Journal Of Youth And Community Development (JYCD)

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Journal Of Youth And Community Development (JYCD)

Focus and Scope

Journal Of Youth And Community Development (JYCD) fills a unique and critical niche in the youth development arena: it is a place designed for bridging applied research and practice. In other words, it addresses issues and features studies and practice efforts that have implications for those workingwith and on behalf of young people in youth-serving organizations and the intermediaries that support them.

To that end, we have refined our section policies below. We seek Feature Articles that address important topics, issues and trends, Research & Evaluation Studies that share new findings from approaches to applied research and evaluation, and Program & Practice Articles that present and discuss programs, practices, trainings and policies designed to inform and improve practice. These sections are peer-reviewed, and authors need to specify how their articles bridge youth development research and practice.

Our Resource Reviews share valuable resources and keep JYD readers abreast of important developments in the field. Our invited Thought Leader Commentaries provide cutting-edge thinking on major issues by leading figures in the field. Our Forum section stimulates discussion and debate about important topics and emerging issues in the field of youth development. These sections are editor-reviewed though suggestions for resources to review and thought leaders to invite are most welcome.

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Journal Of Youth And Community Development (JYCD)

Contents

Supporting Adolescent Exploration and Commitment: Identity Formation, Thriving, and Positive Youth Development

Mary Elizabeth Arnold
Oregon State University

A B S T R A C T

The large body of literature on adolescent identity formation, pre-dating and found largely outside the main body of positive youth development (PYD) literature, shows that identity formation remains a key process for adolescent well-being. This paper revisits the critical adolescent task of identity formation proposed by Erikson (1950) and outlines an alignment of identity formation with adolescent thriving and PYD. By highlighting the congruency of identity formation and PYD the paper considers the role that youth development programs can play in assisting the process of identity formation in adolescents. Practical program implications for facilitating identity formation are presented.

Key words: identity formation, thriving, positive youth development, Erik Erikson

Introduction

The nature of human identity and how it is formed has been the subject of considerable research, discussion, and application since its entree into the scientific study of human development in the mid-20th century. Identity is reflected in a consistency of personhood, across situations, contexts and time (Erikson, 1968), presenting a coherent integration of one's self-understanding, goals, values, and behaviors that is constructed through the life choices one makes (Eichas, Meca, Montomery, & Kurtines, 2015). Because of the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional changes that take place during the second decade of life, adolescence is the time when young people begin to question self-identity, and begin the process of answering the question of "who am I?", a question critical to lifelong pyscho-social wellbeing and thriving.

Identity is often presented as something to achieve, as if one can place a confident checkmark next to that particular task, and move on in assured possession of self-definition. In reality, identity formation, which beings in earnest during adolescence, takes place across the lifespan in a continual cycle of confirmation and reappraisal (Côté & Levine, 2016; Eichas et al., 2015).

According to Côté and Levine (2016), identity formation and self-development are parallel, but distinct aspects of human development. Identity formation is focused more on the stability of self over time, identified social roles, and arrangement of those social roles. Self-development is reflected in the perceptions of one's self within those roles. For example, an adolescent typically takes on the identity

role of student, but his or her sense of competence in the student role is reflected in self-concept. To date, positive youth development (PYD) has largely considered development in terms of the self-awareness of the young person, rather than through the lens of identity. Take for example the prominent Five Cs model of PYD (Bowers et al., 2010) that measures confidence, competence, character, connection and caring through indices of youths' self-appraisal of the five constructs.

The aim of this paper is to elucidate the connections between identity formation, adolescent thriving, and PYD, and to explore related implications for youth development program practice. The goal of the paper is to broaden the youth development discourse through a renewed emphasis on the important developmental task of identity formation, a task that has lost prominence in the contemporary theories of PYD (Côté, 2011). It is important to note that multiple aspects of identity, such as social, religious, sexual, moral, cultural, and ethnic have been explored by developmental researchers. For the purpose of this paper, identity is considered broadly, encompassing multiple identity dimensions, and exploring the processes that assist a young person in defining who he or she is as a stable entity over time and context.

Identity Formation in Adolescence: A Wedding of Classical and Contemporary Theories

The topic of human identity dates to ancient times when philosophers first pondered the significance of being human (Côté & Levine, 2016). Building on the ego psychology work of Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson (1956) brought identity formation to the forefront of human development by highlighting identity formation as a necessary step in reaching healthy human maturity and potential. Identity as Erikson proposed it is a complex phenomenon shaped by three separate, but interacting, influences: (a) one's own psychological processes, (b) the context in which one resides, and (c) one's physical characteristics that can either facilitate or impede development (Erikson, 1968). According to Erikson (1968), identity formation is necessary for a young person to experience "wholeness" and youth must "feel a progressive continuity between that which he has come to be during the long years of childhood and that which he promises to become in the anticipated future; between that which he conceives €himself to be and that which he perceives others to see him and expect of him" (p. 87).

The interplay of these influences is consistent with inquiry in the field of applied developmental science (Lerner, Fischer, & Weinberg, 2000), and elucidated in the relational developmental systems model of individual-context interaction, where an emphasis is placed on the mutuallydefining interactions between the developing young person and his or her environment (Lerner, Lerner, von Eye, Bowers, & Lewin-Bizan, 2011). The relational developmental systems model lies at the heart of PYD theory and practice. The process of identity formation and PYD are strikingly similar; indeed, identity formation is

often a desired outcome of PYD programs, but has only recently begun to be included specifically in program models (Eichas et al., 2015).

Identity formation in adolescence is rarely spoken of directly in the PYD field, although it is certainly implied in much of the body of work. However, as Côté (2011) states: "The scholars in the Positive Youth Development movement can indeed be seen as carrying on the tradition of humanistic pioneers like Erikson who believed in the positive psychological potentials that can be nurtured—or stilted—by environmental influences" (p. 1225-26). Indeed, Côté (2011) makes a direct and valid point that the PYD framework aligns well with Erikson's (1968) psychosocial development stages, despite the dismissal of Erikson's work as "passé (at best), or wrong (at worst)" (p. 1225).

Erickson's (1950) developmental theory asserts that all humans undergo the resolution of developmental "crises" as they grow from infancy to old age. Each crisis poses a developmental dilemma that individuals must resolve in a positive manner in order to progress through life successfully. As an infant, we must develop trust in the world around us; as toddlers we begin to develop autonomy; as young children we learn to take initiative and begin to exert some control over our lives; and as childhood draws to a close, we develop a sense of industry and accomplishment, often through social and academic success. According to Erikson (1950), the primary task of adolescence is the development of identity, the ability to know one's self, to develop stability in how one sees oneself, and to be true to that self, based on personal agency, which Erikson called fidelity.

