



# **Youth Development Research Briefs**

## **2013**

**Mary E. Arnold, Editor  
Oregon 4-H Youth Development Program  
Oregon State University**

*Youth Development Research Briefs* is a collaborative project among 4-H youth development faculty and educators at Oregon State University. The goal of the project is to provide concise summaries of current research relative to 4-H youth development program in:

- **Creating and Sustaining Youth-Adult Partnerships**
- **Youth Development Practice**
- **Youth Engagement**
- **Youth Development Profession**

Collaborators participate in the project by reviewing one current article, presenting a summary of the review at the 4-H professional development conference in the spring, and preparing a written review following a proscribed review outline. Each written review contains:

- **Topic area that is covered**
- **A verbatim article abstract**
- **A complete article citation**
- **A research brief that covers the article's contribution to theory and implication for promoting high quality youth development programs and practice**
- **Selected references for additional reading**

### **Contributing Authors for 2013**

Dani Annala, Hood River County  
Virginia Bourdeau, State 4-H Office  
Jamie Davis, Lake County  
Wendy Hein, Clackamas County  
Maureen Hosty, Multnomah County  
Marilyn Lesmeister, State 4-H Office  
Pamela Rose, State 4-H Office  
Claire Sponseller, Umatilla County  
Elissa Wells, Coos County  
Shana Withee, Harney County

### Reference Citation for Complete Volume:

Arnold, M. E. (Ed.). (2013). *Youth development research briefs 2013 (Research Brief No.2)*. Corvallis, OR: 4-H youth Development; Oregon State University. Available on-line at: <http://oregon.4h.oregonstate.edu/4h-research-briefs>

## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Predictors of adolescent successful development after an exchange: The importance of activity qualities and youth input.....                            | 4  |
| <i>Dani Annala</i>  |    |
| Strategies for designing community-based programs to build STEM competencies and college readiness in underserved populations: A Literature Review..... | 8  |
| <i>Virginia Bourdeau</i>  |    |
| The 4-H Youth Development Professionals Workload Relationship to Job Satisfaction.....  | 13 |
| <i>Jamie Davis</i>  |    |
| How is Civic Engagement Developed Over Time? Emerging Answers from a Multidisciplinary Field.....   | 17 |
| <i>Wendy Hein</i>   |    |
| A New Measure for Assessing Youth Program Participation.....  | 20 |
| <i>Maureen Hosty</i>  |    |
| The Psychology and Practice of Youth-Adult Partnership.....   | 24 |
| <i>Marilyn Lesmeister</i>   |    |
| Patterns of Adolescents' Participation in Organized Activities: Are Sports Best When Combined With Other Activities?.....                               | 27 |
| <i>Pamela Rose</i>  |    |
| An Emerging Model of Knowledge for Youth Development Professionals.....   | 31 |
| <i>Claire Sponseller</i>  |    |
| The Voice of Youth: Atmosphere in Positive Youth Development Program.....   | 36 |
| <i>Elissa Wells</i>   |    |
| The Impact of Participatory Research on Urban Teens: An Experimental Evaluation.....  | 41 |
| <i>Shana Withee</i>   |    |

# Predictors of adolescent successful development after an exchange: The importance of activity qualities and youth input

Dani Annala  
4-H Program Coordinator  
Oregon State University

## **Topic Area(s)**

- Youth activities
- Successful Development
- Qualities of Programs
- Youth Voice

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors involved in predicting successful development after an intensive exchange experience in adolescence. Specifically, we consider the eight positive features, as conceptualized by Eccles and Gootman (2002), as well as the amount of input youth had into their exchange experience as predictors of successful development after the exchange. In this short-term longitudinal study, 242 young, middle, and older adolescents, who participated in a national short-term exchanges program, completed surveys before and after completion of the program. Overall, we found that both the eight positive features and personal input were significantly related to overall successful development. This research contributes to an understanding of the importance of different qualities of activity experiences in overall youth development.

## **Article Citation**

Lawford, H., Ramey, H., Rose-Krasnor, L., & Proctor, A. (2012). Predictors of adolescent successful development after an exchange: The importance of activity qualities and youth input. *Journal of Adolescence* 35 (2012) 1381-1391 doi:10.1016

## **Research Brief**

Activity involvement including long term extra-curricular activities and sports has been linked to positive adolescent development and there is much research to support this relationship however research focused on short-term intensive activity experiences such as an exchange or camping programs is lacking.

The author's goal in this article was to examine the factors involved in predicting successful development after an intensive exchange experience in adolescence. The author starts by examining current research related to high intensity experiences, successful adolescent development, and the importance of youth voice and features of the activity setting. The authors then present their study which compared adolescents' reports of successful development before and after participating in a short-term, intensive national exchange program.

### **Contribution to Theory**

Short term extensive experiences, including exchange programs, have the potential to provide Positive Youth Development (PYD). Eccles and Gootman (2002) reviewed literature and found that there are eight features of activity settings that are critical for positive adolescent development: safety, structure, supportive relationships, feelings of belongingness, positive values and social norms, opportunities for efficacy, skill-building, and connections to family, school, and community. Another important factor in positive adolescent development is youth input. Studies show that youth input into program and organizational decision-making is linked directly to positive adolescent development. The impact of input may depend on the developmental stage of the adolescent involved. Adolescence is a unique stage and the developmental needs are unique to each individual therefore there will be greater gains for some adolescents and lesser gains for others.

This study looked at Eccles and Gootman's eight features within the context of a national exchange program and found that positive features of the group involved in the exchange and the amount of personal input into the exchange were important positive predictors of successful development. The study found that adolescents who rated their exchange more positively with respect to the eight features were also more likely to report gains in successful development after their experience. The study also found that early adolescents reported higher levels of successful development versus middle and late adolescents. In the table below from Lawford, H., Ramey, H., Rose-Krasnor, L., & Proctor, A. (2012), you can see that the level of youth input reported also had an influence on the level of successful development reported especially in early and middle adolescents.

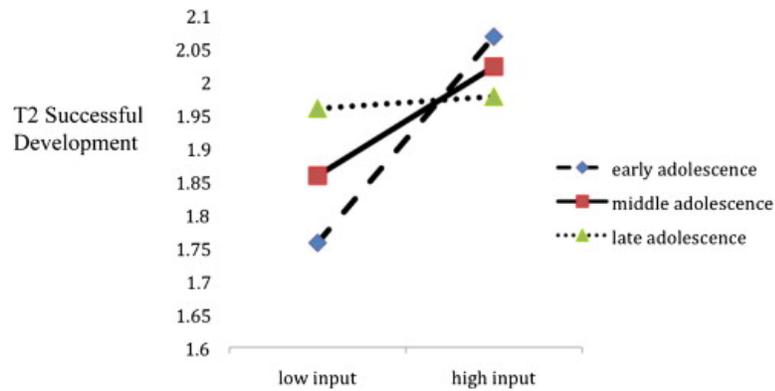


Fig. 1. Interaction between amount of input into the exchange and age group predicting successful development.

### **Contribution to Practice**

Program developers need to consider how their program design meets the developmental needs of the participants and incorporate the positive features identified by Eccles and Gootman as necessary. This study suggests that organizations with the goal of promoting positive youth development may be more successful if they provide opportunities for youth to have meaningful input into the program. Youth input can be incorporated around the eight features identified by Eccles and Gootman safety, structure, supportive relationships, feelings of belongingness, positive values and social norms, opportunities for efficacy, skill-building, and connections to family, school, and community.

### **Implication for 4-H Youth Development Professional Practice**

As 4-H Youth Development Professionals we need to be aware of the positive features of activity settings as well as youth input in order to increase the potential to “make a difference” for youth participants engaged in short-term extensive experiences such as an exchange or a camp. The features of activity settings that need to be considered are safety, structure, supportive relationships, feelings of belongingness, positive values and social norms, opportunities for efficacy, skill-building, and connections to family, school, and community. Activity settings also are considered more likely to foster PYD when they provide an empowering, expecting, and supportive atmosphere, with opportunities for input and decision-making. These are things that we can incorporate into all program areas and increase the likelihood of fostering positive adolescent development.

### **Selected References for Additional Reading**

Arbreton, A., Sheldon, J., Bradshaw, M., Goldsmith, J., Jucovy, L., & Pepper, S. (2008). *Advancing achievement: Findings from an independent evaluation of a major after-school initiative*. NY: The James Irvine Foundation and Public/Private Ventures.

Beames, S., & Ross, H. (2010). Journeys outside the classroom, *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 10(2), 95-109.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14729679.2012.505708>.

Eccls, J., & Gootman, J. A. (Eds.), (2002). *Community programs to promote youth development*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Mitra, D. L. (2004). The Significance of students: can increasing “student voice” in schools lead to gains in youth development? *Teachers College Record*, 106(4), 651-688

# **Strategies for designing community-based programs to build STEM competencies and college readiness in underserved populations: A Literature Review**

Virginia Bourdeau  
4-H Specialist  
Oregon State University

In its December, 2012 report to the Oregon Legislative Assembly the Joint Interim Task Force on STEM Access and Success stated, “Overall, too many Oregon students are not completing high school with the mathematics and science literacy and preparation in STEM required for post-secondary studies, careers, and informed citizenship.” Further, the Task Force recommended, “In order to successfully reach underserved populations and communities as a whole, STEM education must involve families. Family involvement would include education of families on the importance of STEM for career success, opportunities for families to participate in STEM activities and programs, and education for families on STEM education opportunities and scholarships.”

