quantifying the data abstracted from the research, and the qualitative design allowed participants to express their personal feelings and experiences through words. The project was implemented in two programs. The Longitudinal Life Course Change Project is an ongoing longitudinal study of changes in the lives of multiproblem youth (The Miami Youth Development Project, n.d.). The CLP is a school-based counseling intervention that uses a participatory learning and transformative approach to empower multiproblem youth residing in Miami to take control of and make positive changes in their lives (Arango, Kurtines, Montgomery, & Ritchie, 2008). To determine program effectiveness, qualitative and quantitative measures were relied on.

Mixed-methods research is the term used to identify studies that integrate qualitative and quantitative research within a single project (Bryman, 2008). The CLP used qualitative methods of open coding and quantitative methods of quasiexperimental designs to evaluate the Miami Youth Development Project. To better understand the effect the Miami Youth Development Project had on participants, the CLP study compared youth who were involved in the CLP program with those who were not involved in any type of youth development and intervention program. Comparative designs are useful to gain a better understanding of how multiple participants feel about a particular experience. Comparative designs study two contrasting cases using identical methods (Bryman, 2008).

The intervention group (32 students) was composed of 22 high school students and 10 additional students, for an assessment-only nonintervention comparison group (Arango et al., 2008). The 32 students were 50% male and 50% female with a median age

range of 16.2. The makeup of the multiethnic population was typical of the school's demographics in both studies. A second study that replicated and extended the first study was conducted to extend the scope of the first study (Kortsch et al., 2008). The intervention condition in the second study was similar to that of the first. A total of 43 adolescents participated in the second study; 23 who had never participated in counseling composed the comparison group (Kortsch et al., 2008). The population was 54% female, mostly Hispanic (48%) and African American (40%) with an age range between 14 and 19 (Kortsch et al., 2008).

To record qualitative and quantitative change, the comparison groups were analyzed using the individual participants, their contexts, theory, and research (Lerner & Overton, 2008). Each component was an important part of the study. The combination, termed Relational Data Analysis, is a multidimensional framework that unified data analytic strategies and phases of analysis (Kurtines, Ferrer-Wreder, et al., 2008). The framework allowed for triangulating the data collected between the intervention and comparison group. The data were collected using a pre- and post-nonrandomized comparison control quasiexperimental design (Arango et al., 2008). Quasiexperimental designs are employed in studies that do not fulfill all of the internal validity requirements of an experimental design (Bryman, 2008).

Starting with observations grounded and informed by relational and developmental systems theories, quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed to produce new observations during a recursive cycle (Lerner & Overton, 2008). The data were collected in multiple stages. The project explored what changed and how it changed, the theory of what to change and how to change it, and what to measure and

how to measure it (Kurtines, Montgomery, Ferrer-Wreder, et al., 2008). The changes were recorded using both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative methods were employed to collect narrative expressions from the participants and were subsequently analyzed through quantitative measures using the Possible Selves Questionnaire (Kurtines, Ferrer-Wreder, et al., 2008).

Audio-recorded interviews were conducted and transcribed by undergraduate psychology students (Arango et al., 2008). The students were broken down into three classifications to code the data for specific categories. Macro Interview Response was used to transcribe all of the words, phrases, and sentences participants used to give description to the meaning and significance of their experience (Arango et al., 2008). The first level of coding was performed by theory-neutral coders whose goal was to identify each nonoverlapping content category (Arango et al., 2008). After the first level of coding reached the point of saturation, the data were given to the second level of coders for review. The second level of theory-laden coders recategorized the data by theory (Arango et al., 2008). When the second level of coding reached the point of saturation, the data were given to the third level of coders. The final level of coding was performed by a second set of theory-laden coders who classified raw, uncoded free-response data into meaningful categories and subcategories (Arango et al., 2008). The second study employed a similar strategy, but only relied on two levels of coding (Kortsch et al., 2008).

In the Miami Youth Development Project programs, youth may talk about their personal issues, but they also take the necessary actions to resolve their problems (Kurtines, Montgomery, Eichas, et al., 2008). Findings from both studies of the Miami

Youth Development Project revealed the theoretical and empirical feasibility to simultaneously pursue the relationship between individual and context, theory, and research (Lerner & Overton, 2008). The study relied on youth voice to investigate the Miami Youth Development Project. Future studies that rely on research designs that promote PYD and are informed by the youth situated in the PYD context through the perspectives that preserve the richness of meaning they give to their personal lives is the next logical framework to develop (Kurtines, Montgomery, Eichas, et al., 2008).

Mixed-Methods Study of PYD

Surveys and focus group thematic analyses were employed by Heinze (2006) to investigate the perspectives of a group of homeless youth in Detroit, MI, regarding their personal lives. The study group consisted of 91 female and 42 male youths between the ages of 10 and 24, with a mean age of 17.7, from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds (Heinze, 2006). Study participants were clients of six agencies established to provide services to homeless youth (Heinze, 2006). Participating agencies identified youth who were willing to participate in the study.

Researchers are increasingly relying on signed Informed Consent forms to outline the objective and background of the research and to obtain participant consent (Bryman, 2008). Consent forms describing the study, measures to protect participant confidentiality, any risks/benefits of participating, and the procedures to be followed were discussed with participants, program staff, and parents of minor children prior to obtaining participant assent (Heinze, 2006). The study was designed to encourage participation. One benefit of participating in the study was provided in the form of compensation. Participating agencies were given a one-time donation of \$100, and \$10

was given to each youth who completed the questionnaire and those who participated in the focus group (Heinze, 2006). Some youth participated in both the interview and focus group sessions. Fifty-five youth completed the questionnaire and participated in one focus group, and three youth participated in two focus groups (Heinze, 2006).

The interviews and focus group sessions allowed for data to be obtained that represented the participants' perspectives of the programs they attended. The data collected were triangulated using multiple focus groups, the collection of qualitative and quantitative data, observer notes, and through collaboration between social work and psychology researchers (Heinze, 2006). The study employed two questionnaires to obtain quantitative data that would be triangulated with qualitative data obtained from the narrative focus group sessions. The questionnaires were designed to investigate the characteristics of the participants. A six-step hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess program component satisfaction (Heinze, 2006). Program satisfaction was assessed through a series of questions. In addition to other factors, the questionnaires were designed to obtain participants' perspectives of the assistance they received from the agencies designed to help homeless youth (Heinze, 2006).

Focus group sessions assist in investigating how individuals respond to and build upon the views of others (Bryman, 2008). Heinze (2006) employed a framework that analyzed the relationships between processes and individual perspectives during a series of 16 focus groups consisting of 75 youth in groups of three to seven participants per session. The focus group participants were the same individuals used for the questionnaires. To obtain focus group data, a semistructured interview guide was designed to elicit participants' perspectives on helpful and unhelpful aspects of the

agencies and what they found most and least helpful in their experiences (Heinze, 2006). There was no preferred order for completion of focus group sessions and the questionnaire. The availability of each participant varied, and every effort to accommodate each individual's schedule was made. Depending on the availability of the participant, the focus groups either preceded or followed the questionnaire administration (Heinze, 2006). Focus group sessions lasted approximately 1–1.5 hours, were tape recorded, and permitted session facilitators to take notes (Heinze, 2006).

Transcripts from the sessions were open coded, compared, reduced, and clustered to develop categories related to the characteristics of best practices in programming for at-risk youth (Heinze, 2006). Researchers have recently begun to attempt to describe the characteristics of best practice programming in the field of youth intervention and development. The results of the data collected revealed findings that were largely consistent with factors outlined in service utilization and youth development literature (Heinze, 2006). Factors reported to negatively affect a youth's decision to utilize a particular intervention varied. Acknowledging and specifically addressing barriers to utilization that resulted from a lack of knowledge, unfriendly and insensitive staff, inconvenient or restrictive rules and policies, and dehumanizing and/or unsafe condition may encourage youth to take advantage of programming (Heinze, 2006). The results appeared to suggest age was a determining factor in a youth's decision to participate in an intervention program. Program satisfaction for younger participants seemingly relied on their ability to get along with program staff, while program organization and predictability seemed to be more important for older participants (Heinze, 2006).

Youth intervention and development programs should consider the age of the participant when addressing deficiencies in program utilization. Skill development in youth will vary. Research on developmentally informed services may lead to enhanced development of skills and competence for youth intervention and development agencies providing opportunities for youth involvement in decision making (Heinze, 2006). Youth should be given opportunities to be involved in decision-making activities. Research tools that measure the quality of services available in youth intervention and development programs from the perspective of youth participants are needed.

Fixed Design Study of PYD

There is a lack of research tools designed to measure the quality of youth intervention and development programs using the perspective of program participants (Sabatelli, Anderson, & Rubinfeld, 2006). At the time of their study, Sabatelli et al. posited there was no existing survey questionnaire to capture the supports, opportunities, and services for youth. The Youth Development Assessment Device (YDAD) was designed to fill this void by providing a method to assess the developmental quality of youth programs from the perspective of youth (Sabatelli, Anderson, Kosutic, Sanderson, & Rubinfeld, 2009). The YDAD is the result of a combination of different disciplines that believe youth are instrumental forces in their own learning and development. The YDAD framework, which is informed by research, theory, and practice, is designed to capture the relationship between developmental outcomes, youth engagement, and intentionality in the philosophy, design, and delivery of youth intervention and development programs (J. Walker et al., 2005). This relationship is defined in programs that exhibit four major

attributes: safety, supportive relationships, challenging activities, and meaningful involvement (Sabatelli et al., 2009).

A comparison case study was performed to investigate the perspective of adolescents attending a neighborhood youth center in a New England state. Data were collected from youth on two different occasions (Sabatelli et al., 2009). There were 31 participants in the first study ranging in age from seventh through 12th grade (Sabatelli et al., 2009). The population was 54.8% male and 45.2% female (Sabatelli et al., 2009). Of the 34 youth who participated in the second study, 62.5% were boys and 37.5% were girls. Both the first (90.3%) and second (91.2%) studies were completed by youth who were predominantly African American. The collection site was the same neighborhood youth center in both studies.

The YDAD was pilot tested over a 2-year time span using 1,074 participants from 12 neighborhood youth centers in seven Connecticut cities (Sabatelli et al., 2009). Of the 579 youth in Grades 6–12 participating in the first study, one youth did not indicate gender, 66.8% were male, and 33.0% were female (Sabatelli et al., 2009). A total of 495 youth—59.9% male and 40.1% female, in Grades 6–12—participated in the second study (Sabatelli et al., 2009). The majority (41.8%) of the participants in the first study identified their racial background as African American, and the majority (46.0%) of participants in the second study identified their racial background as Latino or Latina (Sabatelli et al., 2009).

The YDAD surveyed items that reflected the supports and opportunities conceptually linked to developmental quality (Sabatelli, Anderson, Sanderson, Kosutic, & Trachtenberg, 2007). The youths' answers reflected their own opinions on the supports

and opportunities available in the neighborhood youth center programs. The survey questionnaire assessed youth perspectives of the supports and opportunities present in youth intervention and development programs (Sabatelli, Anderson, & Rubinfeld, 2006). The four major attributes were analyzed using SPSS 14.0 in the first study to develop an exploratory factor analysis and then confirmed using AMOS 6.0 in the second study to develop a confirmatory factor analysis (Sabatelli et al., 2009). Questionnaire items were created to assess environment safety, supportive relationships, challenging activities, and opportunities for youth to be meaningfully involved in their programs and in their neighborhoods (Sabatelli et al., 2007).

Upon analysis, changes were required to be made to both questionnaires. The first study confirmed three of the factors were relevant. The findings indicated that Challenging Activities and Meaningful Involvement should be combined into one factor (Sabatelli et al., 2009). The factors were combined to support what the findings indicated. The results of the second study supported the three-factor finding and provided evidence of internal reliability of the YDAD (Sabatelli et al., 2009).

The YDAD was eventually tested on the multisite neighborhood youth center on two different occasions. Although the population may not be representative of the broader population of youth who attend intervention and development programs, the validation excluded youth voice, and potential biases in the tests of model fit were present; the findings were significant (Sabatelli et al., 2009). On the first wave of testing, the data revealed male scores were statistically significantly lower than female scores on the Supportive Relationships scale (Sabatelli et al., 2009). This was attributed to the ratio of female youth workers to male youth workers. Corrective actions were taken based on

the findings, and the youth were tested again one year later. Additional male youth workers had been hired. The results of the second test indicated the improvement plan was successful. There was no longer a statistically significant difference between boys and girls on the Supportive Relationships scale (Sabatelli et al., 2009).

By increasing the number of male role models, the neighborhood youth center was able to achieve enhanced results on the second study. Guiding youth intervention and development programs to quality programming that achieves tangible results requires a willingness to tailor services, supports, and opportunities to the youth being served (Sabatelli et al., 2009). By using youths' perspectives of their program experiences to make programmatic changes, program participants were empowered to have a role in making changes and became more invested in center activities and program planning (Sabatelli et al., 2006). The youths' perspectives revealed staffing changes were needed. The center's outcomes improved when the staffing changes were intentionally made to reflect the needs of the youth.

The theory of developmental intentionality framework defines the relationship between development outcomes, youth engagement, an intentionality in the philosophy, design, and delivery of program supports and opportunities for adolescents (J. Walker et al., 2005). The concept is built around the precepts of intentionality, engagement, and goodness of fit (J. Walker et al., 2005). Sound strategies that engage youth in their own learning and development are a sign of a promising youth intervention and development program. Intentionality is where the learning opportunities, not the youth, are intentionally shaped, and research-based topics are combined with the experiences of best practice in the community (J. Walker et al., 2005).

Best practices in youth intervention and development programs are exhibited when youth are provided with opportunities to engage in positive activities that foster their own development. Engagement is defined by the willingness of youth to take part, become motivated and challenged by learning opportunities, experience success, feel a sense of belonging, and stay involved in an activity for a significant period of time (J. Walker et al., 2005). To be successful, youth intervention and development programs must intentionally plan engaging activities that will meet the needs of the youth population they intend to serve. The theory of developmental intentionality is a framework of the operational principles and program components that will make the biggest difference in improving the impact of youth intervention and development programs (J. Walker et al., 2005). Three components have been identified for improving the impact of youth intervention and development programs. Programs that are intentional about maximizing (a) relationships, (b) activities, and (c) contextual connections exhibit these components (J. Walker et al., 2005).