Waterman (1984) described identity as having a clear sense of one's self, made up of goals, values and behaviors to which one is solidly committed, that provides purpose, direction and meaning to a young person's life. Waterman (1984) presents two possible drivers for the innate search for personal identity. The first is based on the discovery of one's true self. Implied in the notion of discovery is the idea that one's identity already exists—a predestination to be discovered. The discovery approach to identity has its roots in Aristotelian ethic that each human has a true self to discover, and that each person has an obligation to know his or her true self (Norton, 1976). Embodied in the discovery approach to identity, is the possibility of personal fulfillment, echoes of which are found in Maslow's (1968) description of "peak experiences," Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of "flow," and Benson and Scales' (2011) description of "sparks" and their relationship to adolescent thriving.

The other driver for identity formation, according to Waterman (1984), is creation, implying that there is not one "true" self, but rather many possible selves that can be created through personal exploration, by trial and error, and supported or limited by the interaction with the context in which a young person

develops. Indeed, exploration can be seen as the basic process that guides identity formation (Berman, Schwartz, Kurtines, & Berman, 2001). The creation driver is seen in developmental models that emphasize the interplay between the young person, his or her innate capabilities and the mutual interactions between self and context. Echoes of the creation driver are evident in current relational developmental theory that emphasizes person-context interaction as the driver for PYD (Lerner et al., 2011).

A created identity is formed from a seemingly endless array of choices, with the implication that young people can become anything they want to be. Inherent in the creation approach, however, is the possibility of increased anxiety young people search for who they are. One of the identified dark sides of identity formation is anxiety that is produced for adolescents who worry about their ability to form an adequate identity (Alsaker & Kroger, 2006). According Waterman (1984), there is an inherent drive to create an identity as a way to avoid the fear of being undefined, and yet at the same time, there is also a fear of foreclosing on an identity that creates stasis or stagnation (Kensington, 1970). Although Waterman (1984) identified the two drivers of discovery and creation, he is careful to point out that they are not mutually exclusive, and that the parameters of one's "true" self are sufficiently broad that creation and discovery are not as distinct in the lived experiences of adolescents as they are in theory.

Contributions of other scholars have emphasized the continued role of exploration particularly through in-depth exploration and reconsideration of identity possibilities (Crocetti, Rubini, & Meeus, 2008; Meeus, 1996), supporting the premise that positive identity formation is progressive and evolving. This premise is supported through research that shows most youth tend to make initial commitments toward identity in early adolescence that are explored in increasingly more depth in middle to late adolescence (Klimstra, Hale, Raaijmakers, Branje, & Meeus, 2010; Luyckx, Soenens, & Goosens, 2006; Meeus, Iedema, Helsen, & Vollebergh, 1999). Valde (1996) goes even further, arguing that once one has established an identity it is important to remain flexible in one's identity commitments. Those who do remain flexible score higher on self-actualization measures than those who hold on to rigidly held identities.

Models of Adolescent Identity Formation

One of the perennial critiques of identity formation is that it is not defined well enough to be tested empirically, and then, from such testing, translated into practical use (Coleman, 2011). Marcia's (1983) Identity Status theory is the most enduring operational model of identity formation, and the basis from which further models have evolved. Marcia (1983) conceptualized identity formation through the

dimensions of exploration and commitment. Exploration is the process of looking for new roles, trying different ideas on, and opening up to new possible ideals, values, goals, and skills. Exploration is driven by the basic question of "is this me?" Commitment, on the other dimension is defined by choices and actions based on an emerging understanding of who one is. Commitments are typically made in terms of values, expectations, personal parameters, goals, and beliefs, as well as educational and vocational decisions. A key component of healthy identity commitments is that they are made based on one's own selfdefinition, and driven by emerging self-understanding, not on the expectations, values, or goals of others, such as parents, peers, or social organizations. Differentiating self from others, and acting on self-knowledge is critical to authentic identity formation (Coleman, 2011).

When the dimensions of exploration and commitment are juxtaposed, four quadrants representing Marcia's (1983) Identity Status model are formed: Diffusion, Foreclosure, Moratorium, and Achieved (see Figure 1).

According to Marcia (1983), adolescents who have not started identity formation are in the diffused state (low exploration, low commitment), having not committed to any identity, nor explored possibilities. Foreclosed adolescents (low exploration, high commitment) have formed an identity without exploring other available options. This is often illustrated by youth who commit to beliefs, values, and goals based on the opinions or expectations of others. Adolescents in the moratorium status (high exploration, low commitment) are actively seeking out possibilities for self-identity, but have not yet made clear identity choices. Finally, adolescents in the achieved status (high exploration, high commitment) have established an identity that is self-determined and based on the individual's own beliefs, values, and gaols, often illustrated by choices of career path, social roles, and personal ideology.

Figure1. Identity Status Model (Marcia, 1983)
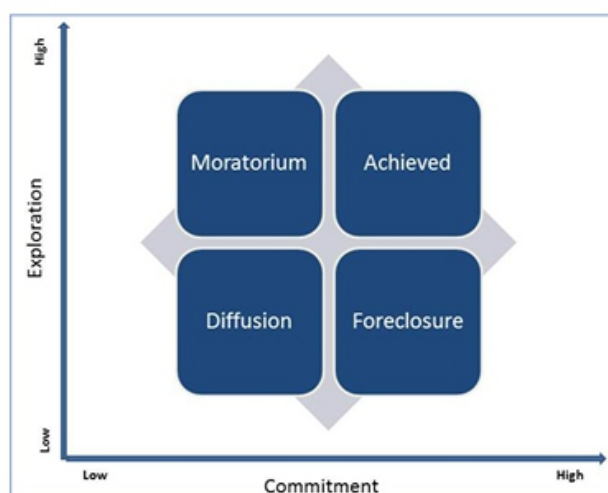
Subsequent research on the Marcia's theory has supported the four-status description, revealing characteristics of each status that are important to understanding trajectories of youth development and thriving, with important implications for youth programming (Alsaker & Kroger, 2006; Coleman, 2011; Kroger, 2004). Adolescents who fall into the diffused identity status generally have higher levels of psycho-social problems, such as poor peer relations, low levels of self-esteem, and higher levels of hopelessness, and social isolation (Alsaker & Kroger, 2006). Adolescents with a foreclosure identity status tend to be more authoritarian in nature, are more rigid in ideology, and are less open to new experiences (Côté & Levine, 1983; Stephen, Fraser, & Marcia, 1992). Foreclosed adolescents are less anxious, however, but this is interpreted as there "not being room" for anxiety when one is certain of who he or she is (Alsaker & Kroger, 2006).

The influence of context on identity formation is also supported by Kroger, Martinussen, & Marcia (2010), who found that youth coming from a "closed" or limited context, such as a small religious school, membership-only communities, or other systems of closed and closely held beliefs and values had a higher proportion of foreclosed youth and less identity achievement during the transition to adulthood. Adolescents in the foreclosed and diffused identity statuses are marked by limited exploration of identity possibilities, and the results of this limitation have detrimental effects on the young person. This finding underscores again the importance of open educational, recreational and community contexts that offer a broad range of opportunities and support for identity exploration to support optimal identity development.