One of the three research agenda priorities identified in the National Science Board’s (2010) Report: *Preparing the Next Generation of STEM Innovators* is to, “Investigate the individual contributions of, and the interplay between, the cognitive and non-cognitive attributes of an individual, and the learning ecosystem, in leading to future development of STEM innovators.” Program designers must recognize the complex factors affecting youth and families in communities and target their programs in areas where they may have the most impact.

Needs should be addressed at the community level and should involve both youth and parents/guardians. As noted by Fenichel and Schweingruber (2010, p. 121), “To achieve equity, practitioners must consider ways to connect the home and community cultures of diverse groups to the culture of science.” Strategies to help families succeed include retaining youth in a community-focused informal STEM program pipeline from middle school through high school, intentionally involving youth’s extended family in educational and social events, increasing family access to, and ability to utilize, technology, and creating a positive relationship between families and institutions of higher education (Behnke & Kelly, 2011).

To reach underserved audiences informal learning opportunities should be offered in community settings where relationships between families and educators can be built and maintained over time. *Learning Science in Informal Environments: People, Places, and Pursuits* (National Research Council, p.232, 2009) suggests that using collaboration, partnership, and diversity of power and “ownership” may provide greater opportunity for nondominant groups to see their own ways of sense-making reflected in informal settings. The literature indicates

that when true collaboration and partnership are program attributes there is a greater impact in community based programs.

One of the National Academy of Sciences' eighteen conclusions in *Learning Science in Informal Environments: People, Places and Pursuits* (p.304, 2009) is that, "Learning experiences across informal environments may positively influence children's...attitudes toward science, and the likelihood that they will consider science-related occupations or engage in lifelong science learning through hobbies and other everyday pursuits." One learning experience that has proven successful is non-formal afterschool STEM club programs.

In these club programs, strategies for engaging youth in middle school and retaining them in high school must be carefully designed to target their ages and stages of development. Middle school clubs should offer opportunities to try new things and provide for supportive peer interaction. High school club programs should build on the middle school club's attributes and further support youths' interest in specific content areas, while recognizing their desire for more community responsibility and their need to plan for their post-secondary future (Deschenes, Little, Grossman & Arbreton, 2010). Sustaining these peer networks over the lifetime of the youth's participation in the STEM club's programs will foster sustained participation of members of nondominant groups (National Research Council, 2009).

Appropriate STEM curricula for afterschool clubs should be identified and repurposed with a focus on the National Research Council's (2011) *A Framework for K-12 Science Education* recommended three dimensions: (1) Scientific and engineering practices; (2) crosscutting concepts; and (3) core ideas in physical sciences, life sciences, earth sciences and space sciences. STEM club leaders should focus on "supporting students' ability to build scientifically based explanatory ideas over time, making conceptual connections across scientific disciplines, and involving learners in science and engineering practices to construct and apply these ideas" (Moon, Michaels, & Reiser, 2012).

STEM club leaders must also understand how to provide a program context to achieve enhanced positive youth development (PYD). This context is based on the PYD program attributes set forth by Eccles and Gootman (2002) that establish program quality standards, as follows:

1. Intentionally create a place for youth to experience physical and psychological safety.
2. Provide intentional and appropriate structure for participating youth.
3. Emphasize supportive relationships; particularly youth-adult relationships.
4. Intentionally create a place for youth to belong and to matter.
5. Develop and enforce clear social norms, with clear expectations for youth.
6. Provide opportunities for the development of mastery and efficacy.
7. Provide distinct opportunities for youth to build specific skills.
8. Intentionally seek to integrate youths' family, school, and community.

In addition to after-school club programs, Community Science Nights are a useful strategy to engage families and their children of all ages in learning together. These events can be

provided in partnership with the high school STEM club youth, who can deliver the evening's science activity to families. The high school STEM club members can assist to identify relevant science topics and create science mini-kits for families to use at, and after the events. In this way program designers will assure that the Community Science Night's informal environment for learning will be developed and implemented with the interests and concerns of the community and cultural groups in mind (National Research Council, 2009).

An important aspect of personal identity in relation to science is the gradual understanding of the implications of one's own actions on the world and the potential to change those actions in light of scientific evidence (National Research Council, 2009). Through participation in community based afterschool STEM clubs and science nights, families can be given an opportunity to increase their science interest, skills and knowledge, and develop awareness of the many pathways in which youth may become scientists. Science literate parents will be better able to advocate for themselves, their children and their community.

High school youth and parents need to receive tools to assist them to access higher education and financial aid applications such the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). In addition, they need opportunities to develop relationships with personnel at institutions of higher education. To be successful, youth and parents need an understanding of what the college application system expects of them. In *Redefining College Readiness*, Conley (2007) notes, "Given the knowledge-intensive system of college readiness, admission, and financial aid that the US has developed, the component of personal support and student initiative cannot be overlooked in the college readiness equation."

An additional area where program designers need an understanding of their target underserved population is in that population's knowledge of, and ability to access digital technology.

According to the Pew Research Center's 2012 report *Digital Differences*, internet access is no longer synonymous with going online with a desktop computer. Groups that have traditionally been on the other side of the "digital divide" in basic internet access are using wireless connections to go online. Young adults, minorities, persons with no college experience, and persons with lower household income levels who are smartphone owners are *more likely than other groups* to say that their phone is their main source of internet access (Zickuhr & Smith, 2012). The National Academy of Sciences' 2012 publication *Education for Life and Work: Developing Transferable Knowledge and Skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* states that all people need competence to use digital technologies and process multiple forms of information to successfully accomplish tasks distributed across contexts that include home, school, the workplace and social networks.

By engaging youth in informal (after school) STEM clubs where they participate in experiential STEM activities to develop STEM interest and skills; connecting youth and their families to institutions of higher learning; and improving parent understanding of STEM content, and how to access higher education for their child the number of youth from under-represented groups who are college ready and choose science and technology majors will be increased.

## **Selected References for Additional Reading**

- Behnke, A., & Kelly, C. (2011). Creating Programs to Help Latino Youth Thrive at School: The Influence of Latino Parent Involvement Programs. *Journal of Extension*, 49 (1), 1FEA7. Available at <http://www.joe.org/joe/2011february/a7.php>
- Conley, D. T. (2007). Redefining college readiness. Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center.
- Deschenes, S., Little, P., Grossman, J., & Arberton, A. (2010). *Participation over time: Keeping youth engaged from middle to high school*. *Afterschool Matters* (pg. 1-8). Retrieved at <http://www.niost.org/Afterschool-Matters/afterschool-matters-fall-2010>
- Eccles, J. & Gootman, J. A. (Eds.). (2002). *Community programs to promote youth development*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Fenichel, M., and Schweingruber, H.A. (2010). *Surrounded by Science: Learning Science in Informal Environments*. Board on Science Education, Center for Education, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
- Joint Interim Task Force on STEM Access and Success, (Dec. 2012), Report to the Oregon Legislative Assembly. Retrieved at <http://opas.ous.edu/Work2011-2013/STEM-TF-HB4056-rpt.pdf>
- National Research Council. (2012). *Education for Life and Work: Developing Transferable Knowledge and Skills in the 21st Century*. Committee on Defining Deeper Learning and 21st Century Skills, James W. Pellegrino and Margaret L. Hilton, Editors. Board on Testing and Assessment and Board on Science Education, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. Retrieved at [http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=13398&page=1](http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=13398&page=1)
- National Research Council. (2011). *A Framework for K-12 Science Education: Practices, Crosscutting Concepts, and Core Ideas*. Committee on a Conceptual Framework for New K-12 Science Education Standards. Board on Science Education, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. Retrieved at [http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=13165&page=1](http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=13165&page=1)
- National Research Council, (2009). *Learning Science in Informal Environments: People, Places, and Pursuits*. Committee on Learning Science in Informal Environments. Philip Bell, Bruce Lewenstein, Andrew W. Shouse, and Michael A. Feder, Editors. Board on Science Education, Center for Education. Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. Retrieved at [http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=12190&page=R2](http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=12190&page=R2)

National Science Board, (2010). NSB Report: Preparing the Next Generation of STEM Innovators. Retrieved at <http://www.nsf.gov/nsb/publications/2010/nsb1033.pdf>.

Zickuhr, K., & Smith, A., (2012). *Digital Differences*. Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project. Retrieved at <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Digital-differences.aspx>.

# The 4-H Youth Development Professionals Workload Relationship to Job Satisfaction

Jamie Davis

4-H Youth Development

Oregon State University

Lake County Extension

## **Topic Area(s)**

- Youth Development Profession
- Job Satisfaction
- Workload

## **Abstract**

A study to determine what job responsibilities Extension 4-H youth development professionals (n=241) chose to spend their work time doing and how the workload related to their job satisfaction and burnout is discussed in this paper. Workload was determined using the 4-H Professional, Research, Knowledge, and Competencies (4-H PRKC). Professionals identified their level of job satisfaction and burnout. Based on the previous research on workload, burnout, and job satisfaction, 4-H youth development professionals are prime candidates for experiencing low job satisfaction and increased burnout, which may lead to professionals leaving the organization early. 4-H youth development professional reported being satisfied with their job and felt very little burnout. Even with the positive job satisfaction and low burnout, there are strategies shared for each of the 4-H PRKC domains to help 4-H professionals continue to have a high level of job satisfaction and low burnout. Many of the strategies that are shared in this paper are applicable to not only 4-H youth development professionals but to any professional who works in the field of youth development.

## **Article Citation**

Stark, C., Vetter, R., Gebeke, D., Lardy, G. & Eighmy, M., A. (2012). The 4-H youth development professionals workload relations to job satisfaction. *Journal of Youth Development, 7(3)*, 23-35.