Programs That Utilize Y–APs

Many youth intervention and development programs are either all-adult- or all-youth-led, but several programs intentionally maximize youth–adult relationships, youth activities, and the contextual connections between these components. The objectives and meanings for Y–APs reflect different assumptions, innovative organizational structures, and flexible adult behaviors (Zeldin, Camino, & Mook, 2005). There are proponents for and against organizations utilizing the Y–AP approach. Research reveals Y–APs have both pitfalls and promising practices that characterize movement in this direction in the youth intervention and development field (Camino, 2005). To move forward in the field

of youth intervention and development requires an investigation of the effectiveness of Y-APs to assist organizations in gaining a deeper understanding for the need to employ the Y-AP approach.

The idea of Y-APs is perceived as new by policymakers and community members, many of whom often resent change (Zeldin et al., 2005). Adults often feel youth need to be seen but not heard. Some adults oppose Y-APs, choosing to believe youth are immature and not ready for responsibility or viewing them in the light of their own negative adolescent experiences (Jones & Perkins, 2006). The movement to create new roles for youth can pose significant challenges to community organizations (Zeldin et al., 2005). Cultural and institutional barriers to Y-APs remain tied to the notion that adolescence is a time of storm and stress and that youth are in need of protection and control from their communities (Zeldin et al., 2005). This notion is obviously tied to the early years of research performed in the field of youth development. Many organizations have the capacity but lack the understanding of the importance of community building with youth (Zeldin et al., 2005). The adolescent period is no longer considered to be a period of storm and stress for youth. Managerial challenges include the ability to create an organizational culture that encourages people to pay attention and commit to innovation (Zeldin et al., 2005). It has now become necessary to address the critical role of bringing scholarship to bear on this issue (Zeldin et al., 2005).

Support for Y-APs rises from the belief that youth engagement in adult roles maximizes their sense of community and allows them opportunities to be active agents in their own development, thereby enhancing the communities where they live (Brittian, 2010; Zeldin et al., 2005). Youth can be agents of their own change. The most effective

way to work with youth is to see them as experts in their own experiences, energetic and innovative resources to each other and adults, and as valued community members with the right to share their perspectives (Libby, Rosen, & Sedonaen, 2005; Saito, 2006). Areas where Y-APs need help include youth leadership skill development, team building, project development, and targeted training for adults (Lerner, 2007; Mitra, Sanders, & Perkins, 2010). More research is needed on creating opportunities for marginalized youth to build skills through Y-APs to reshape youth intervention and development programs and to promote community change (Libby et al., 2005).

Flexible Design Study on PYD

The *Youth Ethnographers Project (YEP): Evaluating After-School Contexts* was part of a qualitative evaluation study designed to examine youths' experiences in five after-school youth intervention and development programs located in a major West Coast city (Kirshner, O'Donoghue, & McLaughlin, 2005). A total of 21 youth ranging in age from middle school (20) to college freshman (1) were selected to work as youth ethnographers in the five sites (Kirshner et al., 2005). The multipart evaluation process included focus groups, case study interviews with youth, and informal observations of program activities (Kirshner et al., 2005). Additional demographic information on the participants was not made available.

The collection sites were the five individual programs. Semitrained youth were given freedom to design interview protocols, choose the location of their observations, and participate in the analysis of the data collected, which took roughly three months (Kirshner et al., 2005). Adults made themselves available for the youth whenever the need arose. The youth spent two additional months analyzing and coding the data they

collected to develop themes that were summarized by and incorporated into two years of data that had been collected by the adult research coordinators (Kirshner et al., 2005).

Upon analysis, it was determined the youths' perspectives both emulated and countered those of youth participants and the adults. When questioned about their participation, the youths' diversified responses reflected that different youth drew different lessons from the same general experience (Kirshner et al., 2005). This was an important concept to record since the context was the same for each youth participant in the study. In other cases, the opposite was true. Data collected by the youth were used to triangulate the conclusion drawn by the adults that after-school centers were viewed as safe places (Kirshner et al., 2005). The youth enjoyed having a participatory role in the research, but were not provided with the opportunity to participate in some phases of the project.

Youth participation in the project's design was limited. Youth did not obtain a deep role in knowledge creation because they had no role in selecting the audience, the final research questions, or the opportunity to offer opinions on how the data would be used or presented (Kirshner et al., 2005). At this point, the project reflected that of a quasi-Y-AP design. The adults did not feel ownership in the project was fully shared by the youth (Kirshner et al., 2005). Other limitations included imagined pressure for youth to respond in certain ways, knowledge and understanding of analytic techniques available for the youth to use, and biased interpretations (Kirshner et al., 2005).

Although youth held limited roles, the project still reflected the Y-AP design can be successfully employed. When organized around adequate training and support of adolescents, Y-APs represent a promising direction for youth intervention and

development programs to take (Kirshner et al., 2005). Allowing youth to deliver certain components provided the adults with a refreshing look at youth intervention and development programs. Working with youth can give adults access to information and perspectives that otherwise may not be available (Kirshner et al., 2005). Youth can be active agents in their own development. By including youth voice, collaborative projects heighten the likelihood that research findings will be relevant to the needs of both youth and the intervention and development program (Kirshner et al., 2005). Although youth played a diminished role in its development, the study was successful. The full potential of working with youth as researchers will most likely be realized in a model that embraces them as partners throughout the research process (Kirshner et al., 2005).

Comparative Case Studies of PYD

Youth take on a central role as researchers as well as subjects in an effectively implemented Y–AP research project (Bulanda, 2008). Youth serving as both participants and researchers may give them a heightened sense of accomplishment. Bulanda used qualitative methods to gather and analyze naturalistic data to evaluate a youth intervention and development program in Chicago, IL. Data from the population of 100% African American participants were drawn from two tape-recorded sessions of 22 and 25 students (Bulanda, 2008). Fifteen students participated in both the first and second sessions (Bulanda, 2008). No additional demographic data were provided.

A pilot study was conducted prior to the collection of live data. Data relating to the population of students utilized for the pilot were not revealed. NVivo was used to organize, analyze, and code the data through two levels of coding (Bulanda, 2008). The findings revealed five central ideas:

(a) Severely disadvantaged youth have identifiable strengths and greatly benefit from programs supportive of their basic psychological needs in order to tap into their full capabilities; (b) Youth participation shows the capacity to shift from extrinsically motivated to intrinsically motivated when a program meets the basic psychological needs of the youth; (c) Healthy caregiving and caregetting experiences help facilitate the development of youth's capacity for empathy and compassion in relationships; (d) Self-determination theory has practical implications for youth program development and clinical interventions; (e) Youth are capable of participating in program evaluation and youth-led program evaluation has both positive effects on the youth and the program. (Bulanda, 2008, p. xiii)

In conclusion, adults have not attempted to learn which development and intervention strategies youth deem to be most important, or actively sought to engage youth in the evaluation of programs designed to meet their basic needs. Findings from the study implicated that youth stay involved in programs that engage them in the programming of after-school activities (Bulanda, 2008).

Providers of youth services are continuously recognizing the value of involving youth in community development and as actors in their own development (Dallaire, 2009). Dallaire performed a comparative case study of two community development corporations (CDCs) and two youth-serving organizations in the state of Massachusetts. The interventions were located in areas where youth under the age of 18 composed 20–35% of the total population (Dallaire, 2009). No breakdown for gender, ethnicity, or religion of the youth was provided.

The study was exempt from review by the granting Institutional Review Board (IRB; Dallaire, 2009). Participants for the CDCs utilized in the case study were recommended by a youth representative in the Boston, MA, area (Dallaire, 2009). Youth directors at two youth-serving agencies in the Massachusetts area were interviewed after being contacted. Interviews were conducted with the directors to gain a deeper

understanding of how they promote youth development and how the strategies they employ relate to or conflict with other agencies offering similar services in the same community (Dallaire, 2009).

One youth-serving organization selected works to engage youth through direct service, collaborative programming, and community partnerships (Dallaire, 2009). The other program works to develop and strengthen youth in building a just society through several programs designed to promote PYD (Dallaire, 2009).

Qualitative methods were used to collect data. Onsite personal and telephone interviews that lasted an average of 53 minutes were conducted (Dallaire, 2009). Different questions were established to help distinguish between the services being offered by the CDCs and the youth-serving organizations (Dallaire, 2009). Interviewees at the CDCs were given eight questions about the individual and the organization and 10 secondary subquestions about the organization and youth programming (Dallaire, 2009). The questionnaire for the youth-serving organizations consisted of five questions that focused on the relationship between the agency and local CDCs and what the agency saw as the primary needs for the youth who attended the programs (Dallaire, 2009). Findings revealed that youth who participated in CDCs were engaged in their communities in a way that promoted their positive development (Dallaire, 2009). Youth want to be recognized as instrumental forces in the positive development of their communities. Youth voice can be strengthened by building meaningful roles based on mutual responsibility and respect among all members, developing shared language and norms, and developing joint enterprises aimed at fostering voices that have previously been silenced from decision making and knowledge-building processes (Mitra, 2008).

Organizations and communities that involve youth in the development and organization of activities and programs have more positive community environments and youth outcomes (Dallaire, 2009).

Mixed-Methods Exploratory Study on PYD

It is impossible to describe the most successful youth intervention and development programs using terminology upon which the entire field of PYD has agreed. The field of youth development has not yet developed a unifying conceptualization of youth development that considers the contributions of youth, youth workers, researchers, and policymakers (Urban, 2008). Research has shown that certain components exist in successful youth development interventions, but these components are not always agreed upon by researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and youth. Urban conducted a mixed-methods exploratory study using a community-based participatory approach to compare and contrast the contributions of these four participant groups.

The study's population included policymakers, practitioners, researchers, additional adult participants, and youth from two youth development programs located in central New York (Urban, 2008). The number of youth and adults who participated in the generation and structuring phases is listed in Table 1.

Prospective research participants should be given as much information as possible to make an informed decision about participating in a study (Bryman, 2008). Researchers explained the nature of the study as part of their participant recruitment strategy. To participate in the study, youth participants were required to submit parent permission and youth assent forms (Urban, 2008).

Table 1. Number of Youth and Adults Who Participated in the Generation and Structuring Phases

Participants	Generation (brainstorming)	Structuring (sort, importance, youth development)
Youth	22	20
Adults	117	66

The study was conducted in two phases. Eight youth participated in two phases, and seven youth participated in the entire study (Urban, 2008). Participants were guaranteed anonymity, although a limited amount of demographic information was taken during the structuring phase. The majority of the youth were female (70%), and the average age of the 20 youth participating in this phase was 15.45 (Urban, 2008). The adults, representing all parts of the United States and Canada, were majority female (68.7%), and the average age for those who gave that information was 44.4 years (Urban, 2008). Adults were recruited at various symposia, through listservs, and by referral (Urban, 2008).

The 1,075 brainstormed statements generated from the youth and adults were analyzed and coded using the KWIC software program until 100 themes had been identified (Urban, 2008). The themes were member checked by one local (New York) participant from each of the four population groups (Urban, 2008). Member checking is performed when there is a need to ensure the written interpretation of the data collected has the same meaning as the participant stated. The reviewers did not note any major discrepancies in the coded data as compared to randomly selected statements from their

original statements, but they did suggest minor changes to the wording (Urban, 2008). This procedure was significant in increasing the clarity of the coded responses and providing a deeper understanding of their meaning.

The combined set of 100 statements were sorted and rated in the structuring phase (Urban, 2008). This phase built upon the brainstorming stage by bridging the way for data analysis. Structuring collection methods used for the adults were different from those established for and used by youth participants. The adults completed the structuring phase remotely and returned their responses by e-mail (Urban, 2008). Youth, on the other hand, were facilitated by the research party in the completion of the data sort and rate stage at their respective youth development programs (Urban, 2008).

Data collected during the structuring stage were analyzed using Concept System Version 3 (Urban, 2008). When analyzing data, it is important to ensure the coded data are reflective of the respondent's original thought pattern. Eight representatives, including two youth and the researcher, gathered to review the statements, assign cluster labels, and interpret the findings (Urban, 2008). During this process, seven major clusters were identified. Of the seven resulting clusters, the Empowering Youth-Friendly Environment cluster received the highest rating and the Ongoing Program Monitoring and Assessment cluster was rated the lowest in importance (Urban, 2008). Other significant findings related to the way researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and youth viewed the ratings. Practitioners emphasized the importance of youth leadership opportunities and the need for equality between youth and adults; and policymakers, the most neutral group, emphasized the need for stronger youth voice and presence in decision making (Urban, 2008). The most notable and consistent differences were found

between researchers and youth, indicating a gap in the research–practice agenda (Urban, 2008).

All four groups rated empowering youth-friendly environments, leadership opportunities, opportunities for life skills development, and promotion of individuality and connectedness highest (Urban, 2008). Findings revealed 100% of the policymakers, 88.9% of the practitioners, and 70.6% of the researchers agreed that more Y–APs where each member is treated equal were needed (Urban, 2008). True Y–APs provide equal opportunities for youth and adults to assume leadership roles. Y–APs exist in organizations that promote youth and adults partnering for a common objective (Anderson & Sandmann, 2009; Brittan, 2010). In true Y–APs, adults learn to share the power so youth have the opportunity to assume the role of a leader. This type of relationship has been identified as a key component of PYD.

The findings confirmed that there is broad consensus across stakeholder groups on the key components of youth development (Urban, 2008). The key components include active youth citizenship; skill building and leadership opportunities; promotion of future time perspective, general health, and well-being; fun activities; sustained adult–youth relationships; a strengths-based approach; and an ecologically and contextually sensitive and inclusive environment (Urban, 2008). PYD is assumed to be present in youth development agencies that provide the majority of the key components identified.

It was difficult to report how much emphasis community involvement, degree of youth participation, and program accountability had on PYD. Key areas of debate were the inclusion of community involvement, level and degree of youth participation, and how much emphasis, if any, should be placed on program accountability (Urban, 2008).

These three key areas of debate need more investigation. More research is needed to deepen the understanding of the impact between community involvement and the magnitude of youth participation required for optimal positive developmental outcomes for youth (Urban, 2008).

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis of PYD

Researchers, practitioners, and policymakers may continue to remain optimistic about finding PYD interventions that promote desired outcomes, reduce juvenile delinquency, and eliminate other problem behaviors exhibited by adolescents (Edwards & Taub, 2009; Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, 2005). Ensuring PYD requires developing research-based policies that take a strength-based approach to youth, strengthens the capacities of families in diverse communities, and enhances the fit between youth capacities and the assets for positive development in their communities (Edwards & Taub, 2009; Lerner, Almerigi, et al., 2005).