Alternatively, the moratorium and achieved identity statuses are both marked by high exploration, with more positive results. Adolescents in the identity-achieved status are typically psychologically healthier than adolescents in other identity statuses (Coleman, 2011). Likewise, emerging adults in moratorium and achieved status report more pro-social tendencies than those in identity diffusion (Padilla-Walker, Barry, Carroll, Madsen, & Nelson, 2008).

Research on Marcia's model generally supports a progression from diffused to achieved status across adolescence (Kroger et al., 2010). However, the authors note that many youth had not reached achieved status by early adulthood, indicating that identity development continues beyond adolescence. This finding is consistent with recent theorists who propose that the road to adulthood, along with the traditional developmental markers of transitioning to adulthood, is delayed in contemporary society, and thus argue for a new developmental phase entitled "emerging adulthood" that is distinct from late adolescence and young adulthood (Arnett, 2004; Padilla-Walker et al., 2008).

Despite the usefulness of Marcia's (1983) theory for describing identity formation, it does not identify the processes through which formation takes place (Crocetti, 2017). Similarly, recent PYD literature has highlighted the increasing need to understand the processes through which youth development takes place (Arnold, 2015; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2016). In an effort to understand the process of identity formation more clearly, Crocetti et al. (2008) proposed a dual-cycle model of identity formation and maintenance. Crocetti (2017) purports that identity formation is an interplay between commitment and reconsiderations that challenge previous commitments. Identity maintenance, on the other hand, is an interplay between commitment and in-depth exploration, the purpose of which is to validate the commitment, thus leading to its maintenance. Elucidating the processes through which identity is formed and maintained has important implications for youth development programs.

Identity Formation as PYD: A Return to Erikson

In his eloquent commentary on the place of PYD within wider scholarly endeavors to understand human development, James Côté (2011) interpreted recent PYD research through the lens of Erikson's (1950) psycho-social developmental framework. Côté acknowledges just how far the field of adolescent development has come when he points out that recent PYD research "verifies many of the principles with which Erikson worked, with data and statistical methods that Erikson could not have imagined" (p. 1225). Côté also invites scholars to again—to read more carefully—Erikson's theory of development over the lifespan, and highlights several places where the constructs of PYD are evident in what Erikson wrote over 60 years ago.

Erikson's neo-psychoanalytic perspective on human development is my home court, the place where my own studies began, and I did not need to be asked twice to take on that careful rereading of Erikson's texts, now yellowed with age. Returning to these texts again was like finding an old friend, and becoming reacquainted after years of separation. In those intervening years I have been a practitioner scholar in the PYD field, following the developments of theory closely, and translating theory into practice in my work as a youth development specialist. I do not easily refer to myself as a developmental scientist however; rather, I am distinctly a developmental philosopher, one who ponders the discourses of developmental science, the well-worn paths from which new discoveries have emerged, and what they mean for practice in the world of youth development. The observations and understandings of human and, particularly in this case, adolescent development that Erikson put forth were not tested through hypotheses based on elegant and elaborate structural models. Nonetheless, what Erikson described in terms of healthy adolescent development matches the proposed definition of thriving put forth by Benson and Scales (2011), which is framed by PYD (Lerner et al., 2011).

Benson and Scales (2011) make a compelling case for thriving as a developmental process (Moshman, 2005), describing four unique qualities that set thriving apart from other contemporary theories of positive human development. First, thriving is rooted in the of developmental systems theory, which emphasizes development in an ecological context that is bi-directional and mutually beneficial. Second, thriving is essential pro-social, with an orientation toward, and responsibility for, helping others. Third, this pro-social sensibility is a direct outgrowth of finding and nurturing one's talents and passion. Finally, thriving has a distinctly spiritual emphasis that involves virtue and character strength. Thriving in adolescence is very similar to the successful development of personal identity, especially when both are considered as a developmental process rather than statuses. Additionally, contribution to others and civic engagement are consistent outcomes of successful identity formation and adolescent thriving (Crocetti, 2017; Hershberg, Desouza, Warren, Lerner & Lerner, 2014)

Corollaries of the four criteria of thriving are found throughout Erikson's works. Erikson's psycho-social developmental stages outlined a process of development, cumulatively dependent on the successful resolution of a series of eight "tasks" (Erikson, 1950). Consistent with developmental systems theory Erikson underscores the contextual and interactive nature of human development. Furthermore, the prosocial aspect of thriving also aligns with key aspects of Erikson's theory. The first task in infancy is to develop a basic trust in life, in one's environment, and in others. Erikson believed the development of trust sets the stage for the possibility of later pro-social drives (Browning, 1975). As a child progresses into early adolescence, and into the psycho-social task of identity formation proper, two qualitatively different pro-social constructs begin to emerge: morality and ideology (Wright, 1982; Xing, Chico, Lambouths, Brittian, & Schwartz, 2015). Young adolescents are guided by the rules, norms and values presented to them by their parents and society. As adolescence progresses, however, the young person must begin to form an internalized personal ideology that is uniquely his or her own. Subsequent decisions are guided by the young person's fidelity to the emerging ideology. Erikson proposed that development of and fidelity to one's ideology in adolescence is the basis from which a young person can make responsible and ethical contributions as an adult (Wright, 1982). The ultimate contribution in adulthood is represented in Erikson's (1950) last psycho-social stage of generativity, a "universal sense of values assented to with insight and foresight in anticipation of immediate responsibilities not the least of which is the transmission of these values to the next generation" (Erikson, 1970, p. 164.). While Erikson positioned the stage of generativity late in the lifecycle, more indicative of middle to old age than youth, he also stated that such a pro-social adult sensibility has its genesis in the successful resolution of earlier developmental stages. Adolescent identity, developed through an exploration of one's self and interests, is the key factor that links early morality to later generativity (Wright, 1982).

Finally, the emphasis of thriving as a spiritual process is also found in Erikson's work, albeit in a slightly different form, indicative of the times in which Erikson wrote. Erikson considered at length the religious requirements and implications of human development (Wright, 1982), which reflect the social structures more prevalent 60 years ago that confined one's spiritual being to the institutions of religion. At the core of Erikson's understanding was that one's moral and ideological development is essentially a religious enterprise, an idea that was carried forward into the realm of spiritual development by neo Eriksonian scholar Robert Coles (1991) as he realized that the moral actions and ideas of the children he studied could not be understood with any satisfaction unless considered through a religious or spiritual lens.

While usually understated in descriptions of PYD, spiritual development is often implicitly or explicitly part of many programs (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak & Hawkins, 2002). Furthermore, the nature of spiritual development and its role in thriving, PYD, and identity formation represents a significant new thrust in the adolescent development literature (Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2003; Benson & Roehlkepartain, 2008; MacDonald, 2011; Warren, Lerner & Phelps, 2011).