## **Research Brief**

Previous research has indicated there is a high level of turnover of youth development professionals. This high level of turnover has been correlated to low financial compensation as well as long and irregular work hours of youth development professionals (Astroth and Lindstrom, 2008). Long work hours, evening meeting and weekend commitments are closely

tied to burnout, which was found to be a contributing factor to high turnover of youth development workers by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2003) report.

The connection between job satisfaction and turnover is evident, especially in the multifaceted career of a youth development professional. (Jewell, Beavers, Kirby & Flowers, 1990). This study examines, through self-evaluation, how 4-H youth development professionals spend their time and how they believe they should spend their time in regards to the 4-H Professional, Research, Knowledge and Competencies (4-H PRKC). Participants were also asked to rank order seven common job responsibilities of 4-H youth development professionals, within each of the domains, based on time spent on each responsibility. Additionally, this study correlates job satisfaction to each of the six 4-H PRKC domains.

The authors' purpose was twofold. This study examines how youth development Extension educators allocate their time in regards to the 4-H PRKC, and compares the findings to how these educators believe they should be spending their time. In addition, through self-assessment of job satisfaction, the authors encourage the importance of 4-H youth development professionals being aware of the factors related to job satisfaction.

### **Contribution to Theory**

Through their research the authors identified respondents spent the most amount of their time within the two domains which gave them the highest level of job satisfaction, the youth program development and youth development domains. The authors correlated this relationship to 4-H youth development professionals preferring to spend their time by directly working with people. Additionally, respondents reported they spend more time within the domain of youth program development than they think they should. This was also true for the volunteerisms and partnership domains.

Respondents reported lower levels of job satisfaction for domains which did not allow them to work directly with people and were tied to reporting, infrastructure or inter office job responsibilities. The organization systems domain as well as the equity, access and opportunity domain had the lowest level of job satisfaction. In addition, respondents reported spending less time in each of these domains than they think they should.

Although previous research has indicated youth development professionals have a low job satisfaction, this study found these professionals are generally satisfied with their job. 79.2% of respondents reported being either extremely satisfied or satisfied with their current 4-H youth development professionals.

### **Contribution to Practice**

This research reaffirms the importance of 4-H youth development professionals being aware of how they spend their time within each of the six domains. As the authors suggest, "...4-H youth development professionals should monitor the amount of time they spend doing work in any one domain. Spending time in a variety of activities within each of the six 4-H PRCK domains may help the 4-H youth development professionals' level of job satisfaction increase rather than decrease." (Stark, Vetter, Gebeke, Lardy & Eighmy, 2012) Additionally, the authors found a negative relationship between the youth program development and youth development domain and job satisfaction. Their conclusion was job satisfaction should decrease as the percent of time in these domains increases.

Within the domain of equity, access and opportunity, just over forty percent of respondents reported spending the least amount of time on the job responsibility of designing materials for diverse audiences. The authors noted even though this job responsibility may differ greatly on the 4-H youth development professionals audience these results could be the basis to justify diversity training which spans beyond ethnic diversity. The authors asserted, "When professional understand all definitions of diversity, it may lead them to spend more time in equity, access, and opportunity domain (Stark, Vetter, Gebeke, Lardy & Eighmy, 2012).

Respondents indicated spending 20.7% of their time within the volunteerism domain, which is slightly more time than they feel they should. However, the job responsibility of using volunteers as middle managers was ranked 7<sup>th</sup> (out of 7) for time spent on a job responsibility within the volunteerism domain. Therefore the authors advocate for the use of middle managers to alleviate some of the workload of youth development Extension educators.

### **Implications for 4-H Youth Development Professional Practice**

From their research the authors make a number of recommendations for youth development Extension educators and their supervisors/administrators. The recommendations are as follows:

- *Accurate Position Descriptions*  
The author's advocate position descriptions for 4-H youth development professionals should accurately reflect their work based on the 4-H PRCK. Supervisors/administrators need to be aware of the differences between 4-H youth development professionals and other Extension educators. Lastly, performance evaluations should directly be correlated to accurate position descriptions.
- *Flexible Schedule*  
Many 4-H youth development professionals work beyond a 40 hour work week and respondents indicated they were dissatisfied with the level of work which was

expected from them. The author's encouraged supervisors/ administrators to allow these professionals to have a flexible schedule to increase job satisfaction.

- *Increased Collaboration*

Responders indicated they prefer to work with people, including their colleagues. The authors proposed task/responsibilities could be divided between neighboring 4-H youth development professionals. Allowing these professionals to take the lead in areas they have interest and expertise in to increase collaboration.

### **Selected References for Additional Reading**

- Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2003). *The unsolved challenge of system reform: The condition of the frontline human service workforce*. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/upload/publicationfiles/the%20unsolved%20challenge.pdf>
- Astroth, K. A., & Lindstrom, J. (2008). Investing in professional development: Building and sustaining a viable 4-H youth workforce for the future. *Journal of Youth Development*, 3(2). Retrieved from [http://data.memberclicks.com/site/nae4a/JYD\\_080302final.pdf](http://data.memberclicks.com/site/nae4a/JYD_080302final.pdf)
- Jewell, L.R., Beavers, K.C., Kirby, B.J. & Flowers, J.L. (1990). Relationships between levels of job satisfaction expressed by North Carolina vocational agriculture teachers and their perceptions towards the agriculture education teaching profession. *Journal of Agriculture Education*, 31(1), 52-57.
- Stone, R., & Rennekamp, R. (2004). *New foundations for the 4-H youth development progression: 4-H professional research, knowledge, and competencies study, 2004*. Conducted in cooperation with the National 4-H Professional Development Task Force. 4-H National Headquarters, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture. Retrieved from [http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/library/4-Hprck\\_study\\_010605.pedu](http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/library/4-Hprck_study_010605.pedu).

# How is Civic Engagement Developed over Time? Emerging Answers from a Multidisciplinary Field

Wendy Hein  
Oregon State University  
Clackamas County Extension

## Topic area

- Civic Engagement

## Abstract

Insights into the development of civic values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and behaviours are greatly demanded by adults worried about a seemingly steady decline in the societal interest of their offspring. Hence, the collection of studies in this special issue on civic engagement in adolescence is not only timely and enlightening, but it also has the potentials to contribute to research in different disciplines on various dimensions, mechanisms and normative models of civic engagement. The studies reveal some promising attempts to bring civil themes into the field of adolescent development. However, to overcome some conceptual, methodological and empirical shortcomings, future developmental studies in the area need to be substantially improved by considering cultural and institutional conditions, by focusing on processes across various everyday life contexts, by merging theories from different disciplinary fields, by conceptualizing adolescents as changeable subjects, and by delineating untested and unwarranted normative assumptions.

## Article Citation

Amnå, E. (2012). How is civic engagement developed over time? Emerging answers from a multidisciplinary field. *Journal of Adolescence*, 35(2012), 611-627.

## Research Brief

This paper serves as the introduction to an entire issue of the *Journal of Adolescence* that is dedicated to the the development of civic engagement in young people. Using a broad, international literature review as background, Amnå provides his current assessment of the endeavor to study the development of civic behavior and puts the articles contained in the issue into context. Such papers are typically written to poke holes in the existing thought around a topic and this one in particular takes the view that we don't really know as much about youth and civic engagement as we think we do.

The primary deficit that Amnå points out is that our definitions and measures of civic engagement are subjective and transitory. Civic engagement is a value of a democratic society, and its ideal expression will change depending on the nuances of the particular democratic society being investigated. There is also the large problem that adults are the ones defining civic engagement and concluding that today's youth are not engaged. A look at the history of any democratic society will easily demonstrate that each generation finds its own way of creating change. Well-intentioned interventions by adults may not only be off-the-mark, but may even have the potential of stifling engagement of youth.

Amnå proposes a framework of political participation that puts civic engagement in the middle of the spectrum, in a position suggesting it is a precursor to actions typically labeled as political involvement (such as voting and activism). At one end of the spectrum is disengagement attributable to disinterest. At the other is willful disengagement in politics by anti-civic behavior (such as civil disobedience). Amnå suggests that little research has been done on disengagement (on either end of the spectrum), and that it would behoove us to pay more attention to this perceived opposite of civic engagement.

Amnå also believes that the bottom-up approach of empowering youth lacks empirical grounding. First, many different psychological models have been proposed as the mechanism for the development of civic behavior, and there is no clear frontrunner. Studies of the development of values and political opinions of youth show strong influences from parents that even schools seem unable to overcome (in fact, schools seem unable to overcome almost anything that has strong socioeconomic ties). He seems to have little hope that associations (like 4-H) have significant impact. However, there is some evidence that prevalent hardship during adolescence (such as current high rates of parental unemployment) affects future engagement, suggesting generational variation in political participation.

Much of the referenced research into civic engagement is tied to positive youth development. This probably explains why the effects measured are primarily individual ones – studies look for positive changes in knowledge and behavior by asking the individual what they believe or have done. Weaknesses in this approach are that studies rarely measure effects beyond the individual, youth are not usually asked about their feelings, volunteerism and civic engagement are conflated, and quantity of participation is often measured instead of quality. An important aspect of mature civic engagement is pursuing change because it is needed for society as a whole, not because it will positively affect you. Many evaluations do not go deep enough to separate individual from altruistic motivations.