Community programs that promote supportive Y-APs have strong potential for positive development and provide indirect benefits to youth by encouraging them to practice expressing their thoughts and ideas (Brittian, 2010; Serido et al., 2009). To deepen the understanding of youths' perspectives of youth intervention and development program qualities, Serido et al. conducted a hierarchical multiple regression analysis to test three hypotheses that analyzed how youth voice can account for the relationship between Y-APs and PYD.

The first hypothesis stated that youth who attend intervention and development programs and establish supportive relationships with adults have PYD outcomes. It was expected that program participation where youth develop supportive relationships with

adults form the basis for positive youth outcomes (Serido et al., 2009). The second hypothesis stated that opportunities for youth to use their voice will enhance feelings of program ownership, thereby allowing youth to report more benefits from program participation. Youth who feel they have a stronger voice in the program assumed more program ownership and reported more benefits from participating in the program (Serido et al., 2009). The third hypothesis stated that Y-APs and youth voice provide both direct and indirect benefits. In addition to the direct benefits of Y-APs, supportive relationships indirectly contribute to youth-perceived benefits of program participation by encouraging youth to express their opinions and ideas freely (Brittian, 2010; Serido et al., 2009).

Participants for the study were gleaned from the National 4-H Council Initiative's Engaging Youth Serving Communities (EYSC) Y-AP programs in 29 states (Serido et al., 2009). A total of 748 youth ranging from 10 to 19 years of age and 410 adult staff members who were, on average, 42.3 years old participated in the study (Serido et al., 2009). The majority of the youth (76%) and adults (79%) were White (Serido et al., 2009). The youth were majority female (68%) with an average age of 15.1 years (Serido et al., 2009). Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous (Serido et al., 2009). Religion was not one of the demographic measures studied.

A web-based design with a paper-and-pencil option was employed to facilitate the collection of data from participants in the 29 states (Serido et al., 2009). The paper-and-pencil option was designed to assist respondents residing in areas with limited or no computer or Internet access (Serido et al., 2009).

The project was reviewed and approved by the appropriate human subjects committee (Serido et al., 2009). EYSC coordinators and project directors, who were 4-H

youth development program staff and had agreed to participate and completed ongoing Human Subjects Certification requirements, were trained by an evaluation team (Serido et al., 2009). The training included acceptable methods for administering the interview protocol. After being trained, the EYSC staff members explained the objective of the study and the data collection procedures to prospective participants and provided them with letters of invitation to participate in the study (Serido et al., 2009).

The instrument was a 44-item anonymous survey that investigated program effectiveness through the participants' perspectives of skills learned and program context (Serido et al., 2009). To ensure anonymity, demographic information was not collected. The instrument did not request identification or ask sensitive questions of the respondents (Serido et al., 2009). Over the course of 14 months, participants completed sections of the survey that took approximately 10 minutes each (Serido et al., 2009). To ensure confidentiality, when finished, participants who completed paper-and-pencil surveys were instructed to mail their surveys to a specified location (Serido et al., 2009).

The survey focused on five constructs related to Y-APs, decision making, and leadership experiences (Serido et al., 2009). Using a 5-point Likert-type scale, participants measured four or five items per category relating to youth-adult relationships, youth voice, and the benefits from program participation (Serido et al., 2009). A limited amount of personal data that did not conflict with the anonymity of the participants was collected. Areas of inquiry included ethnicity and control variables for age and gender (Serido et al., 2009).

A series of one-way analysis of variance were used to analyze mean score differences of the variables measured, and a series of hierarchical multiple regressions

were used to test the specific hypotheses (Serido et al., 2009). Findings revealed Native Americans reported less supportive relationships with adults and felt their voice carried less strength than what was reported by youth in the Hispanic, White, Asian/Pacific Islander, and African American groups (Serido et al., 2009). Significant differences in the same groups did not appear in the Benefits Gained category (Serido et al., 2009). The findings may suggest that opportunities to interact with adults benefit youth by directly contributing to their perspective of the program's value and indirectly by promoting youth voice (Serido et al., 2009).

For youth to develop positive relationships with adults and perceive more benefits to program participation in community programs, they must have opportunities to strengthen their voice (Gong & Wright, 2007; Serido et al., 2009). Research shows that youth benefit from being in environments that allow them to be positive agents in their own development. Program staff must intentionally (a) provide opportunities for youth to act on issues that are meaningful to them and have an impact on their lives, (b) provide opportunities to become meaningfully engaged in their communities, and (c) build strong relationships with youth (Serido et al., 2009). "It would be helpful if future studies include both self-report measures of youth perspectives in addition to objective measures of both individual benefits of participation as well as benefits to the program" (Serido et al., 2009, p. 15). It may be possible to accomplish this by conducting a study to deepen the understanding of what is helpful, not helpful, and could be changed to improve the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs from the perspective of program participants.

Chapter Summary

The field of youth development began under the false presumption that all youth were troubled individuals. After decades of research, investigators began to study what the absence of negative behaviors really meant during adolescence. As time progressed, universally accepted concepts of PYD began to evolve.

PYD is evident in programs that exhibit opportunities for youth to voice their opinion and develop positive relationships with nonfamilial adults in safe environments. Youth can develop a sense of empowerment when they are given the opportunity to voice their opinions in environments that fully support their growth.

Youth development organizations that incorporate the 5 Cs in their programs create opportunities for youth to be contributors in their own development (Floyd, 2007). Youth intervention and development programs can empower youth by providing opportunities for youth voices to be heard, yet they frequently neglect the perspectives of program participants in program assessments. Examples of techniques to obtain youth participants' perspectives have been employed in longitudinal and comparative single- and multiple-case study designs, but there is a lack of research tools designed to measure the quality of Y-APs using the perspectives of program participants.

Youth who have positive youth relationships with adults perceive more benefits from youth intervention and development programs that provide opportunities for them to strengthen their voice. Studies that measure youth perspectives in addition to youth and program benefits in intervention and development programs may be useful research tools to deepen the understanding of what is helpful, not helpful, and could be changed to improve program effectiveness based on the perspectives of participants of youth

development programs. The next chapter outlines an exploratory case study methodology for addressing this gap in the literature.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The objective of this exploratory case study was to understand the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs from the perspective of program graduates. It may be possible to determine the unique characteristics and needs of youth who attend youth intervention and development programs by exploring what is helpful, not helpful, and could be changed to improve the effectiveness of these programs based on the perspectives of program graduates.

This study used a qualitative method that purposively selected 15 graduates of youth intervention and development programs in a large city in an East South Central state. The graduates were interviewed using an interview guide consisting of seven sections. According to Yin (2009), “how” or “why” questions are likely to favor the use of case studies focusing on contemporary events that do not require control of behavioral events. Based on these conditions, the interview guide was designed to obtain answers to the following questions.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

What are the perspectives of graduates of youth intervention and development programs that may be used to understand program effectiveness?

The central research question explored the perspectives of graduates of youth intervention and development programs regarding program effectiveness. This question was designed to explore youth intervention and development program effectiveness from the perspective of program graduates only, not the perspectives of current program participants or other program stakeholders.

Research Subquestions

1. How did the program meet graduate needs?
2. How did the program help graduates?
3. What aspects of the program were not helpful?
4. What aspects of the program could be changed to improve program effectiveness?

This chapter provides information on the methodological approaches available, the specific research design chosen, and the justification for the choice made. It reviews the sampling design indicating specific data sources, the required permissions for recruiting participants, and the setting for collecting data. Discussion focuses on the instrument used to collect data, how it was tested, and why it was considered to be valid and reliable. The strategies employed for analyzing the data collected are included as well as the ethical considerations undertaken to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of participants and organizations that agreed to participate in the study. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main ideas presented and provides an introduction to the actual data collected using the selected research design.

Research Design

Research design involves combining philosophical ideas with strategies and implementing specific procedures or methods (Creswell, 2003). For this study, the philosophical perspective follows that of a constructivist viewpoint. In constructivism, each individual constructs his or her own perspective of the experience. This research incorporated the paradigm assumption of an emerging design, used context-dependent questions, and analyzed the data inductively (Creswell, 2007).

The object of this research was to explore, from the perspective of graduates of youth intervention and development programs, what is helpful, not helpful, and could be changed to improve the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs. The central characteristic of a qualitative study involving humans requires the interpretation of a participant's behavior and actions through a lens that looks at his or her personal ideas about the experience (Robson, 2002). To obtain the opinions of graduates, a research strategy that allowed for the exploration of the graduates' perspectives about their former youth intervention and development program experiences was selected. The three basic frameworks for developing a research design are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods.

Qualitative or Flexible Research Designs

Beginning in the late 20th century, qualitative research gained much popularity. The five major qualitative research strategies are ethnographies, grounded theory, case studies, phenomenological, and narrative research (Creswell, 2003). Unlike quantitative studies, qualitative researchers rely on words instead of numbers. According to Denzin and Lincoln (as cited in Creswell, 2007)

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 36)

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research uses an inductive strategy to develop patterns and themes to analyze data that are collected from natural settings. Qualitative studies are useful when the desire is to study a particular population and to give power to voices that might otherwise be unheard. Rather than report conclusions with numbers and figures, qualitative studies employ the voices of participants in the results. The framework of a qualitative research report will include the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and extend the literature (Creswell, 2007).

Ethnographic studies focus on entire cultural groups. They involve extended observations of the group through participant observation that requires immersion in the day-to-day lives of the participants. Grounded theory studies are best selected when there is a desire to generate theories grounded in the data provided by the participants. Case studies are case-based studies that focus on one or more cases within a specified context. Phenomenological studies describe the meanings of the lived experiences of several individuals, and narrative studies have a specific focus on stories as lived and told by individuals. Narrative can be both a method and the phenomenon of study (Creswell, 2007).

Quantitative or Fixed Research Designs

Quantitative research is a claim of knowledge that usually begins with an assumption or hypothesis about a problem that will attempt to be verified through deductive reasoning. In addition to more specific types of inquiry, these knowledge claims include experiments and surveys (Creswell, 2003).

Surveys are useful designs when there is an interest in learning about a particular population. According to Creswell (2003), “A survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (p. 153). The results obtained from the sample can be used to make generalized statements about the larger population. Some advantages of utilizing surveys include ease of design, a quick way to obtain information, and inferences about a large population by sampling a smaller group from the population. Surveys can take the form of self-administered paper or online questionnaires, interviews, reviews of records, and observations (Creswell, 2003).

Various types of experimental designs are available for quantitative research studies. “The types available in experiments are pre-experimental designs, true experiments, quasi-experiments, and single-subject designs” (Creswell, 2003, p. 167). Experiments can take several forms. They may include a control group, may include an intervention, may randomly assign participants to groups, and may involve the observation of one or more individuals or groups.

Mixed-Methods Designs

The mixed-methods strategy is a combination of both the quantitative and qualitative research methods in a single study. The mixed-methods research strategy

developed out of the need to create an understandable design using both complex data and analyses (Creswell, 2007). In a mixed-methods study, quantitative data may be collected before or after collecting qualitative data or both types of data can be collected simultaneously. The method of data collection chosen will depend on the intent of the research. Qualitative data are collected first when the intent is to explore the topic in its natural setting and then to expand the understanding of what was collected through large numbers of participants (Creswell, 2003).

Summary of Research Designs

All research methods begin with a research problem, proceed to the research question(s), the collection of and subsequent analysis of data, and conclude with a report of the findings (Creswell, 2007). These five steps are required in all types of research studies. “The knowledge claims, the strategies, and the method all contribute to a research approach that tends to be more quantitative, qualitative, or mixed” (Creswell, 2003, p. 18). Quantitative studies rely on surveys and experiments to collect data that will subsequently be analyzed through statistical measures. Qualitative studies approach the collection of data through interviews and other methods to obtain the lived experiences of individuals through words that will be used to develop themes. Studies that follow a mixed-methods strategy employ data in both numeric and text form and utilize a combination of the two in the final analysis.

Qualitative Research Design

A research design presents a logical sequence of getting from the question being studied to its answer (Yin, 2009). This study employed an exploratory case study design

to study the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs from the perspective of program graduates. Exploratory case study designs are useful when the object of the research is to study operational links needing to be traced over a period of time (Yin, 2009). This objective proved to be useful for researching the perspectives of graduates of youth intervention and development programs.

The objective of the study was to describe the circumstances and conditions of a commonplace situation (Bryman, 2008). The research design guided the collection, analyzing, and interpretation of the data to be collected. The research design provided a framework for the collection and subsequent analysis of data that reflected decisions about the range of dimensions of the research process (Bryman, 2008). The range of dimensions in the research process included graduates' perspectives of effective youth intervention and development programs. The research design is a map of the research that was conducted to identify the research question, the data to be collected to answer the research question, and how the data should be analyzed to develop the answer to the research question(s). According to Cooper and Schindler (2006),

Research design is (a) an activity- and time-based plan; (b) a plan based on the research questions; (c) a guide for selecting sources and types of information; (d) a framework for specifying the relationships among the study's variables; and (e) a procedural outline for every research activity. (p. 139)

The research design is useful tools to keep a study on track. The main objective of the design is to help avoid collecting data that do not address the research question (Yin, 2009). Developing appropriate questions is the first of five steps to take to ensure the study is on the right track.

Case study research normally poses a “how” or “why” question and focuses on contemporary events where there is no control over the actual behavior of the participants being studied (Yin, 2009). Possible answers to exploratory design questions concerning the effectiveness of a youth intervention and development program may lead to how or why certain perspectives exist. The case study is preferred when examining existing events where the participants’ behaviors cannot be influenced (Yin, 2009). It is useful when observation is not possible because events have to be reconstructed through the eyes of the participants (Bryman, 2008).

Fifteen graduates of youth intervention and development programs located in a large city in an East South Central state were interviewed to obtain their perspectives on the effectiveness of the program they attended. By assuming each participant was truthful in describing past events, the chances of manipulating the behavior of the participant was practically eliminated. The perspectives collected were member checked for accuracy, analyzed, coded, reduced, and assimilated into a report that revealed the findings of the research conducted. This exploratory case study investigated how the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs can be improved from the perspectives of program participants who have exited or graduated from the program.

By focusing on the perspectives of graduates of youth intervention and development programs in a large city in an East South Central state, this study investigated the effectiveness of youth voice in the assessment of programmatic. Program effectiveness was measured using the perspectives of 15 program graduates. Serido et al. (2009) posited it would be helpful if future studies included the perspectives of program participants that measured individual benefits of participation and how these

perspectives could be used to the benefit of youth intervention and development programs in general. The population for the present study consisted of graduates of two youth intervention and development programs in a large city in an East South Central state. Each graduate was the unit of analysis of each individual case study, but the study as a whole covered multiple cases, thereby employing a multiple-case design (Yin, 2009).