Identity Formation as Thriving: Implications for Positive Youth Development Programs

This paper revisited the critical adolescent task of identity formation put forth by Erikson (1950) and explored an alignment of identity formation, adolescent thriving and PYD in an effort to bring identity formation more fully into the youth development practice discourse. This is not to propose that the three are synonymous, because indeed they are not. However, the extensive body of literature, pre-dating, and found largely outside the main body of PYD literature, shows that identity formation remains a key process for adolescent well-being (McClean & Syed, 2015; Schwartz, Luyckx, & Vignoles, 2011). Furthermore, identity formation is an inherent dimension of adolescent thriving as proposed centrally in the PYD literature, sharing all of the key characteristics for thriving outlined by Benson and Scales (2011).

Three aspects of identity formation specifically inform PYD programming. First, is the importance of supporting adolescent exploration of possible identities. The evidence provided in this paper supports the multiple ways that such exploration contributes to adolescent thriving, whether it is through supporting a young person's nascent discovery of his or her most driving passions, or providing multiple opportunities for youth to try on roles, and to learn through trial and error those things at which they excel. Key to the exploration is the underlying process of increase in personal agency, confidence, and, over time, commitment, to one's This process is consistent with, and illustrated well by Benson and Scales (2011) in their proposal to support the identification and development of youth "sparks."

In practicality, individual adolescents will present a preference to explore personal identity development through discovery or creation, and attention should be paid toward understanding those adolescents who appear to resonate deeply with experiences that define who they are (Benson & Scales, 2011; Coatsworth, Palen, Sharp, & Ferrer-Wreder, 2006), and providing the contextual support, opportunities and encouragement to youth who are trudging through a jungle of possibilities on the path to identity formation (Jones & Deutsch, 2012; Tanti, Stukas, Halloran, & Foddy, 2011).

Dworkin, Larsen, & Hansen (2003) highlight the importance of exploration in identity formation, particularly through the multiple activities in which youth participate. Such active participation allows youth to learn who they are by exploring what they enjoy, and learning what they are good at, as well as what they are not. By exploring possibilities in the context of typical adolescent activities, youth become agents of their own development through the intentional and purposeful trying on of possible selves. Dworkin et al. (2003) further emphasize the importance of a young person's willingness to engage in self-defining activities, and to stretch beyond one's comfort level in order to learn more about who one is.

The second key implication for youth programming is the recognition that identity formation is essentially developmental. As such, programs seeking to support identity development in youth must be thoughtfully structured in light of the developmental changes that take place from early to late adolescence. Programs for early adolescents may offer opportunities for identity exploration without any expectation for commitments toward identity. These explorations are conducted within programmatic contexts that support a young adolescent's need to belong; develop competence in basic skills; and navigate the basic moral structures, such as program rules and expectations; in order to form a secure foundation for the later ideological and identity commitment tasks. Likewise, programs for middle and late adolescents should focus on helping youth discover or create an expressive sense of self, with encouragement toward increasing identity commitment to support the transition to emerging adulthood. Similarly, Coatsworth et al. (2006) highlight the importance of youth discovering an "expressive identity," a discovery that often comes about through engagement with activities that become selfdefining for an adolescent.

A critical developmental aspect of PYD programs seeking to enhance identity formation is an increasing emphasis on the exploration of post-adolescent opportunities and pathways to those opportunities, which in turn help a young person find his or her way through a myriad of choices, thus reducing the potential for psychological distress. Goal-setting based on the young person's emerging identity becomes an essential ingredient for programs at this stage. Along with this, however, is the explicit need to encourage late adolescents to reflect on their goals and plans to ensure that such ideas are coming from

an internal sense of who the young person sees him or herself to be, and not on the expectations and desires of those external to the self. The internal nature of identity formation is critical in today's world that demands much of adolescents in order to "succeed" in life; demands to which adolescents may respond without appropriate reflection on how well they match their own emerging self-definition.

Finally, youth programs must support identity formation in ways that are consistent with the expectations of contemporary society, recognizing the multiple contexts in a young person's life and the influence of these contexts on identity formation. When Erikson originally proposed identity development, the adolescent world was much more predictable and structured. Change, at least compared to the pace we witness today, was slower, and social roles, which informed many identities, were more defined. As such, the traditional concept of identity formation had a more static quality, as reflected in Marcia's final status of "identity achieved." In today's postmodern world, little is static, homogenous, or definitively structured, as such, adolescent identities need to be viewed as fluid and adaptable across the life span (Côté & Levine, 2016).

Furthermore, the identification of the emerging adulthood years as a distinct phase between adolescence and young adulthood has considerable implication for the nature and timing of identity formation.

By intentionally including identity formation in programs for adolescents, PYD practitioners can play an important role in delivering adolescents to the edge of adulthood with sufficient fidelity to self-definition and personal ideology to navigate an increasingly complex social milieu. Indeed, if we consider the relevancy of Erikson's theory for contemporary adolescent development and its alignment with thriving and PYD, identity formation is arguably the most important outcome for youth programs across the adolescent years.

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Towards the Promotion of Positive Development among Boys in Challenging Contexts: A Mixed-Methods Study of Engagement in the Scoutreach Initiative

Robey B. Champine
Yale University
Sara K. Johnson
Tufts University

A B S T R A C T

Engagement in youth development programs reflects the quality of young people's program-related experiences. However, more research is needed that explores cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of engagement in programs that serve underrepresented youth of color. The present crosssectional and mixed-methods study assessed potential relations among dimensions of engagement in the Boston-area Scoutreach initiative, character attributes, self-perceived school competence, and intentional self-regulation. We analyzed data from 32 Scouts (Mage = 9.97 years, SD = 2.46, Range = 6 to 14), 32 parents/guardians, and five Scoutreach leaders. Scouts demonstrated that they were cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally engaged in Scoutreach, and these dimensions were related differentially to indicators of healthy development. Qualitative data elucidated key aspects of Scoutreach (e.g., camping, peer relationships) that were linked to youth engagement. We discuss limitations of the present study and implications for future research and practice.

Key words: youth development programs, youth engagement, character attributes, positive youth development

Introduction

High-quality youth development (YD) programs (e.g., 4-H, Boy Scouts of America [BSA], Boys & Girls Clubs) may represent key ecological developmental assets in the lives of diverse youth (Vandell, Larson, Mahoney, & Watts, 2015). These programs immerse youth in structured activities in safe and supervised settings with opportunities to enhance their socialization and life skills (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2016). High-quality YD programs emphasize a positive youth development (PYD) perspective, through viewing youth as resources to be developed (Lerner et al., 2005).

Relational developmental systems (RDS) metatheory (Overton, 2015) represents an ideal frame through which to examine how ecological developmental assets, such as YD programs, may optimize the development of diverse youth. This holistic and integrated view of human development emphasizes that all youth have strengths and the capacity for healthy growth that results from mutually-influential, individual-context relations (Overton & Lerner, 2014). Youth thrive when their individual

developmental assets or strengths are connected with ecological developmental assets (Lerner, Agans, DeSouza, & Gasca, 2013).