Although the paper has frequent references to positive youth development as a field, it has no reference to positive youth development best practices. We have to extrapolate a bit to find the relevancy to program development and evaluation. 4-H workers should know that civic engagement is not a clearly defined field. They will need to balance the expectation of engagement that stakeholders have with the need to let youth develop their own definition of engagement. We should also be cognizant that seemingly disruptive behaviors may result from high civic engagement. For example, arguments in committee meetings and volunteers that go “over your head” may be doing so out of a desire to do their civic duty (assuming they are doing these things for selfless reasons). When evaluating programs that are specifically trying to develop civic engagement, we must carefully choose instruments that measure participation quality and motivation, not just the quantity of involvement.

**Suggested References for Further Reading:**

Adler, R. P., & Goggin, J. (2005). What do we mean by “civic engagement”? *Journal of Transformative Education*, 3(3), 236-253.

Ekman, J., & Zetterberg, P. (2011). Schools and democratic socialization. Assessing the impact of different educational settings on Swedish 14-year-olds' political citizenship. *Politics, Culture, and Socialization*, 2(2).

Niemi, R. G., Hepburn, M. A., & Chapman, C. (2000). Community service by high school students: a cure for civic ills? *Political Behavior*, 22(1), 45-69.

Sherrod, L. R. (2007). Civic engagement as an expression of positive youth development. *Approaches to Positive Youth Development*, 59-74.

Torney-Purta, J., Lehmann, R., Oswald, H., & Schulz, W. (2001). *Civic education in twenty-eight countries: Civic knowledge and engagement at age fourteen*. Amsterdam: IEA.

Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

# A New Measure for Assessing Youth Program Participation

Maureen Hosty  
Professor, 4-H Youth Development  
Oregon State University  
Multnomah County Extension

**Topic Area(s):** Evaluation and Assessment

## **Abstract**

Adolescents and young adults face a wide array of health issues (e.g. obesity, unintended pregnancy, SITs/HIV, violence/bullying, drugs/alcohol). Participation in after school programs may provide opportunities for meaningful choice and voice by promoting active engagement by youth in the decisions that affect their lives and thereby hold promise for improving health outcomes of youth. This study reviews current approaches to measuring program participation and then reports on a new model, theoretically grounded, as a more reliable measure of youth participation in the context of a study of adolescent sexual health promotion. The 20-item theoretically grounded Tiffany-Eckenrode Program Participation Scale (TEPPS) is a model that supplements traditional measures of quantity (e.g. number of hours, number of programs) with examination of the quality of participation in these programs, as measured by participant engagement in four areas of Voice/Influence, Safety/Support and Community Engagement. This new model provides a practical tool for youth practitioners seeking to assess, evaluate, and improve practices related to youth engagement.

## **Article Citation**

Tiffany, J, Exner-Cortens, D. & Eckenrode, J. (2012). A New Measure for Assessing Youth Program Participation. *Journal of Community Psychology, Vol. 40, Number 3. 277-291.*

## **Research Brief**

It is widely recognized that participation in after-school programs is an important lever for improving adolescents' health and well-being. Organized activities for young people comprise a key setting for positive youth development efforts (Shinn & Yoshikawa, 2008). Much of the theoretical foundation for the research in positive youth development is based on Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development. In this framework youth are seen as engaged in a dynamic interaction with their environments that may aid or stifle their development. Additionally, positive youth development is based on the foundation of community-level prevention approaches which seek to change environmental as well as individual risk factors, as well as resiliency research regarding the role of protective factors in ameliorating risk (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Hawkins, Catalano, & Arthur, 2002; Werner & Smith, 1992).

Increasingly research has identified significant associations between these positive youth development constructs and youth health promotion/risk reduction outcomes. After-school programs represent one of the developmentally relevant settings that can help enhance young people's resilience and healthy maturation. Psychological empowerment, autonomy, empathy, self-esteem, sociopolitical control to

individual risk, community attachment and skills for steering towards achievements of meaningful and real world goals are associated with sexual health and positive outcomes during emerging adulthood. (Peterson, Peterson, Agre, Christens, & Morton, 2011; Zimmerman, 1995; Galinsky & Sonenstein, 2011; and Shalet, 2009).

Traditionally, however, quality of program participation was measured using well-defined measurement of time intensity (i.e. hours per week, duration of involvement with a program) or examined breadth of involvement (i.e. the number of different programs in which a youth took part). Other studies used an approach that combined both intensity and breadth. Yet few studies have developed measures that integrate intensity, duration, and/or breadth or report on the correlations among these dimensions of participation.

There is increasing support for supplementing measures of quantity (e.g., number of hours, number of programs) with an examination of the quality of participation in these programs, as measured by participant engagement (Bohnert et al., 2010; Hirsch, Mekinda, & Stawicki, 2010; Weiss, Little, & Bouffard, 2005). Some studies find that engagement predicts the quality of program implementation as well as youth outcomes (Hirsch et al.; Shernoff, 2010).

Likewise, research informed by ecological-developmental theories provides groundwork for the more nuanced approach to the measurement of quality of participation (Durlak, Mahoney, Bohnert, & Parente, 2010). Smith and colleagues (2010) build on Bronfenbrenner's (1999) insights about the importance of understanding ecological context and concentrate on assessing point-of-service interactions and the characteristics of micro settings (i.e., specific programs, rather than larger agencies). In contrast to a measurement framework that solely emphasizes intensity, duration and breadth of involvement, an ecological-developmental frame of reference also considers structural features of programs, described as program characteristics like having supportive adult program staff/facilitators, learning opportunities, safety, and voice in program decision making.

Colleagues Tiffany, Exner-Cotens and Eckenrode make the case that in order to assess overall quality of participation, then it is important to measure both individual-level (e.g., intensity of participation) and program-level (e.g., presence of supportive adults) characteristics and to integrate these facets of measurement to provide a more comprehensive assessment of program participation.

### *Methods and Design*

The Tiffany, Exner-Cortens, Eckenrode developed the TEPPS model as a way to measure the quality of the experiences and the structural elements of the program in which youth were engaged, rather than simply the amount of time spent in the program or the variety of the youth's activities. The focus of the survey model centered on ecological development (social connectedness as well as linkages within the program activities and other ecological context), characteristics of positive youth development (i.e. safety within the program and relationship with adult staff), and youth empowerment/youth engagement. Both the ecological-developmental literature and positive youth development literature provided the framework for this model.

A longitudinal study using the TEPPS model involved 331 12-18 year old adolescents was conducted over a 16-month period beginning in January 2008. Youth participants were currently engaged in an after-school program at one of eight community –based agencies in New York City.

The TEPPS model for measuring breadth and intensity of participation differs from the research reviewed by Bohnert and colleagues (2010) in the following ways. First, they measured breadth of participation by examining the number and characteristics of roles reported by youth, rather than by measuring participation in different types of activities; these roles were coded and analyzed in relation to the level of participation and opportunities for influence on decision-making that they offered youth. Second, they measured intensity of participation in overall programs rather than in specific activities; some of the programs included a variety of activities, and some provided career ladders for youth that included opportunities for engagement in more complex activities and increasing levels of decision-making over time.

### *Study Results*

Correlations between the 20 items of the TEPPS were examined. Three of the four TEPPS subscales were significantly correlated with intensity (Personal Development, Safety /Support, Community Engagement). However, only one subscale (Safety/Support) was significantly correlated with duration.

Voice/Influence was the only subscale correlated with breadth of program involvement, a measure that captures both the number of roles fulfilled by youth and the level of engagement those roles require. The 20-item TEPPS measure and subscales assessing Personal Development, Safety /Support, and Community Engagement were all positively and significantly correlated with their measure of family connectedness, confirming their initial hypothesis that these elements of youth experience were interrelated.

### **Implications for 4-H Youth Development Professional Practice**

The TEPPS model is a more nuanced understanding of the potentially complex relationship between participation and adolescent sexual health. The TEPPS approach to measurement sees high quality participation as contingent upon structural elements within programs that enable youth to access supportive adults, learning opportunities, safety, and voice in program decision-making, as well as upon individual characteristics of the youths themselves. As such, the authors believe that the use of the TEPPS will enable researchers and practitioners to better understand experiences of adolescent program participation, and therefore allow improved assessment of the relationship of participation with outcomes of key interest, including sexual health and access to health-related resources. Finally, the use of the TEPPS will aid in quality assurance efforts by program providers, by allowing a more thorough assessment of the quality of participation as experienced by youth.

### **Selected References for Additional Reading**

Bohnert, A.M., Fredricks, J., & Randall, E. (2010). Capturing unique dimensions of youth organized activity involvement: Theoretical and methodological considerations. *Review of Educational Research*, 80, 576-610.

- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1999). Environments in developmental perspective: Theoretical and operational models. In S.L. Friedman & T.D. Wachs (Eds.), *Measuring environment across the life span* (pp. 3-28). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P.A. (1998). The ecology of developmental process. In W. Damon (Series Ed.) & R.M. Lerner (Vol. Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology: Theoretical models of human development* (5th ed., pp. 993-1028). New York: John Wiley.
- Durlak, J.A., Mahoney, J.L., Bohnert, A.M., & Parente, M.E. (2010). Developing and improving after-school programs to enhance youth's personal growth and adjustment: A special issue of AJCP. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 45, 285-293.
- Galinsky, A.M., & Sonenstein, F.L. (2011). The association between developmental assets and sexual enjoyment among emerging adults. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 48, 610-615.
- Hawkins, J.D., Catalano, R.F., & Arthur, M.W. (2002). Promoting science-based prevention in communities. *Addictive Behaviors*, 27, 951-976.
- Hirsch, B.J., Mekinda, M.A., & Stawicki, J. (2010). More than attendance: The importance of afterschool program quality. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 45, 447-452.
- Schalet, A.T. (2009). Subjectivity, intimacy, and the empowerment paradigm of adolescent sexuality: The unexplored room. *Feminist Studies*, 35, 133-159.
- Shernoff, D.J. (2010). Engagement in after-school programs as a predictor of social competence and academic performance. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 45, 325-337.
- Shinn, M., & Yoshikawa, H. (2008). *Toward positive youth development: Transforming schools and community programs*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, C., Peck, S.C., Denault, A., Blazevski, J., & Akiva, T. (2010). Quality at the point of service: Profiles of practice in after-school settings. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 45, 358-369.
- Werner, E., & Smith, R. (1992). *Overcoming the odds: High risk children from birth to adulthood*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Zimmerman, M.A. (1995). Psychological empowerment: Issues and illustrations. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 23, 581-600.