Sampling Design

In program evaluation, the logic of case sampling lies in the fact that lessons may be learned about unusual conditions or extreme outcomes that are relevant to improving typical programs (Patton, 2005). The participants for this study were 15 graduates of youth intervention and development programs located in a large city in an East South Central state. These are programs that have track records of success spanning a combined 27 years in helping youth to become productive adults. This participant size is consistent with that selected by Bulanda (2008) and Richmond (2009), which ensures a sufficient number for theoretical saturation. Theoretical saturation occurs when successive interviews fail to reveal any new or relevant data (Bryman, 2008). The graduates ranged between 19 and 30 years of age. No additional constraints regarding gender, ethnicity, or other demographics exist. Program personnel received a written invitation inviting them to participate in the study. Graduate participants who may have perspectives directly related to the research questions were identified by program personnel. Participants who were willing to share information regarding the effectiveness of the program they attended from their own personal perspectives were invited to participate in the study (Richmond, 2009).

The participants were purposively selected (Merriam, 2009). The population of participants was selected based on the need to interview individuals who are relevant to the research questions (Bryman, 2008). Two youth intervention and development programs in a large city in an East South Central state that agreed to participate in the study were briefed. Both intervention and development programs were asked to identify, make the initial contact, and subsequently provide contact information for the graduates selected. The request was made for 20 successful graduates from each program. A total of 40 graduates was requested to help compensate for participants who would not be available or willing to participate in the study. This number also helped reach theoretical saturation. Interested participants were contacted by telephone. The telephone conversations provided an opportunity to fully explain the objective of the study; discuss the methods and procedures to be followed for obtaining informed consent; how the data would be collected, analyzed, stored, and destroyed; and how the findings would be presented.

In that the participants for this study were graduates or alumni, they were no longer members of their respective youth intervention and development programs. Therefore, the actual context for the interviews varied. Each participant was encouraged to select a setting that was a convenient, comfortable, and confidential place for them to talk. Each participant was encouraged to select a place that was quiet to facilitate the participant's ability to aid in the delivery of a high-quality product in the recording of the interview by telephone.

The questions discussed addressed the programmatic that were employed at the youth intervention and development program during the period of time the participant

attended. Specifically, the participant was asked questions pertaining to his or her perspective of which program components were considered most and least helpful and asked what changes could be made to the program components to make the program more effective.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for this study was a semistructured interview guide. The interview guide investigated participants' perspectives concerning what was helpful, what was not helpful, and what could be changed to improve program effectiveness. The interview guide used in this study (see Appendix A) was modified and based on an interview guide developed by Heinze (2006). The modified interview guide consisted of a series of questions relating to the interviewee's perspective of the youth intervention and development program attended. The interview guide developed by Heinze was considered appropriate for use in this study because it was designed to provide insight from the perspective of homeless youth to understand what they considered to be helpful and unhelpful in programs designed to assist them. The instrument also measured what homeless youth found to be most and least helpful in their experiences with their respective agencies (Heinze, 2006).

Field and Pilot Tests

Frequently, field tests and pilot tests are required for research. Terminally degreed experts often field test a new instrument for validity. In that the selected instrument for this study was field tested for homelessness research, and found to be valid and reliable, a

field test was not necessary for the purpose of this study. However, certain terms in the instrument needed to be changed to make it suitable for graduates of intervention and development programs in the current research. As such, the instrument, with the modified terms, was field tested with three terminally degreed experts who were familiar with social science research and three successful graduates, similar to the planned research participants, of intervention and development programs. The field test ensured the semistructured interview guide questions were worded in a clear, concise, and comprehensive manner that provided answers to the central research question and the research subquestions. This type of testing is an important step in establishing content validity of the instrument and was useful for improving the questions and format (Creswell, 2003). This step ensured instrument clarity, eliminated inconsistencies, and evaluated the instrument's overall validity. The field test participants found the instrument fully acceptable. No changes were suggested.

Alignment of the research questions with the interview questions is illustrated in the Table 2 matrix.

The field test is a trial run of the data collection plan, but it does not help to refine the data collection with respect to the content of the data and the procedures to be followed (Yin, 2009). A pilot test was conducted, as required by the Capella University IRB, following approval for scientific merit.

The pilot test was used to help refine the data collection protocol with respect to the content of the data collected and the procedures followed for collection. A pilot test was conducted with participants similar to the actual research participants. The pilot test participants consisted of three successful graduates of youth intervention and

development programs located in a large city in an East South Central state. The participants for the pilot were purposively selected to ensure they were similar to the study participants but were not included in the actual study.

Table 2. Research Matrix

Central question and subquestions	Corresponding interview guide question
1. What are the perspectives of graduates of youth intervention and development programs that may be used to understand program effectiveness?	2, 3, 4, 6
2. How did the program meet graduate needs?	2, 6
3. How did the program help graduates?	3, 6
4. What aspects of the program were not helpful?	3, 6
5. What aspects of the program could be changed to improve program effectiveness?	4, 6

The individuals who volunteered to participate in the pilot test were not offered any type of reward or compensation for their participation in this research; however, they were advised that their comments were being sought to finalize revisions of the instrument and for their personal assessment of the research protocol. The pilot test was used to help understand the need for making necessary changes, if any, to the interview protocol (Merriam, 2009).

Data Collection

Once approved by Capella University's IRB, data were collected through the use of the semistructured interview guide. The semistructured interview guide is useful for

providing a certain amount of control over the line of questioning when participants will be providing historical data (Creswell, 2003), as required in this exploratory case study. The interviews were expected to last 45–60 minutes. Once informed consent was received from the participant, the interview was taken over the telephone, recorded, transcribed verbatim, and a hard copy was given to the participant for member checking.

“Qualitative research frequently entails the reconstruction of events by asking interviewees to think back over how a certain series of events unfolded in relation to a current situation” (Bryman, 2008, p. 466). Depending on the length of time transpired between being a program participant and the interview, some respondents may have forgotten some aspects of their experiences within the context of the youth intervention and development program. The semistructured format provided an effective strategy for delving deeper into the respondent’s experiences to obtain the desired answer. According to Kvale (as cited in Bryman, 2008), this process could include asking follow-up questions, probing questions, specifying questions, direct or indirect questions, interpreting questions, or having no response and remaining silent to allow the respondent to think before supplying an answer. At the end of the interviews, the participants were reminded that their responses were confidential and that the study would maintain their anonymity. They received responses to any questions they had and were thanked for their participation before explaining member checking, the final step in the process.

The data to be collected consisted of narrative accounts of the participants’ experiences during the period of time they were involved with their respective youth intervention and development programs. The participants’ accounts of their experiences

were guided by the modified semistructured interview guide developed for this study. The interviews were digitally recorded. Incomplete conversations required return calls. Incomplete transcripts required the recordings to be revisited. The digitally recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim using Microsoft Word 2007. A master copy was kept on a 32-gigabyte password-protected USB drive. A working hard copy of each transcribed interview was delivered to each individual. Included was a set of written instructions that encouraged the participant to read the transcribed interview and to make note of any required corrections directly on the working copy. The instructions also advised the participant that the working copy, with or without changes, would be retrieved by the researcher within a specified amount of time.

Additional data were requested from the program describing the offerings available to participants. The documents detailing the offerings for each program were reviewed. The catalog of offerings was useful in helping to understand the program descriptions provided by the participants. Having a full understanding of the participants' descriptions and of the youth intervention and development programs was an important aspect of the researcher's role. Telephone interviews may not capture the richness of a face-to-face interview. In preparing this research, a number of experiences and observations were documented. To capture as much data as possible during the interviews, field notes detailing the participant's tonal quality, use of voice inflections, and emotional responses were recorded. These materials were considered field notes regarding this exploratory case study. They were reviewed as part of the data analysis and used to help understand the vocal expressions, tones, and emotions used by the

participants. This process is consistent with Bryman's (2008) recommendation for qualitative analysis.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in qualitative research is an integral component of the research process. Conducting a high-quality case study requires a well-trained and experienced researcher due to the continuous interaction between the theoretical issues being studied and the data being collected (Yin, 2009). Data were collected using a semistructured interview guide following the criteria of a successful interviewer established by Kvale (as cited in Bryman, 2008):

- [1.] Interviewer was knowledgeable and thoroughly familiar with the focus of the interview prior to its start.
- [2.] Interviewer provided a solid structure for the interview by stating its objective and ensuring the participant's questions are fully answered.
- [3.] Interviewer avoided using technical terms and asked straightforward questions that were easy to comprehend.
- [4.] Interviewer was courteous, gave the participant time to think, and allowed them time to formulate their thoughts when replying.
- [5.] Interviewer comprehended the interviewee's tone and took precaution to be empathetic to the interviewee's feelings.
- [6.] Interviewer was flexible and willing to respond to what was important to the interviewee.
- [7.] Interviewer steered the interviewee into answering the question posed.
- [8.] Interviewer tactfully addressed inconsistencies in the interviewees' statements.
- [9.] Interviewer was alert, paid attention to what was being said, and was able to relate what was being said to what was previously stated.
- [10.] Interviewer was able to relate to the interviewee's statements without interjecting personal views to them.
- [11.] Interviewer balanced the amount of talking and listening used during the interview.
- [12.] Interviewer ensured the interviewee appreciated the nature and objective of the study and that they understood their responses are held in strict confidence. (p. 445)

The quality of qualitative data heavily depends on the methodological skill, sensitivity, and integrity of the researcher (Patton, 2005). Five qualities are present in individuals who are considered to be well-trained and experienced in the field of qualitative research data collection. The first characteristic of a good researcher is the ability to ask good questions and interpret the answers (Yin, 2009). Qualitative research depends on the ability to ask the right questions to elicit the desired answers. The ability to ask good questions is important when performing a case study that relies on the perspectives of the participant to obtain the data needed to answer each research question posed. It is equally important to be able to listen attentively to the participant's response. Listening attentively provided opportunities to delve deeper into the response to ensure the correct understanding was received.

The next characteristic requires good listening skills that account for personal ideologies or preconceptions (Yin, 2009). Good research skills require the ability to deliver questions in a way that the participant does not feel pressured to respond in a particular manner. The participant should have no indication of the researcher's personal opinion of the subject matter. Personal biases were bracketed out of the data collection stage.

The third characteristic requires an adaptive and flexible nature and the ability to be prepared to deal with the unexpected (Yin, 2009). This may include the need to adapt questions or make other changes to the study to allow it to reflect the desired results. Few case studies are completed exactly the way originally intended (Yin, 2009).

Data collection involves collecting voluminous raw data and organizing them into readable narrative descriptions, inductively extracting major themes through content

analysis (Patton, 2005). It was imperative that the data collected be characterized into key categories. The fourth characteristic is the ability to reduce relevant events and information into manageable proportions (Yin, 2009). This skill is important to prevent feeling overwhelmed by the large volume of data that is collected, analyzed, and coded.

The final characteristic of a well-trained and experienced researcher is the ability to remain unbiased by preconceived notions regardless of their source of origin (Yin, 2009). This topic was previously considered and requires that the conversation be free of the researcher's personal biases on the topic. This was accomplished by following the line of inquiry in the interview guide and asking questions in an unbiased manner that addresses the same line of inquiry (Yin, 2009).

To ensure the questions were well written, approval of the questions was received from the dissertation chair and committee prior to conducting the field test. The participants were not expected to make any changes to the questions as written. Had there been any confusion in the answers received based on the question posed, the question was revised to obtain the desired response. Each respondent's interview was reviewed separately prior to analyzing all of the responses to confirm that each participant understood the issues being studied. The researcher is a middle-class African American woman who had no prior contact or connection with the participants or the programs.

Two youth intervention and development programs located in a large city in an East South Central state were given a letter of invitation to participate in the study. The letter requested each program to contact 20 successful graduates to explain the objective of the study and invite the graduates to participate in the study. Once approval to conduct the research was received from the Capella IRB, contact information for the graduates

was obtained and used to contact the participants by telephone to fully explain the objective of the study and discuss the need to obtain a signed Informed Consent form to proceed.

An Informed Consent form was delivered to each participant by U.S. postal mail. The signed Informed Consent form was personally collected and a time to conduct the telephone interview was scheduled. The telephone interview consisted of asking the graduate participant questions using the semistructured interview guide to elicit the desired answers to its questions. Dialogue with the participants included asking questions, listening attentively to their responses, asking questions to ensure a detailed description of their perspectives was received, and requesting the participants to read over and make any necessary corrections to a written account of the interview upon receipt. The participants were thanked for their participation in the study, instructed to verify the transcribed interview once received, and informed that it would be retrieved within a specified amount of time. Upon receipt, the transcript was thoroughly reviewed. If necessary, corrections were made to the transcribed interview. The data were analyzed and coding was done manually using Microsoft Word 2007.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began during the data collection stage. Qualitative data analysis is inductive and comparative and serves to develop common themes that encompass the data to be collected (Merriam, 2009). As data were collected using the interview protocol, they were analyzed. Data were transcribed verbatim as they were collected. The transcribed data were coded and recurring themes were identified. There were several

strategies for developing themes. Participant narratives were relied on to develop themes. The narratives were used to establish a matrix of categories within which to place coded data, to tabulate the frequency of themes, or to create data displays for examining themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The theoretical proposition that the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs might be improved based on the perspective of program participants kept the focus on themes that appeared while the data were being analyzed. The proposition was the theoretical orientation guiding the exploratory case analysis. The proposition helped focus attention on the data to be analyzed and to ignore data that did not need to be analyzed (Yin, 2009). This step was useful in defining implications and recommendations for future studies. The proposition helped to organize the entire study and to define alternative explanations of the case that may need to be examined (Yin, 2009).

The small number of participants assisted in analyzing and organizing the study. Data collected from each participant were analyzed separately and compared (Yin, 2009). Each individual digitally recorded and transcribed interview was member checked by the participant before being analyzed for themes. Member checking helped ensure the accuracy of the participant's written perspectives. The categories of themes resulted from coding all the evidence collected from participants (see the research matrix in Table 2). The themes were grounded in the experiences of the participants (Zeldin & Petrokubi, 2008). The research matrix in Table 2 was used to code the data by mapping all subject areas in the research question and subquestions. The data were used to develop arguments for and against the theoretical proposition that the perspectives of program participants

can be used to improve the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs. Data ere also collected regarding the offerings available at each program. The analysis addressed all major rival interpretations of the case (Yin, 2009). If no evidence surfaced to support or refute the theoretical proposition, an indication of that fact was stated in the findings.