Urban youth of color in economically disadvantaged communities are underrepresented in YD programs (e.g., Lee, Borden, Serido, & Perkins, 2009). However, when they do participate, these youth are likely to benefit, such that YD programs may buffer youth against potential contextual risk factors (Urban, Lewin-Bizan, & Lerner, 2009). For instance, in a large sample of diverse young people, youth who showed the highest scores on self-regulation were girls from lower-resource environments who participated in YD programs (e.g., Big Brothers/Big Sisters) and other out-of-school-time (OST) activities (Urban et al., 2009). In short, structured activities may serve a protective function in urban, lower-resource neighborhoods (e.g., Francois, Overstreet, & Cunningham, 2011) by providing a safe space for youth of color who are exposed to violence and other potentially challenging experiences, and may connect them with supportive mentors (Francois et al., 2011).

Key Dimensions of Youth Program Participation

Research on YD programs has primarily examined young people's quantity of participation, commonly indexed by breadth, duration, and intensity (Bohnert, Fredricks, & Randall, 2010). In comparison, engagement is a multidimensional construct that reflects the quality of young people's program-related experiences and how youth attribute meaning to their experiences (Tiffany, Exner-Cortens, & Eckenrode, 2012). More research is needed that examines multiple dimensions of engagement within YD programs, as this construct may provide a rich characterization of young people's experiences and insights into how to sustain their active participation (Fredricks, 2011).

Cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement

Bohnert et al. (2010) conceptualized engagement as comprised of three dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. Cognitive engagement is investment in the learning process as well as how much youth value what they learn, and a commitment to mastering difficult skills (Bohnert et al., 2010; Li & Lerner, 2013). Emotional engagement refers to positive and negative reactions toward program activities and may include enjoyment, enthusiasm, and feelings belonging (Bohnert et al., 2010; Li & Lerner, 2013). Behavioral engagement reflects both shallow (e.g., attendance) and deeper engagement (e.g., active participation, effort; Bohnert et al., 2010; Li & Lerner, 2013). Scholars agree that engagement is a multifaceted dimension of youth participation that represents "the missing link in organized activity research" (Bohnert et al., 2010, p. 593).

Present Study

The present cross-sectional and mixed-methods study aimed to enrich understanding of the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement of boys of color who participated in the Boston-area Scoutreach initiative. Scoutreach is an arm of BSA that aims to make Scouting more accessible to ethnically and racially diverse boys and young men in lower-resource communities (Wang et al., 2017). Our study was inspired by a longitudinal, mixed-methods investigation, the Character and Merit Project (CAMP; Hilliard et al., 2014). During focus groups in the CAMP study, Scoutreach leaders discussed challenges in trying to implement the standard Scouting program in a way that was functional, feasible, and engaging to Scouts who were primarily from urban, lower-resource communities (Hershberg et al., 2015). Those findings informed our focus on exploring facilitators of youth engagement in Scoutreach in greater depth.

We drew from prior research on youth engagement (e.g., Bohnert et al., 2010; Li & Lerner, 2013) to assess cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement among ethnically and racially diverse boys from urban, lower-resource communities who participated in Scoutreach. We examined whether an adapted school engagement measure (Li & Lerner, 2013) was appropriate for use in this YD program context. In addition, we analyzed interview data from Scoutreach leaders, parents/guardians, and youth to examine similarities and differences in their views of youth engagement in Scoutreach. We explored the following research questions:

1. Were Scouts cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally engaged in Scoutreach?;

2. What were the relations among dimensions of engagement and character attributes, self-perceived school competence, and intentional self-regulation?;

3. What were Scouts', parents/guardians', and leaders' views of how Scoutreach promoted youth engagement?; and

4. When interpreting the quantitative and qualitative data together, what types of meta- inferences can be made about youth engagement in Scoutreach and its relation to PYD?

Method

Mixed-Methods Approach

Mixed-methods approaches facilitate a richer and more holistic understanding of the potential processes through which involvement in programs may be linked to youth outcomes in comparison to the use of a

a single research method (Riggs & Greenberg, 2004). Triangulation of data across sources and participant groups may be useful for assessing the validity of measures and for examining potential convergence and divergence in views (Guion, 2002; Hershberg et al., 2015). Accordingly, we collected quantitative and qualitative data from Scoutreach leaders, parents/guardians, and youth to examine similarities and differences in program-related experiences across data sources and participant groups.

Quantitative Analysis

We collected quantitative data from Scouts to assess whether dimensions of engagement were related to character attributes, self-perceived school competence, and intentional selfregulation. In light of the study's small sample, we imputed all missing values using Version 22. We performed 20 data imputations and, in SPSS, split the file by the variable to generate pooled estimates (IBM SPSS Guide, 2011). We tabulated means and standard deviations and computed Pearson product-moment correlations.

Qualitative Analysis

We performed interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith, 2011; Smith & Osborn, 2008) of interview responses to examine the views and experiences of Scouts, parents/guardians, and leaders. This approach involves close, detailed analysis of individual cases, followed by analysis of patterns or themes across cases to assess potential convergence and divergence (Smith, 2011). There are several steps involved in IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

After the first author developed initial codebooks for each participant group, she discussed the codes with two other trained qualitative researchers to validate her interpretations of participants' responses and to reach conceptual agreement on the codes. Next, using the initial codebooks, the first author and a second researcher independently coded approximately half of the transcripts in each participant group. They discussed their coding decisions and resolved any discrepancies (e.g., through adding codes or revising the definitions of codes). Kappa coefficients indicated adequate interrater reliability (.72 for Scouts, .73 for parents/guardians, and .75 for leaders).

After separate analyses of the quantitative and qualitative data, we examined areas of commonality across the three participant groups and across both sets of analyses. This concurrent triangulation approach (Creswell, 2009) helped to provide more in-depth information about participant experiences and outcomes, and may have offset the weaknesses associated with one method with the strengths

associated with the other method.

Participants

We analyzed quantitative data from 32 Scouts (Mage = 9.97 years, SD = 2.46, Range = 6 to 14) enrolled in two Scoutreach units in the greater Boston area. About a third (31.3%) identified as Hispanic/Latino. The racial composition was 37.5% multiethnic or multiracial, 15.6% Black or African American, 9.4% American Indian/Native American, 9.4% Asian or Pacific Islander, 9.4% White, and 6.3% identified as Other. Qualitative data were collected from 10 Scouts (Mage = 11.40 years, SD = 2.41, Range = 6 to 14).

We analyzed quantitative data from 32 parents/guardians (Mage = 40.0 years, SD = 8.54, Range = 26 to 55). Half of the parents/guardians identified as Scouts' mothers. In regard to ethnicity, 31.3% of parents/guardians identified as Hispanic or Latino/a. The racial composition was 21.9% White, 18.8% Black or African American, 15.6% Other, 15.6% multiethnic or multiracial, 6.3% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 6.3% identified as American Indian/Native American. Half of the parents/guardians had less than a Bachelor's degree and most (68.8%) met United States Department of Housing and Urban Development criteria for low-income status. Qualitative data were collected from 10 parents/guardians (Mage = 37.0 years, SD = 9.37, Range = 27 to 51).