# The Psychology and Practice of Youth-Adult Partnership

Marilyn K. Lesmeister  
Assistant Professor and 4-H Youth Development Specialist  
Oregon State University

**Article** *The Psychology and Practice of Youth-Adult Partnerships: Bridging Generations for Youth Development and Community Change*

## **Topic Area**

Creating and Sustaining Youth-Adult Partnerships

## **Abstract**

Youth-adult partnership (Y-AP) has become a phenomenon to scholars and practitioners. Despite the potential of Y-AP to promote positive youth development, increase civic engagement, and support community change, the practice remains unfamiliar to many. Although research has increased over the past decade, the construct remains vague with an insufficient grounding in developmental theory and community practice. This article seeks to address these gaps by synthesizing data and insights from the historical foundations of Y-AP, community based research, and case study. We propose Y-AP as a unifying concept, distinct from other forms of youth-adult relationships, with four core elements: authentic decision making, natural mentors, reciprocity, and community connectedness. We conclude that Y-AP functions as an active ingredient and fundamental practice for positive youth development and civic engagement. Directions for future research are offered.

## **Citation**

Zeldin, S., Christens, B. D., & Powers, J. L. (2012). The psychology and practice of youth-adult partnerships: Bridging generations for youth development and community change. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Society for Community Research and Action. doi: 10.1007/s10464-012-9558-y

## **Review**

### **Contribution to Theory**

A review of scholarly work in different disciplines results in three common perspectives regarding youth-adult partnerships. First, youth participation is framed as a collective construct – a cross-generational collaboration. Second, social movements have not been age-inclusive, and so have deepened the generational gap. Third, history identifies themes for strong youth-adult partnerships that include joint work, common values, shared power, and a focus on collective issues that contribute to positive outcomes.

Youth development professionals are reminded that development theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) supports the value of Y-A partnerships because of reciprocal activity needs to occur by shifting power

(held by adults) in favor of the developing person (engaged youth), and action is balanced by opportunities for reflection and adult support.

There is need for more foundational research to define and refine the parameters of Y-AP. Future research is needed to determine rubrics for quality environments for youth-adult partnerships.

### **Implications for Youth Development Programs**

The authors offer this working definition of Y-AP. “Youth-adult partnership is the practice of (a) multiple youth and multiple adults deliberating and acting together; (b) in a collective [democratic] fashion, (c) over a sustained period of time, (d) through shared work, (e) intended to promote social justice, strengthen an organization and/or affirmatively address a community issue.” This definition integrates relationships and action. Y-A partnerships are distinctly different from some other relationships because it is found in the dynamics of group interaction as compared to individual mentoring.

The question is not whether or not youth and adults should work together, but rather how shall they work together effectively. The four core elements of Y-AP help youth development professionals understand how adults and youth should work together. The core elements of Y-AP are

- 1) Authentic decision making: powerful adults recognize and encourage active youth voices
- 2) Natural mentors: “...adult partners must be able to empower without abdicating, support without taking over, and encourage without preaching.” (Murdock, et al. 2010).
- 3) Reciprocal activity: mutual respect for co-learning that includes asking questions, sharing skills, solving problems, shoulder to shoulder.
- 4) Community connectedness:

Each core element can occur in the various settings of youth civic engagement, including: advocacy, philanthropy, service, governance, research, outreach, and programs.

As youth development professionals focus on youth-adult partnerships, these partnerships will spark the creation of settings that concurrently promote youth development, with civic engagement and community change.

### **Contribution to Practice**

This historical review supports the notion that there is sufficient research and field experience to guide effective youth-adult partnerships in youth development organizations and caring communities.

Observations and recommendations include

1. Youth protection policies may contribute to current isolation of youth from adults in organizational or community decision making and collective action. Professionals are challenged to address both safety and effective youth-adult partnerships
2. Youth development professional are encouraged to understand the “things that matter” to local youth. These are the program areas and community issues where youth need to be actively recruited and engaged for decision making and action.
3. Youth-Adult Partnerships are most effective when all four core elements are present, and the quality of the experience is positive.

Access to social capital and relationships with diverse people can enhance feelings of connectedness to adults and public institutions, which are also predictors that youth will likely be civically engaged, better adolescent health, increased social trust, improved school achievement, group solidarity, and a stronger sense of community.

Immediate impact on youth-adult partnerships development comes when (a) adults change their perceptions of youth, (b) adults openly share their experiences and skills, and when (c) community adults are inspired by youth action.

### **Selected References for Additional Reading**

Flanagan, C. A., & Christens, B. D. (2011). Youth civic development: Historical context and emerging issues. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 134, 1-9. doi: 10.1002/cd.307.

Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development. (2003). *Youth-adult partnerships: A training manual*. Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, Chevy Chase, MD.

National 4-H Council. (1997). *Creating youth/adult partnerships: the training curricula for youth, adults, and youth/adult teams*. Chevy Chase, MD: National 4-H Council.

National League of Cities. (2010). *Authentic youth civic engagement: A guide for municipal leaders*. National League of Cities, Washington, D.C.

Zeldin, S., Petrokubi, J., & MacNeil, C. (2008b). Youth-Adult partnerships in decisionmaking: Disseminating and implementing an innovative idea into established organizations and communities. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 41, 262-277. doi:10.1007/s10464-008-9158-z.

# Patterns of Adolescents' Participation in Organized Activities: Are Sports Best When Combined With Other Activities?

Pamela Rose  
4-H Youth Coordinator  
Oregon State University

## Topic Areas

- Positive Youth Development
- After-School Activities

## **Abstract**

Although many adolescents participate in sports and other types of organized activities, little extant research explores how youth development outcomes may vary for youth involved in different combinations of activities. The present study uses the Child Development Supplement of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, a large, nationally representative sample, to compare activity patterns of adolescents ages 10–18 years ( $n=1,711$ ). A cluster analytic technique revealed 5 activity clusters: sports-focused, sports plus other activities, primarily school-based activities, primarily religious youth groups, and low activity involvement. Activity patterns were examined in conjunction with 5 categories of youth development outcomes, including competence (e.g., academic ability), confidence (e.g., self-concept of ability), connections (e.g., talking with friends), character (e.g., externalizing behavior problems), and caring (e.g., prosocial behavior). Results showed that those who participated only in sports had more positive outcomes compared with those who had little or no involvement in organized activities, but less positive outcomes compared with those who participated in sports plus other activities.

## **Reference Citation**

Linver, M. R., Roth, J. L., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2009). Patterns of adolescents' participation in organized activities: Are sports best when combined with other activities? *Developmental Psychology, 45*(2), 354-367. doi:10.1037/a0014133

## **Theory and Practice**

This study explored both the risks and benefits for positive youth development outcomes when associated with different profiles of activity participation. Of key interest was determining whether youth did better developmentally when they participated in sports along with a range of other types of organized activities. Linver, Roth, and Brooks-Gunn (2009), found that previous research looking at how sports participation shapes youth development had three

limitations: 1) research often only had two comparison groups – those involved in other activities outside of school and those who were not, 2) research didn't often look beyond what other types of organized activities the sports participants may have been involved in, and 3) research often overlooked the extent to which sports participation may differentially influence youth at risk for poorer development.

This study really aimed to take into account the reality of youths' lives in that youth are often participating in multiple activities. Youth studied were from the Child Development Supplement (CDS-I) and (CDS-II) of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics. Cluster analytic techniques were used to identify patterns of participation in sports and other organized activities. According to Linver, et. al (2009, p. 360), "the five clusters that emerged were:

- 1) Sports cluster – with high sports participation with lower participation in other activities
- 2) Sports Plus cluster – with generally high participation in all activities including sports
- 3) School Groups cluster – with high rates or participation in school activities and lower participation in other activities
- 4) Religious Groups cluster – with highest participation in religious youth groups, and
- 5) Low Involved cluster – with low means across all activities"

Each of these clusters were then correlated with outcomes in each of the 5 C's of positive youth development: 1) academic and social competence, 2) confidence and positive identity, 3) connections with school, peers and parents, 4) character, and 5) caring. Their findings make the following observations and relationships between clusters and the 5 C's of positive youth development:

- Participation in sports is beneficial for positive youth development outcomes, especially over those in low or no active participation.
- Participation in sports is beneficial for positive youth development outcomes in general, but if sports participation occurs in conjunction with other organized activities, the benefits increase.
- Participation in just one set of activities – whether it be sports, school groups, or religious-focused activities, generally leads to more positive youth development outcomes compared with participation in few or no activities. Yet, participation in a diverse set of activities in general is associated with more positive development outcomes for youth.
- Participation in a single activity, other than sports, fared better than youth engaged primarily in sports, in having more parent-child conversations, an indication of connections outcome.
- Participations in religious youth group activities tended to drink less and were more likely to give to charity.
- Participation in the Sports Plus cluster, scored higher in competence and felt more connected to school, compared with those in just the sports cluster.
- For academically at-risk youth, participation in a wide range of activities may be detrimental as evidence through reduction in the confidence and connections domains.