Validity and Reliability

Proposal developers should convey the steps to be taken to ensure accuracy and credibility of their findings (Creswell, 2003). Accuracy should be received from the participants and readers of the study. Creswell posited triangulation, member checking, using rich descriptions, clarifying researcher biases, presenting discrepant information, prolonged time in the field, peer debriefing, and external auditing as the primary strategies for checking the accuracy of findings. This research employed a minimum of five of the eight strategies suggested. These strategies included (a) triangulating the perspectives of the participants to develop common themes, (b) requesting each participant review his or her transcribed interview for accuracy, (c) using complete descriptions to convey the findings, (d) discussing the researcher's personal biases of the subject openly and honestly, and (e) presenting information that ran against the majority of the themes developed accurately. The combination of using member checking, detailed descriptions, clarifying personal biases, and presenting rival themes in the coded data was instrumental in reconfirming the validity of the modified semistructured interview guide developed by Heinze (2006) and used for this study. Combining these four strategies with

the convergence of multiple data sources assisted in checking the accuracy of the findings and in avoiding lower-than-expected outcomes.

Triangulation occurs when a study has been supported by more than a single source of evidence, but does not occur when separately analyzing data to compare the conclusions from different analyses (Yin, 2009). The present study used triangulation to review the documents detailing the offerings for each program against the perspectives of program graduates and the researcher's field notes. The study employed a member-checking strategy by relying on participants to review their transcribed interviews for accuracy. These interviews were transcribed verbatim, thereby providing detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences. Self-reflection techniques were utilized to create an open and honest narrative that clarifies personal biases, and reported any and all discrepant information disclosed based on perspectives that ran counter to the major themes identified (Creswell, 2003).

The study was performed in a manner in which it can be readily replicated. The object of reliability is to ensure that subsequent researchers can follow the same procedures as described using the same case and arrive at the same findings and conclusions (Yin, 2009). Reliability was achieved by designing and following a case study protocol. The protocol is a guide for carrying out the data collection phase in studies in which the case is one of several in a multiple-case study and is a significant way to increase the reliability of case study research (Yin, 2009). These procedures served to increase the validity, reliability, and ethical value of the study.

Ethical Considerations

The highest level of ethical standards should be used when conducting research with human participants. Practicing high ethical standards is especially necessary in studies of contemporary phenomena in real-life contexts (Yin, 2009). There are strategies that should be considered when protecting human subjects during research. These strategies involve obtaining informed consent, avoiding deception, protecting the participants' confidentiality and privacy, and taking extra precautions when working with vulnerable groups, including children (Yin, 2009). Additional strategies include providing anonymity of individuals and study locations, properly destroying data at the appropriate time, designating data ownership prior to their collection, providing an accurate accounting of the information collected, and avoiding language bias (Creswell, 2003). It is equally important to avoid fraudulent practices. Care was taken to avoid suppressing, falsifying, or inventing findings; misusing the results; failing to provide the details of the study design; or failing to provide participants with a form that acknowledges their rights have been protected during data collection (Creswell, 2003).

Informed Consent

Obtaining the informed consent of participants is usually accomplished by providing them with a written document that explains the objective of the study and solicits their voluntary participation. The form for this study addressed the benefits of volunteering and agreeing to participate, if any, and clearly identified any known risk factors associated with participating in the study. It was necessary to obtain informed consent from all persons who may be part of the study by alerting them to the nature of the study and formally soliciting their volunteerism to participate in it (Yin, 2009).

The consent form should include clauses reflecting (a) voluntary participation; (b) objective and procedures; (c) right to ask questions, receive the results, and ensure privacy; (d) any benefits of participating; and (e) signatures of the researcher and the participant (Creswell, 2003). Providing participants with a well-drafted Informed Consent form provided them with the necessary information to make an informed decision on whether they wish to volunteer or participate in the study.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Precaution should be taken to remain honest in the description of the study provided in the Informed Consent form. Participants should be protected from any harm that may arise through deceptive descriptions of the proposed study (Yin, 2009). In addition to protecting participants from harm, the privacy and confidentiality of the participants must be protected. Care was taken to avoid using the names of the participants and the names or physical locations of program sites to ensure anonymity was maintained throughout the study.

As a result of participating in a study, participants should never be unwittingly put in any type of undesirable position (Yin, 2009). This includes, but is not limited to, revealing personal information about the organizations or the participants involved in the study. Precautions were taken to ensure the participants' confidentiality and privacy were protected and that vulnerable group members received the proper treatment. Special attention was given to this subject since the proposed study worked with adults who are minorities and considered to be part of a vulnerable population. To assist in meeting these criteria, the researcher completed an additional Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative training module on working with vulnerable populations.

Bias and Expected Outcomes

Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Robson, 2002) posited threats to the validity of the research design fall into three broad categories of reactivity, respondent biases, and researcher biases. To eliminate reactivity bias, questions were neutrally phrased and asked with a neutral tone of voice so as not to influence the participant's response. This also assisted in reducing respondent bias. To address researcher bias, personal experiences, beliefs, and feelings were eliminated from the collection, analysis, and subsequent reporting of the data.

The data collected were analyzed and reported in an unbiased manner. It was expected the outcomes would reveal that graduates of youth intervention and development programs in a large city in an East South Central state have unique and varying perspectives of the effectiveness of the programs they attended.

Data Storage and Disposal

Security of the perspectives collected from graduates of youth intervention and development programs was ensured. Digital recordings and transcribed interviews were saved on a 32-gigabyte password-protected USB drive. Each file on the USB drive was saved separately. The USB drive was password-protected for security objectives. The documents and recordings on the USB drive and hard copies of the interviews were retained in a locked desk drawer. The collected data will be destroyed in 7 years.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented an overview of the methodology selected for this study. Qualitative research lends itself to research designs that examine the perspectives of

participants through narration. Research that employs a qualitative approach seeks to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of participants (Creswell, 2003).

Quantitative research is useful for developing knowledge about a subject. Employing strategies of inquiry, including surveys and experiments, quantitative research relies on instruments that use statistical data. Studies that utilize numbers and words are said to employ a mixed-methods design. To explore the perspectives of 15 graduates of youth intervention and development programs regarding program effectiveness, a qualitative design that allowed for the collecting of stories using a narrative approach was selected.

A qualitative research design was selected for this study. Components of qualitative research, including the sampling design, measures, field and pilot testing, data collection and analysis procedures, participants' rights and other ethical issues, and the expected outcomes, were discussed. The next chapter reports the findings.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

The object of this exploratory case study was to understand the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs from the perspective of successful program graduates. An effective youth intervention and development program is defined as a program that employs the PYD theory.

Following a semistructured interview guide, data were collected by telephone interview from 15 graduates of two youth intervention and development programs. The graduate's perspectives were sought to determine what program components were helpful, not helpful, and could be changed to improve program effectiveness. An exploratory case study approach was utilized to understand the perspectives of graduates. The semistructured interview guide probed participants to answer the following central research question and four subquestions.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

What are the perspectives of graduates of youth intervention and development programs that may be used to understand program effectiveness?

Research Subquestions

1. How did the program meet graduate needs?
2. How did the program help graduates?
3. What aspects of the program were not helpful?
4. What aspects of the program could be changed to improve program effectiveness?

A pilot study was conducted with three graduates prior to the actual data collection. The pilot study participants were asked the same set of interview questions as the actual graduate participants. The purpose of the pilot study was to stimulate additional discussion on the proposed study, to elicit comments regarding changes that would make the interview flow smoothly, and to pretest the research instrument. The pilot participants did not reveal any major flaws or have major concerns with the central or research subquestions; however, one participant expressed that a face-to-face interview would have been more informative than a telephone interview to collect data. The researcher did not have to make any adjustments to the recording device or note-taking method selected prior to the actual data collection stage, but was able to gain valuable insight on the correct use of the semistructured interview guide from the process.

A qualitative exploratory case approach was the theoretical framework best suited to assess the perspectives of the 15 graduates concerning the effectiveness of their youth intervention and development program. An exploratory research approach was chosen to allow the researcher to gather information about the case that helped define the problem and suggested its solution. In addition to describing the participants, this chapter presents the data collected, the results of the data analysis, and the findings of the study. To

protect the privacy of the organization and the participants, names and locations are omitted from the results. The findings, based on methods described in Chapter 2, were analyzed using Microsoft Word 2007 and are summarized by gender. The outcome presents a fresh approach to innovative strategies for creating an effective youth intervention and development program in the 21st century. These results offer an opportunity for individuals, organizations, and communities of all sizes to better understand how to design programs that address what is helpful, not helpful, and could be changed to improve the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs.

Research Sites and Graduate Participants

According to the literature received from each research site, the mission of both programs is to offer Christian-based counseling, social services, educational enrichment, sports, and work or entrepreneurial opportunities to at-risk youth in inner-city communities in a large city in an East South Central state. Both programs work with youth through age 18. One program began more than 20 years ago and the other about 5 years ago.

Similar to the Miami Youth Development Project, this study relied on youth voice to investigate program effectiveness. Two youth intervention and development sites were approved for the selection of research participants. Of the 40 graduates originally requested from program personnel, a total of 24 graduates were actually invited to participate in the study. Current contact information for 13 of the potential graduates initially identified as possible participants could not be provided by the sites. Three

potential participants did not have time or want to participate in the study when initially contacted by personnel from their former program.

Qualified participants must have graduated from one of the approved youth intervention and development program sites and had to be between the ages of 19 and 30 at the time of the interview. Participants were identified by program personnel who had agreed to participate in the study. The personnel had been asked to discuss the study with each participant individually and then invite the graduate to participate in the study. Contact information for the 24 graduates who program personnel stated had expressed an interest in participating was provided to the researcher. These potential participants were then contacted by the researcher, who fully explained the nature of the study and asked for additional mailing information so they could read and sign an Informed Consent form to acknowledge their willingness to participate in the study.

Calls were made to the 24 phone numbers provided by the two research sites. One male graduate who agreed to participate in the study was mailed an Informed Consent form at the address he provided when initially contacted by telephone. When the graduate was contacted to schedule a time to retrieve the Informed Consent form, the graduate stated that he never received it. The researcher reverified the graduate's address and a new form was hand-delivered to his place of residence. When the researcher phoned again to arrange a time to retrieve the signed Informed Consent form and schedule the interview, the graduate did not answer the phone. From that point forward, the graduate did not answer the phone and would not return the researcher's calls. The researcher was not able to retrieve either the original form that was sent by mail or the replacement form that was hand-delivered. Additionally, the contact information provided for one female

and two male graduates was not correct when the researcher placed calls to the phone numbers provided by the research sites. This contact information was reverified as being correct according to the records at the research sites, but no explanation could be given by the site as to why the telephone number had changed, nor could any alternative method of contact be provided. Of 24 possible participants from the research sites, 20 signed Informed Consent forms were collected.

Signed Informed Consent forms were received from 12 African American men and eight African American women. Of the 20 signed Informed Consent forms received, 15 youth intervention and development program graduates actually completed interviews. One African American female graduate was not available to be interviewed after several attempts to schedule a time. Several attempts to contact the graduate were met by a voice-mail service; one call was answered, but the graduate stated she was at work and could not talk at the time. Four additional graduates indicated they did not wish to participate after being contacted by the researcher for the actual interview. One woman and one man indicated the timing was no longer right for their personal schedules, one man indicated he did not understand how his voice could help after all, and one woman did not give a reason for not wanting to participate in the study. A total of 15 interviews from 10 African American men and five African American women were recorded, typed verbatim, member checked, and are reported in this chapter.

Results

Central Research Question

The interviews allowed for data to be obtained that represented the participants' perspectives of the program they attended (Heinze, 2006). The interviews followed a semistructured interview guide modified from a similar guide developed by Heinze. The modified instrument consisted of one central research question and four subquestions. The central research question asked, "What are the perspectives of graduates of youth intervention and development programs that may be used to understand program effectiveness?" The researcher's interest in this phenomenon is tied to the need for a more complete understanding of the historical progression of PYD, its current state of development, and future use of innovative systems designed to better address the unique needs of the population being serviced.

The current and third phase of youth development is researching theories and research ideas associated with the PYD perspective, a tool for assessing the effectiveness of youth development programs. According to M. King (2006) and Lerner (2005, 2007), the 10-year longitudinal 4-H study of PYD tested a theoretical model about the role of developmental assets and individual actions in the promotion of PYD as conceptualized by the five Cs and contribution. To better understand how youth demonstrate competence, confidence, connection, character, caring (the five Cs), and contribution, the central research question in this study asked participants about their reasons for joining the youth intervention and development program they attended.

The first interview question asked participants to share information about when they started the program and how long they remained in it. The average age for starting to

attend a youth intervention and development program was 12.4 years of age. None of the participants interviewed for this study was under the age of 6 when they started their youth intervention and development program. Four participants were in the 6–10 age group (two boys and two girls), nine were in the 11–15 bracket (six boys and three girls), and two male participants were 16 at the start of their respective programs. According to Heinze (2006), age may be a determining factor in a youth’s decision to participate in an intervention program. The responses for the age at start of program are charged by gender in Figure 2.

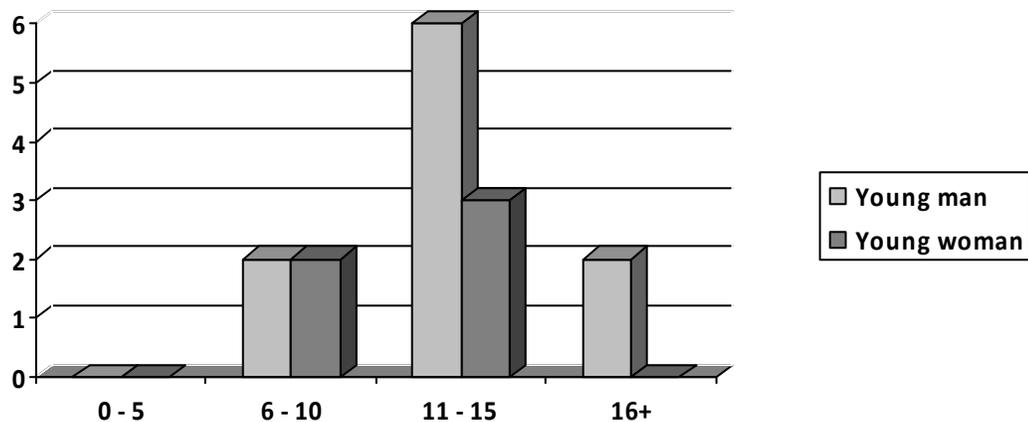


Figure 2. Age at start of program.