Qualitative data were collected from five Scoutreach leaders (Mage = 54.0 years, SD = 10.83, Range = 33 to 62). All were male, the majority (60.0%) were White, and all had at least a Bachelor's degree. Their duration of involvement as leaders ranged from one year to approximately 20 years.

The size of the interview sample (i.e., 10 Scouts, 10 parents/guardians, and five leaders) was chosen with regard to the analytic approach that we used. IPA is recommended for use with small samples (e.g., Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Procedure

This study was approved by the Tufts University Institutional Review Board. We also obtained a Certificate of Confidentiality from the National Institutes of Health.

Participants were recruited from two Scoutreach units in the Boston area. Scoutreach is headed by a District Executive, to whom the leaders report. The first author worked with the District Executive to select packs from whom to recruit participants, giving consideration to criteria such convenience.

According to the District Executive, the units that were selected were considered to be exemplary by the Council in light of their successful records of recruitment and retention. The first author attended unit meetings to describe the study to parents/guardians and to collect verbal consent and assent.

All data collection was completed during Scoutreach meetings. For questionnaire completion, Scouts received a small toy and parents/guardians received a $10 gift card. All interview participants received a $15 gift card. All interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription service or by the first author.

Measures

Scouts completed a modified version of the questionnaire used in the CAMP study (Hilliard et al., 2014), including measures of engagement, character attributes, self-perceived school competence, and intentional self-regulation (Wang et al., 2015a, 2015b). Items were scored using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Not at all like me) to 5 (Exactly like higher scores indicated greater endorsement of items. We created mean-level composite scores by averaging participants' responses across scale items.

Engagement

Cognitive Engagement ($\alpha = .95$) was assessed using five items adapted from the school engagement measure used by Li and Lerner (2013; e.g., "I want to learn as much as I can in Scouts"). Emotional Engagement ($\alpha = .79$) was assessed using five items adapted from the school engagement measure (Li & Lerner, 2013; e.g., "I think Scouts is fun and exciting").

Behavioral Engagement was assessed using five items adapted from the school engagement measure (Li & Lerner, 2013; e.g., "I come to Scout meetings and activities on time"). Initially, scores showed low reliability ($\alpha = .60$). Based on analysis of inter-item correlations, we removed the first item ("I come to Scout meetings and activities prepared [with my uniform on, parent permission forms signed]"). Scores on the revised scale showed higher, albeit still relatively low, reliability ($\alpha = .67$).

Character Attributes

Character attribute items were from the Assessment of Character in Children and Early Adolescents (Wang et al., 2015a, 2015b). This measure assesses eight character-related attributes, some of which are reflected in the Scout Law1. We assessed seven character attributes. Obedience ($\alpha = .73$) was assessed using four items adapted from the conduct/behavior adequacy subscale of the Self-Perception Profile for

Children (SPPC; Harter, 1982, 1983; e.g., "I act the way I am supposed to"). Religious Reverence was assessed using four items adapted from the Spiritual Transcendence Scale (Piedmont, 1999; e.g., "I like to read or listen to stories from my religion"). Scores showed low reliability (α = .66), but analysis of inter-item correlations did not reveal any deletions that would enhance reliability. Cheerfulness (α = .74) was assessed using three items adapted from the Positive and Negative Affect Scale for Children (Laurent, Potter, & Catanzaro, 1994; e.g., "I am happy"). Kindness (α = .83) was assessed using four items adapted from the Caring scale in the 4-H Study of PYD (Lerner et al., 2005; e.g., "I'm kind to other kids"). Hopeful Future Expectations (α = .71) was assessed using three items adapted from the Schmid & Lopez (2011) scale (e.g., "I will have a happy family"). Trustworthiness (α = .89) was assessed using five items adapted from the Personal Values subscale of the Character measure of PYD used in the 4-H Study (Lerner et al., 2005; e.g., "I can be counted on to tell the truth").

Helpfulness (α = .72) was assessed using six items adapted from the Child Behavior Scale (Ladd & Profilet, 1996; e.g., "I help people in my family").

Self-Perceived School Competence

Six items adapted from the academic competence subscale of the SPPC (Harter, 1982, 1983; e.g., "I am very good at my schoolwork") assessed self-perceived school competence. Scores showed low reliability (α = .68). Analysis of inter-item correlations did not reveal any changes that would enhance reliability.

Intentional Self-Regulation (ISR)

Six items adapted from the selection, optimization, and compensation measure developed by Baltes and colleagues (e.g., Freund & Baltes, 2002; e.g., "I am good at making plans") assessed ISR. Scores showed low reliability (α = .63). Analysis of inter-item correlations did not reveal any changes to the scale that would enhance reliability.

Parent/Guardian Demographic Questionnaire

Parents/guardians completed 26 multiple-choice items regarding standard background information (e.g., education and income levels; Hilliard et al., 2014). The questionnaires were English and Spanish.

Youth Interview

We used a modified version of the semi-structured interview protocol from the CAMP Study (Ferris, Hershberg, Su, Wang, & Lerner, 2016) to ask youth about their experiences in Scouting. The protocol consisted of 18 items, including "How has Scouts affected you and your life?"

Parent/Guardian Interview

We used a semi-structured interview protocol to ask parents/guardians about their sons' involvement in Scouting. The protocol consisted of 16 items, including "What kind of an effect do you think that Scouts has on your son?"

Scoutreach Leader Interview

We used a modified version of the semi-structured interview protocol used in the CAMP study (see Hilliard et al., 2014) to ask Scoutreach leaders about their views of Scouting. The protocol consisted of 16 items, including "How do you get boys engaged in Scoutreach?"

Quantitative Results

Descriptive Analyses

We calculated mean scores and standard deviations for the quantitative scales (Table 1). As expected, Scouts' average scores were moderate to high on dimensions of engagement, character attributes, self-perceived school competence, and intentional self-regulation.