- For academically at-risk youth, however, participation in many activities may actually boost positive behavior and buffer against externalizing behavior problems as noted in the character domains. It provides the means to have alternative identities in various after-school activities.

As a result of these findings, there are specific practices that 4-H youth development professionals can put into practice to entice positive youth development outcomes in youth. First of all, youth development professionals should encourage youth to be engaged in any organized activity, as youth in no or low participation do not reap positive youth development benefits. Secondly, youth development professionals should encourage youth to be involved in other organized activities in addition to sports or for youth just involved in 4-H, there is incentive to get them involved in sports related activities to round out the experiences they gain towards positive youth development outcomes. Finally, participation in a diverse set of activities is generally associated with more positive youth development outcomes for youth. Because of this finding, youth development professionals should try to insure a diverse range of activities are present in the 4-H experience, engaging youth in more possibilities for developing positive youth development outcomes.

### **Implications**

What does this study mean for those of us in the 4-H youth development field? This study demonstrated that participation in one set of activities, whether it be sports, school groups, or religious focused activities, generally lead to more positive youth development outcomes, but participation in a diverse set of activities is associated with more positive development for youth.

As a program, we need to emphasize the benefits of involvement in 4-H. Our marketing efforts to potential members and our impact reports to elected officials and our constituencies often lack this statement of value and research foundation. Renewed efforts should be placed on marketing strategies, carried out across the state, to assist in informing others on the merits of our program. Secondly, in our partnership efforts with schools and other organizations, we should share the benefits of the multiplier effect of youth involvement in other organized activities beyond sports. They too, will find value in the latest research of positive youth development, and we can play the role of extending this research knowledge. Lastly, this research emphasizes the need for 4-H to continue to broaden our involvement in sports and other healthy living related outlets. We have created strong soccer programs and a running program in some counties, but expansion in this area can also have a multiplier effect on our impact of positive youth development for these audiences and creates an expansion of our program to new audiences.

### **Selected References for Additional Readings**

- Barber, B. L., Eccles, J. S., & Stone, M. R. (2001). Whatever happened to the jock, the brain, and the princess? Young adult pathways linked to adolescent activity involvement and social identity. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 16*(5), 429–455.
- Broh, B. A. (2002). Linking extracurricular programming to academic achievement: Who benefits and why? *Sociology of Education, 75*(1), 69–95.
- Fredricks, J. A., & Eccles, J. S. (2006a). Extracurricular involvement and adolescent adjustment: Impact of duration, number of activities, and breadth of participation. *Applied Developmental Science, 10*(3), 132–146.
- Lerner, R. M., Lerner, J. V., Almerigi, J. B., Theokas, C., Phelps, E., Gestsdottir, S., et al. (2005). Positive youth development, participation in community youth development programs, and community contributions of fifth-grade adolescents: Findings from the first wave of the 4-H study of positive youth development. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 25*, 17–71.
- Morris, P., & Kalil, A. (2006). Out of school time use during middle childhood in a low-income sample: Do combinations of activities affect achievement and behavior? In A. Huston & M. Ripke (Eds.), *Developmental contexts in middle childhood: Bridges to adolescence and adulthood* (pp. 237–259). New York: Cambridge University Press
- Roeser, R. W., & Peck, S. C. (2003). Patterns and pathways of educational achievement across adolescence: A holistic-developmental perspective. In S. C. Peck & R. W. Roeser (Eds.), *New directions for child and adolescent development: Vol. 101. Person-centered approaches to studying development in context* (pp. 39–62). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Roth, J. L., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2003b). What is a youth development program? Identifying defining principles. In R. M. Lerner, F. Jacobs, & D. Wertlieb (Eds.), *Promoting positive child, adolescent, and family development: A handbook of program and policy innovations* (Vol. 2, pp. 197–223). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Zarrett, N., Peltz, J., Fay, K., Li, Y., Lerner, J. V., & Lerner, R. M. (2007). Sports and youth development programs: Theoretical and practical implication of early adolescent participation in multiple instances of structured out-of-school (OST) activity [Electronic version]. *Journal of Youth Development: Bridging Research and Practice, 2*(1). Retrieved November 20, 2007, from <http://www.nae4ha.org>

# **An Emerging Model of Knowledge for Youth Development Professionals**

Claire Sponseller  
4-H Youth Development  
Oregon State University  
Umatilla County Extension

## **Topic Area(s)**

- Youth Development Practice
- Youth Development Profession

## **Abstract**

A model of knowledge for youth development professionals that is comprised of five knowledge domains: 1) Foundational Knowledge of Positive Youth Development; 2) Knowledge of Youth; 3) Knowledge of Group Facilitation; 4) Knowledge of Contexts and Organizational Systems and; 5) Specialized Youth Development Knowledge is proposed in this paper. The model is intended for use in youth development programs, which have been associated with better outcomes for participants when compared to other types of youth programs. The development of the knowledge base is framed by seminal research on teacher knowledge and informed by practice-oriented research in the out-of-school time field and literature on the quality of youth development programs.

## **Article Citation**

Vance, F. (2012). An Emerging Model of Knowledge for Youth Development Professionals. *Journal of Youth Development, 7(1)*, 36-55.

## **Research Brief**

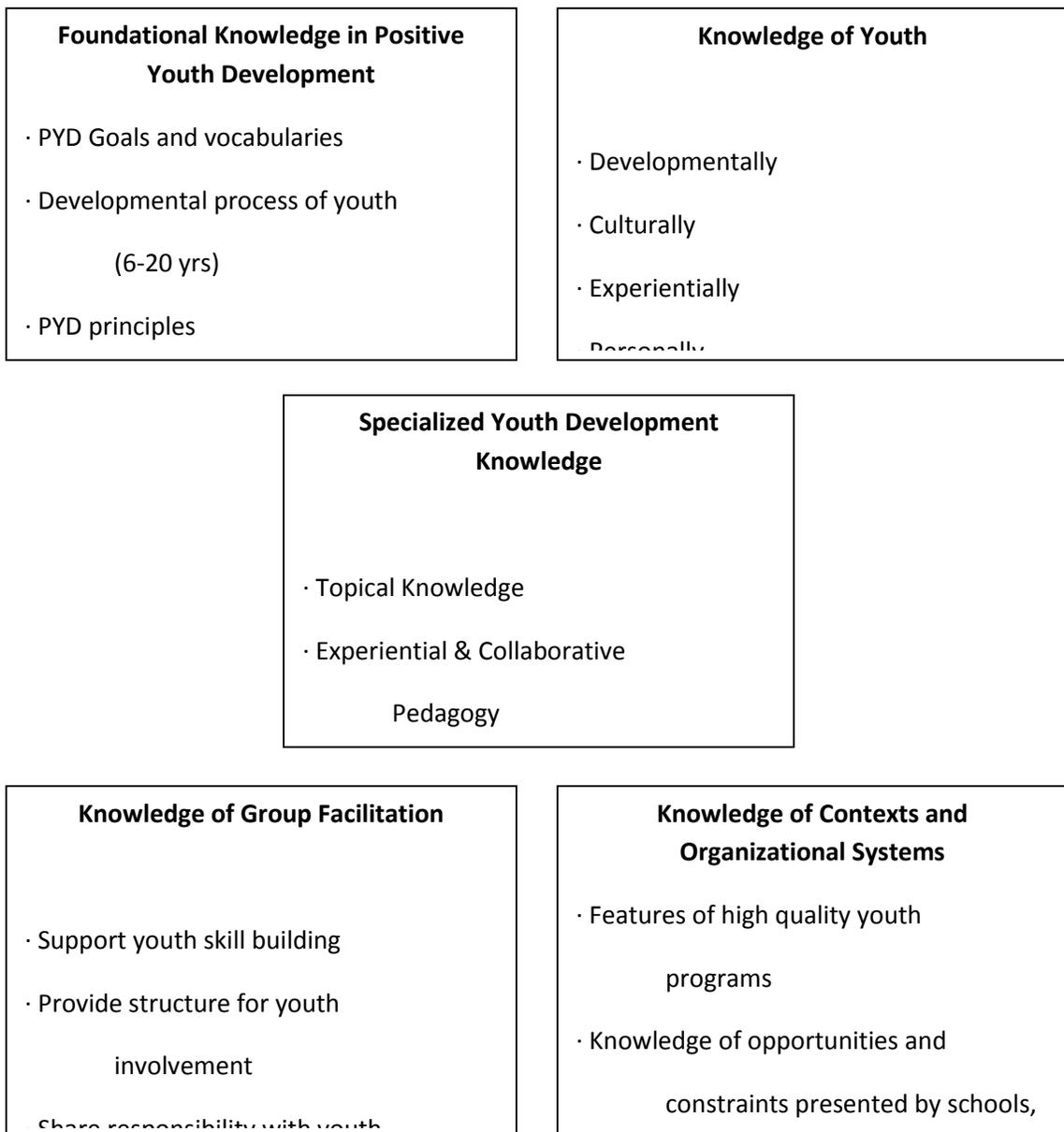
The 4-H youth development program may have been around for about a hundred years, but the refinement of our positive youth development program is an on-going effort. This article takes an extensive look at the current framework of youth development professionals and helps to better establish quality standards for the youth development professional. The model of knowledge developed by the author helps to create a link between knowledge and practice of youth development professionals. Through references in this article, the author shows how both knowledge and practice are needed to develop pedagogical content knowledge, the specialized domain of knowledge for teaching a specific subject, which is essential to become a successful youth development professional.