Six of the participants indicated they had joined their youth intervention and development program as a result of family influence. Another frequent response received was connected to the fact that other youth were attending the program and it appeared as if these youth were enjoying themselves; four responses fell into this category. Two participants indicated their reason for joining was related to their own actions. Other

participants stated that joining was something positive to do rather than hanging out on the streets, getting inducted into a gang, or being killed; three participants indicated this was a reason for joining. For one participant, this was the main reason for joining. For the other two participants, it was more of a side benefit of going:

I just seen some kids going and they was talking about basketball and we ended up going, all going and played basketball that one day and we never stopped going cause we liked it. . . . back then when I was growing up you had more gangs, more fights after school, and it [going to the program] just kept you out of trouble.

The next question asked, “How long did you remain in your program?” The average age for exiting the youth intervention and development program was 17.6. As shown in Figure 3, the majority of the participants remained in their program until they aged out of it at 17 or 18. Specifically, at age 18, six of the participants were still actively involved in the program on a volunteer basis and four participants were actively involved on a paid basis. Two participants were occasionally involved with program activities at age 18. One participant had started his own nonprofit youth intervention and development program, one was enrolled in a related program sponsored by the organization, and the other participant was not actively participating in his former youth intervention and development program, but indicated he wanted to become more active.

Research Subquestion 1

The first research subquestion asked, “How did the program meet graduate needs?” The interview question asked participants to describe what it was like being in the program by explaining (a) what a normal day’s activities consisted of and (b) what the best thing was about being a part of the program.

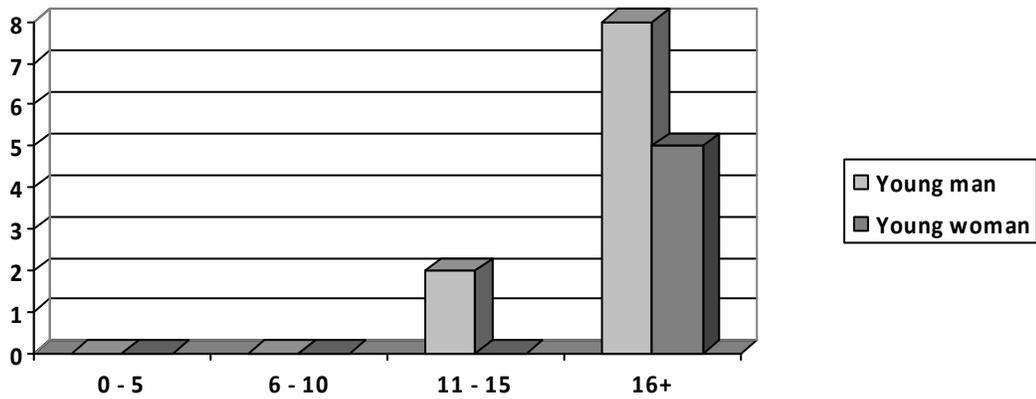


Figure 3. Age at end of program.

A sample of the responses received from the 10 young men and the five young women are provided in the tables that follow. A sampling of the responses given by the young men to a normal day's activities is shown in Table 3. The corresponding samplings of responses made by the young women are shown in Table 4. Samplings of the young men's responses to the best thing about being a part of the program are shown in Table 5, and the corresponding sample of the responses made by young women participants are shown in Table 6.

Research Subquestion 2

The second subquestion asked, "How did the program help graduates?" To answer this question, participants were asked, "How has [name of youth intervention and development program] been most helpful to you?" A sampling of the young men's responses are provided in Table 7, and the corresponding sampling of young women's responses are shown in Table 8.

Table 3. Male Perspective of a Normal Day's Activities

Participant	Response
1	We did stuff like marching and stuff. You know, like the stuff they be saying with about face and stuff like that. How to move together and on the same accord and stuff like that. How to be unified in movement and stuff; have some structure. We did things like that. And um, little exercises and stuff, stretches and push-ups. And then we would have like a good lunch and there would be like a lesson for the day or something and usually it consisted of like a Bible lesson or something.
2	When we first go in, they feed us, and then they had like a lot of activities for us like visual arts, reading, math club, computer lab. They had a science thing going on. They had reading club going on. I mean they had a lot of things going on for us. We had to follow a time schedule.
4	We had a little session where we prayed for about 30 minutes or went over the Bible. They had volunteers to come in help us with our homework. We would exercise and they had study. I mean they mixed it up—it just wasn't all games. They made us feel like when we had problems, we wasn't afraid to ask them about it.
5	We had three services, um, you know, it was a Christian organization . . . we would just, you know, talk about our concerns and just some of our different views on life and how we were able to overcome problems and so we just shared with one another. And so it was more so team building and peer mentoring.
7	We had prayer-like meetings in the morning before we left out for class. We'd have a little free time to do things we liked to do.
10	We would assemble in the gym and have free play. Then there would be an activity hour. We would go on the field trip of our choice, have a discussion of daily life, and a snack. Occasionally we would go swimming before lunch then we would return to free play as the day ended. The night activities would be stuff like watching movies and stuff.
11	Well we really didn't do much. Just hang out and talk to each other, go to the gym and play basketball, jump in the pool, and stuff like that.
12	We would learn life skills like interviews, how to tie ties—things a young man should know, take Bible study, play video games, go on trips and stuff. I liked to play pool, but we played basketball and had a couple of tournaments too.
14	If we were in the building we talked about Jesus, the week's events, and prioritized events for the next week. Other than that just play basketball.
15	Singing and learning about the culture of old . . . music. We practiced for the play, whatever our portion of the performance was and worked on the choreography for the production.

Table 4. Female Perspective of a Normal Day's Activities

Participant	Response
3	We'd get there we'd have a devotion then and ah, ah we would pray, ah we'd have a prayer and then once we prayed . . . would get into the ah activity or the topic that we would discuss or the activity that would do. Over the years it kind of changed. I know when I first started it was like a drill, like a drill sergeant type thing. We had a drill sergeant and we were learning marches and we were learning that, that discipline part of it.
6	From what I remember in the, in the summer time we always started, you know, out in chapel service and we went to our various location whether it was, you know, the math club which was the math club or the computer lab. . . . It was never, you know, a dull moment, never, you know, being still in one particular time so, you know, we went on field trips and went to camp and I remember at one time we used to have cooking classes. At one point they had an exercise class . . . sports all of that, you know, was going on in the summer time. We had a chapel service in the summer time every morning and then during school we would go to chapel service I think it was every Friday. There was praise and worship and then one of the staff members had a brief devotion or what not and everybody was dismissed, you know, to wherever they were assigned to go. . . . how the school year happened was you would get out of school and they would have after school projects so they would have a time set aside for you to complete your homework. I know there was homework time and then math club and the computer lab and the reading program and all of that, but it was just not as much time as it would be in the summer time. You know, you had about, you know, 2–3 hours to work with. So the homework came first, the education, the homework part came first. Everyone had to do that and we would branch off, you know, into the different areas where you supposed to go.
8	We would get the day's assignment radio, TV. We would do a different activity each day. We would do mental healing, radio, and then lunch. After lunch we would do our group projects, computer lab, and group collaboration.
9	Go to counselor, do classroom activities, start bonding with classmates and counselor, lunch, and go to our assigned group based on a test we took when we started. We did the activity of the day and trained for the production, returned to counselor's room, eat a snack, and had some free time to play games and hang out.
13	We would meet in the conference room or designated building with our advisor, do activities, and sit in seminars with professionals who acted like role models.

Table 5. Male Perspective of the Best Thing About Participating

Participant	Response
1	I think that the discipline part is the best part. . . . But it's something that you might not realize at the moment.
2	For me the learning experience because I ain't gonna tell no story. I didn't know nothing at first till I joined the center. When I joined the center, I learned a lot of things.
4	It taught me leadership. It taught me a lot of leadership cause everyone they look up to me, but I didn't know where to take it and by being around Rev. I wanted to be like Rev. I wanted to be a leader. I wanted to help people and that's why that helped me.
5	It was for the first time I was able to leave the house by myself, you know, without my mom or grandmother or family to go to someplace completely different. It gave me a whole 'nother, it was a paradigm shift, you know. It was wide open to be able to engage me in whatever was my need at that point.
7	It was kind of one of those things that it was in a, a I guess I saw the big picture. It was in a small community. Kind of like a small world, but it was ran as if it was the real world. So it was up to you on how you make it. I had a chance to be able to have leadership skills. . . . I liked the challenge pretty much, but the best thing about it was the leadership. It really growed me in a lot of areas. I was really confident when I got out. I knew who I was because it was proven that I could lead.
10	Having a say so in what actually went on.
11	It kept social interactions going in the summer.
12	It kept me, for those two days, away from the negative stuff and it gave me something to look forward to.
14	Having somebody I could talk to.
15	It was an opportunity for me to spend a lot of time learning about old... music which gave me a better understanding of music. . . . has a lot of music history that a lot of people may not be aware of. Just about everybody has heard of . . . the various groups from . . . but there were others who might not have been so well known who had just as much of an impact.

Table 6. Female Perspective of the Best Thing About Participating

Participant	Response
3	I feel the best part was being able to get out and to get to know people—make friends. The fact that we were able to work with other people. We had other people from outside the family to learn something with um to just hang out with even though were quote had a system going on it was still good or it was good to me that I had other people that were my age, that were like me, who came in and, you know, learned different stuff. So I mostly enjoyed the fact that I had new people to get to know.
6	I'm talking about a weeklong free trip! I mean you can't beat it, you know, and all I have and all I had to do, you know, get my lesson and be quiet and have a weeklong trip. And if you were eligible to go on the weeklong trip of course it made you eligible to go to [another location] as well. So that's what I mostly looked forward to
8	Wasn't what I expected it to be. They were not uptight, everyone was really laid back. I got to do stuff like ride my skateboard through the halls and drive this ladies car! I learned a lot about things that influence me every day—TV and radio.
9	It taught me how to open up and present myself to people in a creative way.
13	The location made us feel like somebody in a business environment. We had freedom to walk down the street with our group. They trusted us to do what we were expected to do and treated us like we were growing up to be a big business person. It gave us a lot of freedom.

Table 7. Male Perspective of How the Program Helped

Participant	Response
1	It was also helpful in being around other young men around my age cause, for the most part, I was raised by women and there is not that many males in my family that's around my age.
2	The center you can just come to the center and the people they'll take they time with you like if you didn't know anything, if you didn't know how to work or do these problems they'll take their time and ah try to make you better take their time step by step, letter by letter. If you say for instance you didn't know how to read, they wouldn't down you or they wouldn't let nobody make fun of you. They'll take they time and they'll uh make sure you get it down pat.
4	Well it helped because back then when I was growing up you had more gangs, more fights after school, and it just kept you out of trouble.
5	The most helpful part was getting—it opened me up; it gave me a wide range of opportunities and I was able, it wasn't, you know, it was structured, but it wasn't structured to a point that it was like you were being contained in a box.

Table 7. Male Perspective of How the Program Helped (*continued*)

Participant	Response
7	I networked with some good instructors who got me around some good, great people.
10	The program helped me to be open-minded and not stuck on one thing.
11	It opened me up in the areas of social interactions and skill building.
12	I became more confident in myself. Not that I wasn't confident in myself or that I could or would be successful, but I went from knowing I would graduate and hopefully find a job to getting the skills I needed to be sure I would not only have or get a job, but be able to make it.
14	Responsibility. It taught me how to prioritize. What was more important? At first I would rather go play basketball than study or take care of my business. It taught me leadership.
15	I exposed myself to the history of old artists and the struggles they had to becoming famous. I took an interest in and time to learn about the background of local entertainers.

Table 8. Female Perspective of How the Program Helped

Participant	Response
3	Well mostly its discipline mostly. We learned a lot of discipline. How to respect adults, how to respect ourselves, how to carry ourselves. We learned a lot of discipline and it's where it's more helpful to me and being older I feel like that that's where most teens now, I feel that's the area where they have the most difficulty in, so I feel like that's the most helpful part of it.
6	It opened my eyes to what was actually going on in the world; how some of our kids are, you know, how the educational system works and how a lot of our kids are stereotyped and I mean it made me want to make a difference in someone's life to help cause I live how I lived because of my mother and father but a lot of kids didn't have the same opportunities that I had and so of course it made me appreciative, but it also made me want to make a difference . . . wanna give back to the community.
8	By teaching me ways to relax like sometimes I'll get stressed and mad. They taught us how to relax and deal with stress and now that I'm in college, I still use those techniques.
9	Friends; continued networking opportunities. I felt like I was a part of an elite club!
13	I learned to be more independent and about team work and carrying my weight in the team and the importance of doing my own part.

Research Subquestion 3

The third subquestion asked participants, “What aspects of the program were not helpful?” To answer this question, the interview question asked participants, “How has [name of youth intervention and development program] not been helpful?” The corresponding sample of young men and young women’s responses are listed in Tables 9 and 10, respectively.

Table 9. Male Perspective of How the Program Did Not Help

Participant	Response
1	Well, to be honest if there is I can’t think of none off the top of my head.
2	I mean it wasn’t anything to me. I found that it was fair . . . I mean I didn’t see nothing like that.
4	No it wasn’t anything that wasn’t helpful. The transportation back then wasn’t helpful, but we got there. That was it.
5	I wouldn’t say that it, it wasn’t helpful.
7	I didn’t get the proper help I needed. So that was the downfall with . . . system. It didn’t really teach us the things we need to know to survive.
10	That’s a good question [pause]. I guess it didn’t allow us to be around the younger and older people and that kept us in our grades and with our own ages.
11	None of those, but it didn’t help me in life.
12	I don’t have an answer for that. It doesn’t apply to me.
14	It didn’t help me learn studying skills and we didn’t have enough time. We only went for about 2 hours a day two times a week.
15	We didn’t learn about other things. We focused too hard on kids and kid stuff.

Table 10. Female Perspective of How the Program Did Not Help

Participant	Response
3	I take everything from it with me. I may not use something as much, but I still use it. You get what I'm saying? So it's not like that whatever was given to me was not useful at all.
6	No ma'am. Not at all.
8	Had a really wide age group—11 and up. There were all types of people. The young hung out with the young, the old with the old, and the teens with the teens. I didn't get to know people below or above my age. It seemed like a barrier. It didn't help me expand my social circle into different age groups.
9	We never went into depth about personal issues. There weren't any seminars or hug sessions.
13	To learn how to depend on my teammates. I felt like I was doing a lot of their work while they were having fun.