Table 1. Scale Descriptive Statistics (n = 32)

Variable	n of Items	Mean (Standard Deviation)	Min	Max	Cronbach's Alpha
Cognitive engagement	5	4.36 (.93)	1.0	5.0	.95
Emotional engagement	5	4.41 (.62)	2.8	5.0	.79
Behavioral engagement*	4	4.48 (.57)	4.13	4.75	.67
Obedience	4	3.88 (.65)	2.75	5.0	.73
Religious reverence	4	3.15 (.91)	1.5	5.0	.66
Cheerfulness	3	3.58 (.95)	1.67	5.0	.74
Kindness	6	4.06 (.66)	2.5	5.0	.83
Hopeful future expectation	3	4.44 (.66)	2.67	5.0	.71
Trustworthiness	5	3.76 (.91)	1.0	5.0	.89
Helpfulness	6	3.84 (.63)	2.5	5.0	.72
Self-perceived school	6	3.79 (.69)	2.5	4.83	.68
Intentional self-regulation	6	3.41 (.62)	2.5	4.5	.63

Table 2. Correlations among Dimensions of Engagement, Character Attributes, Self-Perceived School Competence, and Intentional Self-Regulation (_n_ = 32)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Obedience											
2. Reverence	.06										
3. Cheerfulness	.45**	.17									
4. Kindness	.44*	.05	.39*								
5. Hopeful future	.41*	.30	.12	.58**							
6. Trustworthiness	.71**	.03	.38*	.48**	.57**						
7. Helpfulness	.65**	.06	.60**	.78**	.52**	.66**					
8. School competence	.51**	.48**	.33	.52**	.44*	.48**	.51**				
9. Intentional self-regulation	.45**	.39*	.36*	.60**	.46**	.48**	.58**	.63**			
10. Cognitive engagement	.26	.16	.34	.25	.40*	.45*	.45*	.41*	.24		
11. Emotional engagement	.38*	.35*	.37*	.52**	.43*	.41*	.69*	.59*	.48**	.60**	
12. Behavioral engagement	.33	.05	.24	..28	.33	.54**	.33	.32	.19	.77**	.42*

Scoutreach Engagement and Indicators of Healthy Youth Development

We computed Pearson correlations to examine relations among all scales (Table 2). We interpreted the magnitudes of correlation coefficients using Cohen's guidelines (Hemphill, 2003). Cognitive engagement was moderately positively associated with hopeful future expectation, trustworthiness, helpfulness, and self-perceived school competence. Emotional engagement was moderately to highly positively associated with obedience, reverence, cheerfulness, kindness, hopeful future expectation, trustworthiness, helpfulness, self-perceived school competence, and ISR. Behavioral engagement was positively associated with trustworthiness, with a large magnitude.

Qualitative Results

Perceived Aspects of Scoutreach Linked to Cognitive Engagement

Leaders described how Scouts were cognitively engaged, or how they tried to promote cognitive engagement, in Scoutreach. Three (60.0%) leaders suggested that they fostered Scouts' cognitive engagement by exposing them to mentally challenging experiences and acknowledging their mastery of difficult tasks and skills: "What I think [Scouts] like about [the activity] is it's challenging"; "Get [Scouts] outdoors in challenging situations. Congratulate them when they do it"; and "It's the challenge, and what we have is the biggest classroom in the world. Just keep pushing the envelope." Two (40.0%) leaders described promoting cognitive engagement during Scout meetings through presenting lessons

concisely and interactively: "In the meetings . . . you're learning while you're having fun" and

> *The Boy Scout meeting is a 90-minute meeting and the way we try and do it is so they're broken up into small blocks which will keep young boys' attention, 15-20 minutes on one thing. We try to use a combination of a teaching section where they work on a Scout skill, a planning section where they think about assuming responsibility . . . some physical activity.*

Similarly, three (30.0%) parents/guardians described the importance of teaching Scouts interesting, useful, and important information and mentioned that their sons felt proud when they accomplished important tasks: "[Scouting] offers not only the theory of learning . . . but they do things that are practical and they prove themselves"; "You've got to make [Scouting] interesting for [youth] so they're willing to participate"; and "[My son's] proud of himself when he's . . . learned a new task and he's completed it."

Half (50.0%) of Scouts said that they thought the skills that they learned in Scoutreach were useful and important: "[first-aid] is important to learn because you can help people that's hurt" and "I like to learn new things . . . learning about new knots, new first-aid type things . . . like how to make splints and stuff. I think it's really cool and it's really useful information." One Scout (10.0%) described how he personally valued what he learned in Scouting: "For me, it was extremely rewarding to learn how to use axes, knives, make fire, and also how to make shelters." Two Scouts (20.0%) also described feeling proud of their learning and accomplishments in Scouting (e.g., through earning merit badges).

Perceived Aspects of Scoutreach Linked to Emotional Engagement

All five (100.0%) leaders discussed the importance of exposing Scouts to fun and exciting activities to foster emotional engagement: "At the Cub Scout level . . . do stuff that's exciting. That's number one"; "You've got to make it fun. This is where we probably have the hardest time because we're trying to follow the curriculum, but . . . you've got to have a fun element"; and "The children that really get into the outdoor parts of the program tend to stay because they love the outdoors program so much that they want to continue." One (20.0%) leader linked Scouts' positive affect toward Scouting to receiving recognition for achievements: "They need to know they're earning things. Nothing makes a child prouder and more wanting to come in than when you call them to the front of the room once a month and you hand them a belt loop."

Four (40.0%) parents/guardians suggested how their sons' emotional engagement was linked to Scoutreach activities; in particular, camping: "[Camping] was nice and [my son] really enjoyed it"; "[My son] loves archery. He loves fishing. He loves the activities where he can do them outside of Scouts as well"; "I think [the activities] are enjoyable for [my son]"; and "[My son] had a lot of fun [at camp]." More than half (60.0%) of parents/guardians also suggested that their sons' emotional engagement was linked to their relationships with other boys in Scoutreach. For example, "He's excited to come. He knows he's going to . . . [interact] with other boys" and "He likes being around his friends."

For four (40.0%) Scouts, emotional engagement was linked to relationships. For instance, "I think [Scouting] is fun because there's other people," and "[I feel] happy [at Scouting] because you get to meet your friends that you have there." For most (70.0%) Scouts, emotional engagement was related to different activities. For example, "[Scouting has] made me feel more . . . you go outside more, so you feel different sometimes"; "I feel happy, excited [at Scouting] . . . because I don't know what we're gonna do next"; "I enjoy [Scouting] and I feel happy when I'm here. It's another thing I do instead of just staying home all day"; and "We don't just learn, we have fun sometimes, playing dodge ball and stuff like that."

Perceived Aspects of Scoutreach Linked to Behavioral Engagement

All five (100.0%) leaders described the importance of getting Scouts actively involved in memorable activities to promote behavioral engagement: "Get them out early, in activities that they will remember for the rest of their Scouting career – BBs, archery, out to a camp . . . once you set that hook, they're always going to want to do more"; "Do a campfire, have some s'mores, and then let them go back on Monday and the first thing out of their mouth when they walk in the classroom is 'I built a fire on Saturday.' That's what works."; "You have to have a physical element that is active"; and "Do things. Get the boys hands-on experience."

 Two (20.0%) parents/guardians also described their sons' effort and active participation in different activities: "[Scouting] worked with him and he sees how much fun he can have outside doing things" and

When he went to the Pumpkin Fest . . . he didn't want to do the
bow and arrow. He said 'I'm not going to be able to do it.' Even
though he didn't really make the shot . . . he tried it. He liked the
fact that he's able to do that.