Overall, this article does an excellent job of stimulating thought and discussion on who we are as youth development professionals and how we can continue to validate the importance of positive youth development within youth programs and individual communities.

**Contribution to Theory**

Through a data driven and theory driven approach, the article demonstrates how research and practice are tools to contribute to the advances in the youth development field. In Figure 1, The Model of Knowledge for Youth Development Professionals shows five different knowledge domains that the author proposes every youth development professional needs to become proficient in and continually update throughout their profession.

**Figure 1  
Model of Knowledge for Youth Development Professionals**



The first domain, Knowledge of Youth, is important for designing challenging activities to attract and retain youth interests, in addition to nurturing supportive relationships with young people. Specialized Youth Development Knowledge emphasizes that different domains of knowledge are combined to foster growth and development in young people. Knowledge of Group Facilitation suggests youth development professionals should be familiar with the strategies or best practices used to accomplish the tasks involved in facilitating learning experiences. The fourth domain, Knowledge of Contexts and Organizational Systems includes the need to identify opportunities and constraints when designing program environments, expanding and improving the program, and program implementation.

However, within these five domains, the author believes that youth development professionals are often weakest in their Foundational Knowledge of Positive Youth Development, better described as a deep understanding of the multiple dimensions of positive youth development theory, particularly how it relates to practice. Yet this domain's weakness may not be specific to the youth development professional, but towards the profession itself. The youth development field is continually emerging new theories of practice and is working towards more refined methods of practice-oriented research.

### **Contribution to Practice**

Youth development programs, particularly 4-H, continually work to establish these knowledge domains for newer faculty within the field, as well ensuring current faculty are kept up to date through professional development opportunities. Youth development is an ever evolving field that requires regular training in the youth development field by professionals.

As the field of youth development matures and refines the understanding and correlation to positive youth development, youth development professionals should learn about new theories and methods of practice. One such example is the Theory of Developmental Intentionality (TODI) (Walker et al, 2005). TODI offers a concise description of how practice guided by the positive youth development philosophy matters for youth outcomes. TODI suggests that youth engagement occurs when programs intentionally foreground youth's developmental needs by providing a fit between their needs and program content.

Youth development professionals should keep this Model of Knowledge to heart, and utilize it to stimulate further discussion within our own youth development program of 4-H. These discussions should include other youth development professionals on how to continue professional development, highlighting these five knowledge domains and how they can best be put into practice. However, the discussions should also include how these knowledge domains separate and highlight the 4-H youth development program from other programs

within the youth development field and how, as professionals, we can continue to emphasize the importance of our 4-H program.

### **Implications for 4-H Youth Development Professional Practice**

Within Oregon 4-H faculty and staff, we have an excellent resource of knowledgeable youth development professionals. However, there is always room to grow and strengthen our resource base. With most of our employees coming from a wide variety of educational and professional backgrounds, we already have content and curricular knowledge strength. Our limitation, and this could apply to 4-H professionals as a whole, would be with pedagogical content knowledge, or for 4-H professionals, the foundational knowledge of positive youth development where one has a deep understanding of the multiple dimensions of positive youth development theory, especially how it relates to practice.

It seems more often than not, 4-H often has to validate why our youth development program is better and different than other comparable programs. We should establish methods for practice-oriented research and how these knowledge domains are involved. When using this model as a foundation for youth development professionals, how can we show evidence that the knowledge is present in the professional and that directly correlates to program quality? When this model is put into practice on a regular basis, youth development professionals could be on the cutting edge. Why limit ourselves because there is not yet a tangible way to document that 4-H positive youth development practice is a success?

### **Selected References for Additional Reading**

Astroth, K., Garza, P., & Taylor, B. (2004). Getting down to business: Defining competencies for entry-level youth workers. *New Directions for Youth Development* 104, 25-37.

Ball, D., Thames, M., & Phelps, G. (2008). Content knowledge for teaching: What makes it special? *Journal of Teacher Education* 59(5), 389-407.

Madzey-Akale, J. & Walker, J. (2000). Training needs and professional development interests of Twin Cities youth workers: Summary. Minneapolis, MN: Regents of the University of Minnesota.

Roth, J., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2003a). What Exactly Is a Youth Development Program? Answers From Research and Practice. *Applied Developmental Science*, 7(2), 94-111. doi: 10.1207/S1532480XADS0702\_6.

Roth, J., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2003b). Youth development programs: Risk, prevention and policy. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 32(3), 170-182.

- Roth, J., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2003c). What is a youth development programs? Identification of defining principles. In R. Lerner, F. Jacobs, & D. Wertlieb (Eds), *Handbook of applied developmental science: Promoting positive child, adolescent, and family development through research, policies, and programs: Vol. 2. Enhancing the life chances of youth and families: Public services and public policy perspectives.* (pp. 197-223). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Shulman, L. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15(2) 4-14.
- Stone, B., & Rennekamp, R. (2004). *New foundations for the 4-H Youth Development profession: 4-H professional research, knowledge, and competencies study.* Chevy Chase, MD: National 4-H Professional Development Task Force, National 4-H Headquarters, Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service, and United States Department of Agriculture.
- Walker, J., Marczak, M., Blyth, D., & Borden, L. (2005). Designing youth development programs: Toward a theory of developmental intentionality. In J. Mahoney, R. Larson & J. Eccles (Eds.), *Organized Activities as Contexts of Development: Extracurricular Activities, After-School and Community Programs.* (pp. 399-419). Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

# The Voice of Youth: Atmosphere in Positive Youth Development Program

Elissa Wells

Assistant Professor, 4-H Youth Development Educator

Oregon State University

Coos County Extension

## **Topic Areas:**

- Positive Youth Development
- Self-determination theory
- Pedagogy
- Student Voice
- After school

## **Abstract:**

**Background:** Positive youth development (PYD) programs adhere to the notion that all children have strengths and assets to be promoted and nurtured rather than deficits that require 'fixing.' The study of PYD programs indicates three aspects which set them apart from other programs for youth: activities, goals, and atmosphere. Of these, atmosphere has been least studied and what is known about atmosphere has been studied from a mostly adult perspective. Interestingly, while student voice is central to any educational process, students are not often consulted directly about their contributions.

**Aims:** The purpose of this study was to examine the atmosphere of a PYD program grounded in self-determination theory (SDT) through the eyes of the participants. SDT suggests that people have the needs of relatedness, autonomy, and competence which must be met for successful growth.

**Method:** An ethnographically informed case study was employed. Twenty-three participants from grades four and five (9 males and 14 females) took part in a PYD program using basketball as a medium. Data collection included focus groups, individual interviews, extensive field notes, and artifact collection. Responses were analyzed through open and axial coding. Trustworthiness strategies included: prolonged engagement, data triangulation, extensive field notes and researcher journal, member checks from both the staff and students, and peer debriefing.

**Results:** Four themes were identified in respect to atmosphere: relatedness, learning, relaxed climate, and enjoyment. Each theme is discussed in terms of how these youth perceived the construct as influencing their participation, and as integral parts of what they viewed as positive

atmosphere. Each of these themes indicated that the students were provided with a voice that allowed them to express their ideas and interact positively with the adults and the environment.

**Discussion:** Relatedness, competence, and enjoyment have been found separately as important components of successful programs. However, it is the interaction of these themes within the relaxed structure that is unique to this study. For instance, the students chose a greater level of autonomy over higher competence. This led to a higher level of enjoyment which led to greater engagement in the program and its goals. The data also supported the notion that a program grounded in the principles of SDT could be successful, particularly in promoting opportunities for youth in respect to autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Taking into account student voice was a major piece to the success of this program, the student data supported the idea that creating and maintaining a positive atmosphere was good teaching. However, fostering these needs is not automatic but more likely to occur if purposefully implemented through sound pedagogical practices such as the instructional alignment of goals, activities, and assessments.

#### **Article Citation**

Ward, S. & Parker, M. (2012). The voice of youth: atmosphere in positive youth development program. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 1-15.  
DOI:10.1080/17408989.2012.726974.

#### **Research Brief**

This study examined the atmosphere of a positive youth development (PYD) program from the perspective of the youth participants. It focused on an after school basketball program for 23 youth grades 4-5 that met twice a week during the full school year. The basketball program utilized a PYD model for physical education that empowered youth to be responsible for their actions and learning and to transfer these behaviors outside of the gym (Hellison, 2003). The specific research question guiding the study was: what were the perceptions of youth regarding the atmosphere of a PYD program with respect to competence (mastery), relatedness (belonging), and autonomy (independence)?

The elementary school where this study took place had a student population that is 52% Hispanic, 44% Caucasian and 4% other. Ninety two percent of the students received free or reduced lunch rates. Additionally, the school was a Title-1 school that received federal funding to improve academic performance. The majority of youth (86%) who participated in this study are Hispanic and are being raised by single moms and/or grandparents. Some are from blended families. None of the students had prior experience participating in organized basketball.

A typical day at the after school basketball program included free play as the students entered, an awareness talk, group practice or play, and reflection time. Youth were given choices and were allowed to take turns leading various portions of the practice. The program evaluation used a mixed-methods approach to gather data from several sources: focus group interviews, individual interviews, observation, student journals and attendance records. Data collection spanned the entire nine-month school year.