Research Subquestion 4

The YDAD was developed to assess the developmental quality of youth programs from the perspective of youth (Sabatelli et al., 2009). The fourth and final subquestion asked participants, “What aspects of the program could be changed to improve program effectiveness?” To probe participants concerning things that could be changed, three interview questions were asked. The first question asked, “What kinds of things can [name of youth intervention and development program] do better?” Samplings of the responses received are reported in Tables 11 and 12.

Table 11. Male Perspective of Things the Program Can Do Better

Participant	Response
1	I feel that a program like that strives more when you can talk to kids about stuff they can relate more to.
2	They should add the algebra program to the summer camp.
4	If you can get more volunteers. Somebody that want to do it. You can't have nobody that don't want to help the kids or somebody to do it is more simple for somebody that want to do it because they get to where they don't want to be bothered by nobody, they don't want to help nobody, but if you got somebody that want to play or want to communicate with kids that'll be helpful.
5	I think every program needs to be able to modify itself to fit the times.
7	If they could have more like finance classes and not just basic—I mean really take it far where the youth would be so ready when they step out they wouldn't be like the average people and they would be more than average and they could help change America.
10	They could allow for more parent support like in traveling on field trips and other things.
11	They could teach life skills. How to pay bills, manage your credit. Stuff you gonna have to deal with anyway.
12	Adding more days would be good. Maybe three times a week instead of two times a week and open on days when school is out.
14	Let us come three days a week.
15	They could broaden the topic so we could learn about making money, how to start our own production company, or something like that.

Table 12. Female Perspective of Things the Program Can Do Better

Participant	Response
3	I would prefer for us to if we having an activity or a project, we should build on it and do more with that one project and not just stop have a stopping point. Don't just have one purpose for a project. Try to expand on that project. You don't want to expand on it too much where it gets boring, but you do want to expand on it so that more than just one thing or two things or three things is learned from it.
6	I really don't have an answer to that question because every program, everything that was at the [program] to me it always exceeded my expectations.

Table 12. Female Perspective of Things the Program Can Do Better (*continued*)

Participant	Response
8	They need to hire more people to help. Even though it was a small classroom size of people, you could tell they were understaffed. Some people were just there to help. You could only go to certain people about certain things—you couldn't go to anybody.
9	I think with the stuff kids are going through nowadays, I think it would be better to see what the mindset of every child is before putting them into groups.
13	Not enough supervision. They should have had more people checking on and watching us.

The next question asked participants, “How can the services be improved?” A sampling of these responses is reported in Tables 13 and 14.

Finally, participants were asked, “What can the staff do better?” According to Sabatelli et al. (2006), youths’ perspectives of their program experience can be used to make effective programmatic changes that will empower youth to have a role in the program, to become more invested in activities, and in the program-planning stage. A sampling of these responses is reported in Tables 15 and 16.

Summary Research Question

Libby et al. (2005) and Saito (2006) shared the best way to work with youth is to see them as experts in their own experiences, innovative resources to each other and to the adults who oversee them, and valued members of their community who have the right to share their perspectives. This type of atmosphere is best found in programs that support Y-APs.

Table 13. Male Perspective of How the Services Can Be Improved

Participant	Response
1	More focus on things like technology and the arts and stuff like that . . . it's very ideal to incorporate that into a youth program.
2	They should add the algebra to the summer camp and then it would be a lot better.
4	The way they do it is good, but if they get a lot of help, it could be better.
5	We need new opportunities and they and, you know, it's almost like they're afraid of them.
7	The things that they should have been teaching us was about finances and how to properly manage your money, invest your money, how to put things in the proper place so you can be financially stable, financially protected; but they didn't touch on the on the finances of about investment and how to work the market.
10	It could be improved if they would allow for more of a greater variety of things activity-wise.
11	Teach you what you need to know instead of just doing whatever.
12	Add some classes on business. . . . We went to the Get Motivated seminar and this man came and talked to us about stocks. He told us if we just watch the stocks that we wouldn't lose our money. They need to teach us about stocks and add classes about finance.
14	I don't know, but maybe they could focus on studying habits on that third day.
15	Hiring staff that want to teach about making you a better person.

Table 14. Female Perspective of How the Services Can Be Improved

Participant	Response
3	We should have like leaders, because you, I'll say from this standpoint, I would feel better, well me being my age an older person, experienced person could be showing me how to do something, but it is kind of fun when you have a young leader.
6	I don't have an answer for that question.
8	Lunch sucked. Every day it was like cold-cut sandwiches in a box and a hard cookie or fruit cup. Since we paid, it seems like they could have ordered pizza or something instead of serving us cold box school lunches. It wasn't enough time to go somewhere [to get something to eat]. It would have been running again by the time we got back.
9	We were rushed to do the project. They need to take time to realize kids need to have more time to develop.

Table 14. Female Perspective of How the Services Can Be Improved (*continued*)

Participant	Response
13	If they would have had people talking about business things differently with different ways to talk about it.

Table 15. Male Perspective of How the Staff Can Improve

Participant	Response
1	I know one thing is, you know, [chuckle] to have a staff or a person who teaches who enjoys what they are doing.
2	I think they could work a little bit a little bit more harder than what they been working and contribute, you know, full attention to these, these children cause some children don't get full attention at home.
4	They do a great job and it's like even if they open up a payroll for somebody and have more workers for them—but like I said by it being a nonprofit it's hard to pay somebody I'm assuming. I don't know the things they do behind the scenes, but if they could pay somebody to come out on them days, or go to meetings with them, or however it go that would be nice.
5	The staff was wonderful. I would, I would just the only thing the staff I would probably because you have a lot of people that go to all these trainer training classes, leadership classes, these workshops and it teaches them more how to be more so politically correct and you can't go to school to learn passion. You just can't.
7	I believe that they should actually look at themselves, evaluate themselves, and say OK we've been through—you know, I'm talking about instructors, I'm talking about the teachers, and the people who set up the program—they should evaluate themselves and see what's really going on with the economy. What they have to face with themselves and then bring something to the youth so they don't end up in the situation that they might be in or they learn how to fight the battle that they're fighting.
10	They could ask for more feedback from the younger youth. They are always depending on the older—like high school—people to come up with ideas.
11	Be more mature.
12	They were alright to me.
14	I can't think of anything.
15	Alternate the lead role. Take turns letting everybody lead. Make everybody feel important; spread it out.

Table 16. Female Perspective of How the Staff Can Improve

Participant	Response
3	Doing something that's interesting or doing something that you like cause you have somebody to look up to that's your age and you can communicate with them on that level. So they should have like levels of leadership. . . . Have leaders who are closer in age to the participants. Responsible leaders closer to their age because not all 16-year-olds are responsible. Some may be a little more mature so I want to make sure that responsible is in there.
6	No because I mean as long as I've been a part of the [program] it was always a family-oriented team-type situation. I mean it was a love that everybody had for working together.
8	By being more knowledgeable about what they're doing, the program that they're in, or what they're supposed to be helping with.
9	Stop recruiting college interns who aren't ready to deal with kids. They treated us like we were little brothers and sisters instead of being role models.
13	Honestly, I don't remember the staff having the slightest impact on me.

After a review that summarized the key questions and big ideas that emerged from the interview, participants were asked what one thing, whether discussed during the interview or not, was most important to make a youth intervention and development program a good program. A sampling of the responses recorded is shown in Tables 17 and 18.

Research Data and Data Analysis Summary

This study utilized an exploratory case study methodology that relied on a semistructured interview guide to gather information. The data collection and data analysis reported on in this chapter were performed by the researcher.

Table 17. Male Perspective of One Thing That Makes a Program Good

Participant	Response
1	I think what's most important is that you, that the people that's over the program can understand the subject and have a love for that and also that they [have] a love for kids.
2	I mean I think that education more important—the most important.
4	So you got to give them [the youth] more responsibilities and like I said you get somebody in there about they age, a little bit older, mature, and you'll see a whole lot [of] difference.
5	I think things need to be more God-centered. I think if we understood the concept of God—how the Bible talks about how God is love and that's where you get all that passion and those things from you have more compassion, you know, for people and your programs would fit people verses trying to get the people to fit your program.
7	Um [pause] the first thing that comes to my mind is unselfishness. I don't know it's a, when you totally love your neighbor as you love yourself, that's absolutely unselfishness. . . . Any problems or anything that you're faced with you pass it on and if you do it in a big, a big program like that then the information is endless. It's so helpful.
10	By having a staff that are willing to allow the children to have their own feedback and pushing them to open-mindedness.
11	If you walk out having learned something you going to carry with you the rest of your life. Something that is unforgettable.
12	When you hire people who are authentic at heart you can get something out of it. These people break they back for us. They in it; they are real about trying to help someone.
14	It's about your personnel. They need to act like a big brother or a big sister rather than a mother or father. It's about knowing how to correspond with one another.
15	You got to be able to take something away from it. Be able to take it with you, relate it to other things. Know why it is relevant in your life.

The first step was to obtain the contact information for potential participants from the two approved research sites. Of the 40 potential participants originally requested by the researcher, 24 names and phone numbers were provided by the two sites. From the 24 potential participants identified, 20 signed informed consent forms were received.

Table 18. Female Perspective of One Thing That Makes a Program Good

Participant	Response
3	Ah, passion. It goes back to passion because if the person that's teaching me how to live right and do right and they really are concerned and they really put forth a great effort, it really makes me feel good and it kind of push me want to go and want to do what they doing. For me anyway especially if it's whatever the program got going on. If it's teaching me how to tie my shoes a bunch of different ways. If you real passionate, if you really care about me learning how to do this, it gives me a little, it give me a drive to want to learn or do it that way or that particular way that you trying to show me. So I think it really does go back to passion.
6	Well I feel like what makes a good program is whoever is over that program has to definitely have a passion to do what they do. It can't be a situation where it's just a pay check, you come in and you do it because it won't work. If you have a passion to do it, then that's what I feel like makes a program work.
8	If there is a lot for people to do instead of just doing one thing all the time. They should give people options; have a variety of things to do.
9	I guess you can tell a program is a good program if the final day. You can look at the way the kids feel about it on the last day. Are they crying? Happy? Getting phone numbers? How the kids react to it; it should be more like a family environment you have to have to make them act like that.
13	Look at the potential they do have and try to get them to mark where they should be.

One participant, who had signed an informed consent form, was unavailable to interview, another possible participant did not feel his voice would help, two others had timing issues, and the other participant did not give a reason for not wanting to participate in the study. A total of 15 interviews following the modified semistructured interview guide were conducted.

Several recurring themes were identified. The coded themes were analyzed and have been listed according to the number of times they occurred. The data for the central research question provided an overall perspective of program effectiveness through the eyes of a youth intervention and development program graduate. Although the responses

varied, the graduates generally indicated the programs were effective socially and in the areas of education and overall positive development, but lacked in the area of providing knowledge in financial and other areas concerning life. The four subquestions further divided graduates' perspectives by inquiring about their perspectives of how the program (a) met their needs, (b) helped them, (c) was not helpful for them, and (d) could be changed to improve effectiveness, respectively.

The major themes resulting from the first research subquestion were activities, Christian studies, academics, and discipline. The probing question asked, "What was the best thing about participating?" Of the seven resulting categories, social aspects of programs were mentioned the most. Socially related answers surfaced five times. The activities, academic components, opportunities for leadership, and level of personal responsibility tied with two responses each, and the ability to openly discuss items and opportunities for youth to voice their opinion received one response each.

The next subquestion inquired about ways the program helped the graduate. The major themes that appeared were socially (9 responses), educationally and in being more responsible (2 responses each), and with leadership skills and in becoming more disciplined (1 response each).

The third subquestion explored how the program helped participants. The resulting themes were social skills (9 responses), educationally and learning responsibility (2 responses each), and leadership skills and discipline (1 response each). The themes that surfaced on how the program did not help were less varied. Tying for seven responses each was socially and not applicable. The remaining response was related to education.

The fourth subquestion probed graduates on how the program, services offered, and staff could be improved. The program and services showed an overlap of responses in the categories of education, volunteers, socially, operating hours, and not applicable (1 response each). The multiple-response categories concerning staff improvements were not applicable (4 responses), socially (2 responses), and staff knowledge and/or impact (2 responses).

Coding of the final or summary research question revealed staff was the most mentioned topic that made a program a good program. This category had 5.5 responses. Two responses indicated passion. Education and social skills tied for 1.5 responses each, and the remaining categories (love, Christian studies, unselfishness, program, and goals) had one response each.

Each graduate's personal needs were met in different ways by attending the program. For some, it helped academically, and for others, it helped to avoid having negative outcomes in life. Most of the graduates said the programs were helpful, but others mentioned programs were not helpful in preparing them for life's challenges. Each graduate was able to think of at least one way the program, its services, or staff could be changed to improve the overall effectiveness of the program. These findings are further discussed and interpreted in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The objective of this study was to understand the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs from the perspective of program graduates. This research followed a study that investigated the perspectives of homeless youth in Detroit, MI. In that study, Heinze (2006) found that youth intervention and development programs that provide opportunities for youths' voices to be heard may enhance their skill development and competence. This chapter includes a discussion of the findings of this study, the implications of these findings, and recommendations for future research.

Analysis of the Findings

This research was guided by one central research question and four subquestions. The central research question asked, "What are the perspectives of graduates of youth intervention and development programs that may be used to understand program effectiveness?" The research subquestions asked

1. How did the program meet graduate needs?
2. How did the program help graduates?
3. What aspects of the program were not helpful?

4. What aspects of the program could be changed to improve program effectiveness?

These questions were designed to explore the perspectives of graduates of youth intervention and development programs regarding program effectiveness.

A review of the literature revealed the perspectives of graduates of youth intervention and development programs are frequently overlooked in the planning, design, delivery, and assessment of program effectiveness. Watkins (2009) employed a longitudinal qualitative interview design to assess the viability of utilizing community-based youth organizations for youth development. The study was conducted in two community-based youth programs in an urban midwestern city. Data were collected from 20 African American and Latino youth and six adult organizers. The study lasted close to four months. The youth ranged in age from 14 to 18. Neither a field test nor pilot test was performed. The findings suggested community-based youth programs are viable contexts for youth civic development (Watkins, 2009). Youth may become more civic-minded when they attend community programs. A summary of the findings for Wave 6 of *The 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development* (n.d.) revealed that young people in 4-H are committed to improving their communities. The 4-H study employed a longitudinal sequential design to test the theoretical model conceptualized by the five Cs and contribution (M. King, 2006; Lerner, 2005, 2007), but the findings suggested that a longer research period would be required to obtain a full picture of youth development and how youth voice and other factors can enhance PYD (Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2007).

The Miami Youth Development Project employed a multistage longitudinal comparative design that allowed participants to express their personal feelings and

experiences through words (Kurtines, Ferrer-Wreder, et al., 2008). Comparative designs put participants into more than one group to gain a better understanding of how multiple participants feel about an experience. Bulanda (2008) utilized qualitative measures to evaluate youth serving in roles of participant and researcher. Two community development organizations and two youth-serving agencies provided data for a study performed by Dallaire (2009). A comparative case study performed by Sabatelli et al. (2009) used the same data collection site. Comparative designs provide one effective source for triangulating data.

Another method for triangulating data involves the use of both qualitative and quantitative data. To compare and contrast the contributions of youth, youth workers, researchers, and policymakers, Urban (2008) conducted a mixed-methods exploratory study. Heinze (2006) relied on data collected from surveys and focus groups to investigate the perspectives of a group of homeless youth regarding their lives. Surveys like the YDAD, created by Sabatelli et al. (2006), are useful for capturing data regarding the supports, opportunities, and services available for youth. Programs that employ Y–APs intentionally maximize the components of youth–adult relationships and youth activities. The *Youth Ethnographers Project (YEP): Evaluating After-School Contexts* was part of a qualitative evaluation study that employed a Y–APs. The analysis of the relationship of youth voice in Y–APs and PYD was tested in a hierarchical multiple regression analysis study performed by Serido et al. (2009). This current study employed an exploratory case study approach to explore the perspectives of graduates concerning the effectiveness of two youth intervention and development programs located in an East South Central state.

Discussion of the Results

For the purpose of this study, an effective youth intervention and development program was defined as a program that employed the PYD theory. The PYD theory is a policy perspective that emphasizes providing services and opportunities to support adolescents to develop a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging, and empowerment (National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth, n.d.). The central research question was designed to explore program effectiveness from the perspective of program graduates. None of the graduates interviewed entered their respective program prior to age 6. The researcher does not believe the answers to the subquestions would have changed had the participants interviewed spent these early years in their respective programs. From the time of entry to the time of exit, the average participant spent 4.94 years in his or her program. The smallest number of years involved was 2 and the highest number of years was 11.5.

The research subquestions probed for deeper meanings of how the program was helpful, not helpful, or could be changed to improve program effectiveness. The first subquestion asked participants to explain what they did on a daily basis. The majority of the responses indicated the day's activities included some type of Christian-based counseling, academic enrichment skills, focused on a particular outcome or project, and included free time to play games and sports. Participants stated these activities enhanced participants' social skills and connected them with other youth their own age. Participants also stated these activities were restrictive and isolated them from other younger or older participants. These findings point to the need to have activities that, like life, require participants to interact with individuals of all ages.

The next question addressed how the program specifically helped graduates. This question elicited a variety of responses, including being exposed to and able to learn more about Christian principles and having the ability to enhance academic skills in a one-on-one environment. Other responses varied from learning self-discipline and respect, skills one participant did not realize were important at the time, to gaining leadership skills and how to be responsible for one's own decisions. In addition, the participants found the programs were safe havens that protected them from harm and were good social outlets for youth and provided youth with a positive outlook on life. These answers may imply that how a program helps a participant depends on the participant.

The third subquestion asked about ways the program was not helpful. Although a few of the participants could not provide an answer to this question, when probed, several said the programs were not useful in preparing them for life's financial and other challenges. Other responses indicated the programs were not helpful when they consistently segregated participants into age groups, did not help them to learn study skills, did not have year-round academic sessions and consistent daily programming, did not expose them to the world outside of the program, or did not have the proper supervision. These findings indicate the voices of program participants are being overlooked in the planning, design, delivery, and assessment stages. According to Serido et al. (2009), program staff must intentionally (a) provide opportunities for youth to act on issues that are meaningful to them and have an impact on their lives, (b) provide opportunities to become meaningfully engaged in their communities, and (c) build strong relationships with other youth.

The final subquestion inquired about how the program, the services, and the staff could improve. Although not all participants indicated the program was not helpful, every participant said there was at least one area in which the program, the services provided by the program, or the staff could improve. These results again reveal the voices of youth are missing from the planning, design, delivery, and assessment of programs. The absence of youth voices stems from researchers who continue to refuse to see program participants as their most significant resource (Daud, 2006).

The summary research question asked participants what one thing makes a youth intervention and development program a good program. The overwhelming response was about the staff. Participants indicated staff members had to have a passion for working with children. One participant stated an individual could attend training sessions, but that training sessions could not teach compassion. Other responses indicated the programs need to teach participants something that would be useful in life and that programs need to have a variety of activities from which to choose.

Discussion of the Conclusions

The perspectives of program graduates may be an effective indicator of youth intervention and development program effectiveness. Research should be conducted to assess this. This exploratory case study explored the perspectives of graduate participants of two youth intervention and development programs in an East South Central state to explore the understanding of what is helpful, not helpful, and could be changed to improve program effectiveness. For a program to be effective, the specific needs of adolescents should be supported and implemented (Heinze, 2006). The findings

suggested the importance of inviting youth voices to be heard in the planning, design, delivery, and assessment of programs. The results of the study support previous research and theory that indicate the next logical framework to develop should be research designs that promote PYD and are informed by the youth situated in the PYD context through the perspectives that preserve the richness of meaning they give to their personal lives (Kurtines, Montgomery, Eichas, et al., 2008).

Limitations

Studies that measure programs that have incorporated youth perspectives, youth benefits, and program benefits may be useful tools to create intervention and development programs. The results obtained from this study apply only to the graduates who participated in the data collection phase. If additional research sites from other cities had been included and more graduates had participated, these results might be used to generalize the effectiveness of all youth intervention and development programs beyond the study. The results may still be relied on to assist program developers to design more effective programs.

Relying on the approved research sites to provide an adequate number of participants limited the number of participants available for the data collection phase. In addition to the excessive amount of time it took to obtain contact information for former program participants, there was a problem obtaining the specified number of contacts agreed upon to be supplied by both organizations. The researcher discovered that the majority of program participants do not keep in touch with program personnel after exiting youth intervention and development programs. Program personnel are often

unable to locate former participants using the information in the records they have on file. This limited follow-up may be attributed to the fact that people move and that many individuals who once relied on land-line telephones as their main source of communication now depend on and use cell phones whose numbers are not noted in the records. Since a cell phone number directory does not exist, looking for a person's cell phone number can be costly, time consuming, and often futile.

Working with young adults who are just getting started in life can present an obstacle in itself. Although many individuals in the specified age group of 19–30 are mature, some are not. In some instances, it was challenging to coordinate schedules with participants who agreed to be available at a particular time but were not available to be interviewed when called. Although all participants were given the opportunity to participate in the study, several participants who initially agreed to participate were eventually dropped from the study when continuous attempts to interview them failed. It was also a challenge working with a select group of participants, several of whom had familial ties to and with the research sites. For several of these individuals, it may have been difficult to provide negative opinions concerning their family or former youth intervention and development program.

Implications

The results of the study revealed youth voice may be a valuable resource for improving the effectiveness of youth intervention and development programs. When questioned about program improvements, participants from both research sites indicated at least one way they perceived the program could be improved. Participants mentioned

they felt empowered when they had a voice in the program, were given leadership roles, or had the freedom to be treated like young adults. Having a structured environment and being exposed to other youth their age in a positive setting seemed to help build youths' social skills, but there seemed to be a great desire for more life-skills training especially in the area of finances and related money matters to prepare youth for adulthood. On more than one occasion, participants suggested that staffing personnel be hired for their inner passion to help youth rather than their knowledge. Equally important was the need to have staff who could connect with the youth due to their age, maturity level, willingness to help, and attitude.

Recommendations From the Data

The results of this exploratory case study support the fact that there is an absence of youth voice in the assessment of youth intervention and development programs. This study adds to the literature on the perspectives of graduates of youth intervention and development programs that may be used to understand program planning. The findings revealed program developers might be able to improve programmatics by allowing youth to assist in the planning, design, delivery, and assessment of youth intervention and development programs.

1. Recommend that community governments and nonprofit organizations working with youth establish youth advisory boards that are responsible for contributing their voice in all stages concerning the planning, design, delivery, and assessment of local youth programs.

2. Recommend the use of the modified interview guide (Appendix B) to help understand the importance of parental involvement in youth intervention and development.
3. Recommend the use of the developmental intervention model for the assessment of neighborhood systems (DIMANS; see Figure 4) for ensuring inclusion of youth voices in youth intervention and development programs.

The model is based on the research findings.

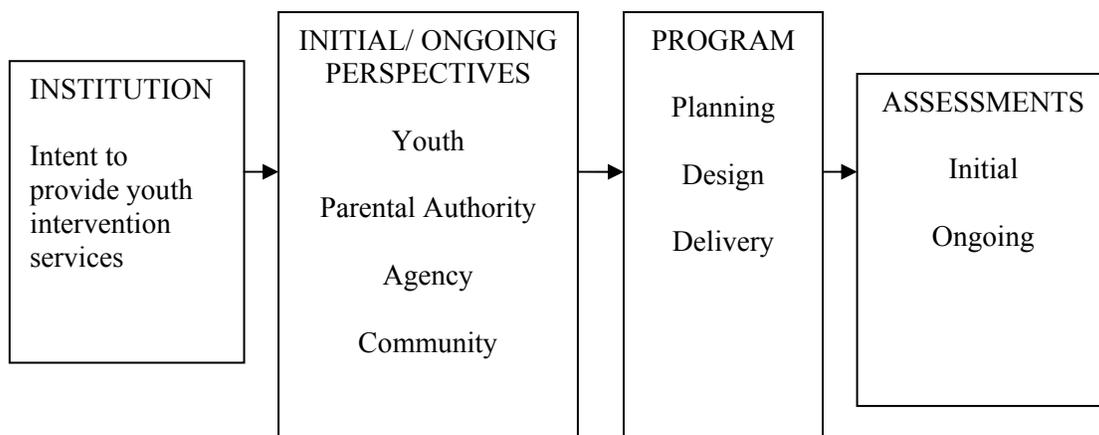


Figure 4. Developmental intervention model for the assessment of neighborhood systems (DIMANS).

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are suggested.

1. Conduct additional longitudinal research that follows graduates of youth intervention and development programs into adulthood.

2. Conduct additional research that utilizes the perspectives of youth situated in the PYD context regarding their personal lives.
3. Develop research tools that measure the quality of services available in youth intervention and development programs based on the perspectives of youth participants.
4. Complete research that measures the quality of the opportunities created for youth through Y-APs.
5. Complete studies that focus on the relevance of PYD to community involvement, the degree of youth participation, and program accountability.
6. Complete studies to support the benefit of utilizing youth voice to allow youth to be agents in their own development.
7. Repeat the study with other ethnic groups.

Conclusion

Youth can be valuable actors in their own development. Providing avenues for youth to have a voice in the planning, design, delivery, and assessment of youth intervention and development programmatic can prove to be an effective measure in determining if a young person will return to, continue in, or complete a program. The themes that resulted from this study may lend a start to future research that will continue to fill the gap in the literature that currently exists in this area. Employing youth voice in future programmatics of youth intervention and development programs may begin to allow program developers to better address the needs of the unique and specialized demographics they serve.

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APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW GUIDE

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(Introduce self from Capella University). I am contacting you today to briefly speak with you about your prior experiences with (name of youth intervention and development program). Remember, everything you discuss with me will remain anonymous and confidential. I will be recording our interview and I will be the only one handling your individual information. No one from your former program will have access to today's interview, nor will they be able to link any of your comments to you individually. Before we begin, do you have any questions of me?

1. Introduction
 - A. Brief summary of current project
2. Reasons for joining (name of youth intervention and development program)?
 - A. Tell me when you started the program and how long you remained in the program.
 - B. What was it like being in (name of youth intervention and development program)?
 - a. Probes: What did a normal day's activity consist of? What alternative activities did you have to choose from?

C. Have we missed anything? Is there anything you would like to add?

7. Conclusion: Thank you for participating in this research.

APPENDIX B. MODIFIED INTERVIEW GUIDE

From *Identification and Evaluation of Effective Programming for Homeless and At-Risk Adolescents* (pp. 147–149), by H. J. Heinze, 2006. Copyright 2006 by Digital Commons@Wayne State University. (AAT No. 3213991) Adapted with permission.

(Introduce self from Capella University). I am contacting you today to briefly speak with you about your prior experiences with (name of youth intervention and development program). Remember, everything you discuss with me will remain anonymous and confidential. I will be recording our interview and I will be the only one handling your individual information. No one from your former program will have access to today's interview, nor will they be able to link any of your comments to you individually. Before we begin, do you have any questions of me?

1. Introduction

A. Brief summary of current project

B. Brief summary of researcher

C. Brief summary of participant

- a. Probes: Who provided parental (e.g., mother, father, grandparents, aunt, uncle, the like) support for you as a youth? _____
- b. How would you rate your _____ parental involvement on a scale of 1 to 5, with very permissive (1), permissive (2), neutral (3), authoritarian (4), and very authoritarian (5)?

- c. How involved was your _____ in your development, with never available (1), somewhat available (2), neutral (3), somewhat involved (4), always involved (5)?
2. Reasons for joining (name of youth intervention and development program)?
 - A. Tell me when you started the program and how long you remained in the program.
 - B. What was it like being in (name of youth intervention and development program)?
 - a. Probes: What did a normal day's activity consist of? What alternative activities did you have to choose from?
 - b. What was the best thing about being a part of (name of youth intervention and development program)?
3. Most and least helpful
 - A. How has (name of youth intervention and development program) been most helpful to you?
 - B. How has (name of youth intervention and development program) not been helpful?

(Examples: For staying in school, finding employment, working things out with family?)
4. Things that could be changed
 - A. What kinds of things can (name of youth intervention and development program) do better?
 - B. How can the services be improved?
 - C. What can the staff do better?

5. Demographic information
 - A. What is your age?
 - B. Gender
 - C. Ethnicity?
6. Summary: Researcher provides a 2- to 3-minute summary of key questions and big ideas emerging from the interview.
 - A. Does this address the important things we talked about?
 - B. Of all the things discussed or not discussed today that make good programs, what do you think is most important?
 - C. Have we missed anything? Is there anything you would like to add?
7. Conclusion: Thank you for participating in this research.