### **Contributions to Theory**

Positive Youth Development (PYD) programs, such as the after school basketball program in this study, are grounded in the self-determination theory (SDT) which suggests that children's needs for competence (mastery), autonomy (independence) and relatedness (belonging) must be met in order for them to be psychologically healthy (Deci and Ryan, 2008). SDT has been used with children to increase motivation, behavioral and cognitive outcomes in school settings (Guay, Ratelle and Chanele, 2008). This study focused on program atmosphere because it is the most elusive and least studied of the program aspects (Newton et al. 2006; Roth and Brooks-Gunn 2003). It conveys the intangible feeling that exists in the program that is often described indirectly as supportive peer and adult relationships, youth empowerment, and expectations for positive behavior (Roth et al. 1998).

The feedback from youth participants were categorized into four aspects of program atmosphere: relatedness, competence, structure, and enjoyment. Students discussed how their enjoyment was connected to all of the other aspects of the program: their interest in basketball, their interactions with staff and peers, and the opportunities provided by the program. Enjoyment is what attracted the youth to the after school program and also what motivated them to continue to participate. Youth were provided opportunities to voice their opinions and make decisions in all aspects of the program, which is another important characteristic of a PYD program grounded in SDT.

### **Contributions to Practice**

The results of this study indicate that youth enjoy (and will continue to participate in) PYD programs that are educational, have a relaxed structure and provide opportunities to make individual choices, develop responsibility, assume leadership roles and build relationships with peers and caring adults. Youth felt empowered when adults listened to their input and when programming reflected their feedback. This is critical in programs where youth are not obligated to participate, but rather choose to participate.

This research suggests that the three main aspects of a PYD program atmosphere are: relatedness, competence and relaxed structure. If these three aspects are the points of a triangle, then there are three corresponding sides along which specific programming negotiations occur between adults and youth. Teaching becomes the side between competence

and relatedness, connecting becomes the second side between relatedness and relaxed structure and autonomy becomes the third side between relaxed structure and competence. For example, youth in the after school basketball program were willing to forego a higher level of basketball competence for a relaxed structure that created opportunities to learn rather than be taught, to be responsible rather than be compliant, and to give respect rather than deference.

### **Implications for 4-H Youth Development Professional Practice**

As 4-H Youth Development professionals, a large part of what we do is to create and maintain a positive atmosphere during educational programs for youth. The findings from this research reinforce best practices that we have observed to be true. It confirms that youth appreciate opportunities to: develop positive relationships with peers and adults, assume leadership roles, learn and practice new skills, and make their own choices. As facilitators of the educational program, we negotiate program atmosphere with youth participants to achieve an ideal balance between competence, relatedness and relaxed structure. When these three aspects are balanced, youth will enjoy learning and will continue to participate in the program. The authors suggest that fostering this balance is not automatic, but is more likely to occur with purposeful alignment of goals, activities, and assessments (using tools such as program logic models). They go on to remind us that it is the ‘science’ of teaching that allows for the accomplishment of instructional goals. However, it is the ‘art’ of creating a positive program atmosphere which keeps students highly engaged.

### **Selected References for Additional Reading**

Deci, E.L. and Ryan, R.M. (2008). Self-determination theory: A macro-theory of human motivation, development, and health. *Canadian Psychology*, 49 (3), 182–5.

Guay, F., Ratelle, C.F. and Chaneil, J. (2008). Optimal learning in optimal contexts: The role of self-determination in education. *Canadian Psychology*, 49 (3), 233–40.

Hellison, D. (2003). *Teaching responsibility through physical activity*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Newton, M., Watson, D., Kim, M., and Beacham, A.O. (2006). Understanding motivation of under-served youth in physical activity settings. *Youth and Society*, 37 (3), 348–71.

Roth, J.L., and Brooks-Gunn, J. (2003). What exactly is a youth development program? Answers from research and practice. *Applied Developmental Science*, 7 (2), 94–111.

Roth, J.L., Brooks-Gunn, J., Murray, L., and Foster, W. (1998). Promoting healthy adolescents: Synthesis of youth development program evaluations. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 8, 423–59.

# **The Impact of Participatory Research on Urban Teens: An Experimental Evaluation**

Shana Withee

4-H, Family Community Health Coordinator

Oregon State University

Harney County Extension

## **Topic Area/s**

- Participatory action research
- Youth-led evaluation
- High school empowerment

## **Abstract**

“Although there is much practice of community-based participatory research in economically-developing countries and increasingly in North America, there has been little systematic assessment of empowerment effects. Youth-led participatory research holds particular promise for fostering positive development and civic participation among economically disadvantaged urban youth. The present investigation uses a clustered-randomized, within-school experimental design to test the effects of youth-led participatory research on the psychological empowerment of 401 students attending urban public schools. We find that attending a participatory research elective class during the school day was associated with increases in sociopolitical skills, motivation to influence their schools and communities, and participatory behavior. We found no significant effect for perceived control at school. The implications for participatory research and related youth development interventions are discussed.”

## **Reference Citation**

Ozer, E. J., & Douglas, L. (2013). The impact of participatory research on urban teens: An experimental evaluation. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 51(1-2), 66-75.  
doi: 10.1007/s10464-012-9546-2

## **Research Brief**

The researchers' goal was to validate participatory action research (PAR), which entails a cooperative process in which community members are trained as researchers and power over decisions are shared among the partners in the collaborations. This approach provides opportunities for community members – typically disenfranchised individuals with little power to affect policies and circumstances – to work together to solve problems of concern to them,

develop relevant skills, increase their understanding of their sociopolitical environment, and create mutual support systems (Zimmerman 1995). PAR is becoming increasingly common as a means of promoting urban young people's engagement in improving their schools and communities.

The primary focus of youth participatory action research (YPAR) is on psychological empowerment, specifically on adolescents' motivation to influence their schools and communities, as well as sociopolitical skills, perceived control, and participatory behavior. This research used control groups within schools to show that YPAR fostered positive development among youth – particularly politically and economically disenfranchised youth of color. This research shows the positive effects of YPAR to support its use as being of benefit to youth development programs. From this research, we can say that modest YPAR program effects were found for participatory behavior, socio-political skills, and motivation to influence their schools and communities due to collective change efforts. There was no YPAR program effect for perceived control or self-esteem.

### **Contribution to Theory**

There is participatory action research (PAR), but this research article furthers the theory by showing that youth led participatory action research (YPAR) increases empowerment effects.

YPAR is generally practiced with small groups of young people who have volunteered or been selected by adult facilitators. Youth are often recruited because of their existing interest and promise. This research investigated the effects of participating in YPAR with diverse urban teens, using a within-school experiment design. The research specifically tested the potential effects on self-esteem. This research found modest, statistically significant effects for YPAR on participatory behavior, socio-political skills, and motivation to influence their schools and communities; and no significant effects for perceived control at school or self-esteem.

### **Contribution to Practice**

This research article recognizes that youth led participatory action research (YPAR) has benefits to youth and their communities, basic tenants of youth development practice. Youth gained skills and were motivated to influence their schools and communities, and most of all, they were motivated to participate. In YPAR, young people are trained to identify major concerns in their communities, conduct research to understand the nature of the problems, and take leadership in influencing their communities. YPAR promotes meaningful involvement, connections with others and their community and empowerment of participants. YPAR gives youth an opportunity to share their opinions and to be effective in recognizing and making changes to their community. YPAR puts their voices into action through involvement and

community engagement. Youth voice is documented to be a critical element of positive youth development.

YPAR improves community settings and resources and is intended to yield developmental benefits for the young people who participate. The potential benefits include attitudinal and behavioral aspects of empowerment, motivation to influence their schools or communities in constructive ways; decision-making and problem-solving skills; critical understanding of the sociopolitical environment; and participatory behaviors, all of which are youth development program practices. Other research shows that YPAR gains include perceived support from caring adults, and more positive attitudes towards education and school, both goals of positive youth development.

### **Implications for 4-H Youth Development Professional Practice**

Reported gains in teenagers' motivation and skills to influence their schools and communities are meaningful. Youth participatory action research (YPAR) may be particularly salient for economically disadvantaged youth, disenfranchised youth, youth of color, and/or urban youth, YPAR allows for meaningful involvement, community connections, and empowerment of participants.

Young people find and access a range of different opportunities and relationships through their communities. They can engage in different programs and places to meet their changing needs. Although community changes may not occur because of YPAR, the process of being involved has documented positive effects on youth.

### **Selected References for Additional Reading**

Berg, M., Coman, E., & Schensul, J. J. (2009). Youth action research for prevention: A multi-level intervention designed to increase efficacy and empowerment among urban youth. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 43, 345–359.

Cargo, M., Grams, G., Ottoson, J., Ward, P., & Green, L. (2003). Empowerment as fostering positive youth development and citizenship. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 27(Supplement 1), S66–S79.

Damon, W., Menon, J., & Bronk, K. C. (2003). The development of purpose during adolescence. *Applied Developmental Science*, 7(3), 119–128.

DuBois, D. L., Felner, R. D., Brand, S., Phillips, R. S. C., & Lease, A. M. (1996). Early adolescent self-esteem: A developmental ecological framework and assessment strategy. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 6(4), 543–579.

Israel, B. A., Checkoway, B., Schulz, A., & Zimmerman, M. (1994). Health education and community empowerment: Conceptualizing and measuring perceptions of individual, organizational, and community control. *Health Education Quarterly. Special Issue: Community empowerment, participatory education, and health: I*, 21(2), 149–170.

London, J., Zimmerman, K., & Erbstein, N. (2003). Youth-led research and evaluation: Tools for youth, organizational, and community development. *New Directions in Evaluation*, 98, 33–45.

Zimmerman, M. A. (1995). Psychological empowerment: Issues and illustrations. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 23(5), 581–599.