In addition, all (100.0%) Scouts described their effort and active participation in camping and other activities: "we . . . make a fire and sleep in tents that we pitched"; "[at summer camp], we go swimming,

archery, rifle shooting, and more"; "when we went to the camps, we did archery, rock climbing, BB guns, and how to make a fire"; "I am actually helping staff the youth leadership training over the summer"; and "my last major [service project] was actually cleaning up the garden cemetery." Some Scouts described, more generally, why they were behaviorally engaged in Scoutreach, as compared to other activities: "I think Scouts is better [than basketball] because you get to do more things" and "At home, I would just play games all night, but at Boy Scouts, I'm active, like how I'm supposed to be"

Summary of Mixed-Methods Findings

Questionnaire data suggested that youth were engaged cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally, with nuanced relations among dimensions of engagement, character attributes, self-perceived school competence, and intentional self-regulation. Emotional engagement, or having a positive affect toward Scoutreach, seemed to be a particularly important dimension of engagement that was related to all of the indicators of PYD.

In interviews, leaders, parents/guardians, and Scouts described positive views of Scoutreach. However, the groups differed in their emphases on key facets of Scoutreach linked to youth engagement. Whereas leaders and Scouts primarily described Scouts' experiences in camping and other outdoor activities as particularly important in promoting boys' meaningful and sustained participation in Scoutreach, parents/guardians more strongly emphasized the importance of relationships that their sons formed with their leaders and other Scouts. On the questionnaires, Scouts had high average scores on the dimensions of engagement that we assessed. The interviews expanded on the quantitative findings by elucidating which aspects of Scoutreach were most strongly related to boys' engagement. For example, participants commonly linked Scouts' engagement in Scoutreach to outdoor activities and the opportunity to build strong relationships with leaders and other Scouts.

Analyses also converged to suggest the important role of emotional engagement. Questionnaire data suggested that emotional engagement was positively associated with the most indicators of PYD, and was uniquely associated with several of these indicators. Similarly, in interviews, leaders, parents/guardians, and Scouts provided vivid examples of how Scouts were emotionally engaged, as compared to how they demonstrated other dimensions of engagement. Interviews with leaders, in particular, seemed to suggest that emotional engagement helped to promote cognitive and behavioral engagement.

Discussion

Research suggests that, although it may be difficult for some youth to navigate experiences associated with living in lower-resource communities, there are youth who thrive despite their exposure to adversity (Jain, Buka, Subramanian, & Molnar, 2012). High-quality YD programs have the potential to maximize diverse young people's potential for thriving by embracing and enhancing their individual strengths and buffering them against contextual risk factors (Urban et al., 2009). However, more research is needed to better understand how such programs effectively engage youth (Bohnert et al., 2010). We used cross-sectional, mixed-methods data to examine how boys of color were cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally engaged in Scoutreach, and whether these dimensions of engagement were related to character attributes, self-perceived school competence, and intentional self-regulation.

Scouts had high average scores on the dimensions of engagement and moderate to high average scores on character attributes, consistent with prior research with Scouting (Lynch et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2015b). Quantitative data suggested nuanced relations among dimensions of engagement and character attributes. These results also aligned with prior research linking dimensions of youth engagement and involvement in programs to indicators of positive development (Ramey et al., 2015; Tiffany et al., 2012).

Scoutreach leaders and Scouts primarily linked camping and outdoor activities to all dimensions of engagement, whereas parents/guardians primarily linked Scouts' emotional engagement, in particular, to relationships with other boys. These data were consistent with prior work suggesting that the perceptions of practitioners, parents/guardians, and youth may vary in regard to what constitutes youth thriving, and barriers to thriving, within the context of YD programs (King et al., 2005).

Camping and the Outdoors

In interviews, leaders, parents/guardians, and Scouts all acknowledged the importance of Scouts' involvement in camping and outdoor activities. Based on descriptions from Scouts and leaders, camping appeared to be the facet of Scoutreach most strongly related to Scouts' interest in joining and their sustained engagement.

A large body of research suggests the developmental benefits associated with camping and other forms of experiential learning (Henderson et al., 2007; Thurber, Scanlin, Scheuler, & Henderson, 2007), including positive identity, independence, social skills, positive values and decision-making, and environmental awareness and physical skills (Thurber et al., 2007). Camping may be an especially meaningful experience for youth who lack access to supportive adults (Henderson et al., 2007) or for youth from urban, lower-resource communities, and may function as an intervention setting through cultivating strong relationships and promoting skill building (Bialeschki, Henderson, & James, 2007).

Camping may be an especially meaningful experience for youth who lack access to supportive adults (Henderson et al., 2007) or for youth from urban, lower-resource communities, and may function as an intervention setting through cultivating strong relationships and promoting skill building (Bialeschki, Henderson, & James, 2007). Scoutreach leaders and Scouts described camping and other outdoor activities as promoting these assets and as helping to facilitate the application of learned attributes and skills.

Potential Implications for Youth Programming

Our findings have important implications for how Scoutreach leadership, and leaders of similar YD programs, recruit participants, implement their programming, and continue to examine the experiences and outcomes of diverse youth. First, the present study reinforced the importance of capturing the views and experiences of different stakeholders (i.e., leaders, parents/guardians, and youth). There were nuances, for instance, in which stakeholders linked aspects of Scoutreach to youth engagement. These findings may have important implications for how Scoutreach leadership, and similar YD programs, markets its programming. For instance, in describing the initiative to prospective Scouts, leaders may want to continue to strongly emphasize the opportunities to gain exposure to new experiences, namely camping and the outdoors. In comparison, when describing the initiative to parents/guardians, leaders may want to emphasize how Scoutreach helps to cultivate supportive interpersonal relationships.

Findings highlighted the potential developmental benefits associated with immersing underrepresented youth in experiential learning opportunities in outdoor contexts to which they otherwise would not have had access. Thus, as part of efforts to effectively recruit, engage, and sustain youth participants, Scouting and similar YD programs should explore ways to continue to involve these youth in new and exciting experiences which, as one Scoutreach leader stated, "Get [youth] out of the neighborhood, and let them see and experience other things that kids in different socioeconomic circumstances take for granted."

Potential Implications for Future Research

Findings also raised potential implications for future research with Scoutreach and similar YD programs. Follow-up longitudinal work should address in greater depth the potential developmental impacts of the camping experience. This research might examine topics such as variation in the amount of emphasis that Scoutreach units place on camping and how the camping-related views and experiences of Scoutreach youth compare to those of Scouts in the traditional Scouting program. Such research may, again, also have important implications for how Scoutreach is marketed.

As noted by King et al. (2005), considerable variation in perspectives may exist across communities and cultural groups. Although we examined the perspectives of an ethnically, racially, and economically diverse sample, between-group comparisons were beyond the scope of our study. Thus, future research may want to examine whether individuals' views of, and experiences in, Scoutreach (and BSA) vary across communities and cultural groups.

Future research should also examine the role of parent/guardian involvement promoting youth engagement, and potential barriers and facilitators to their involvement. In the present study, leaders described parent/guardian involvement as essential for Scouts' success, but also acknowledged challenges associated with promoting their participation. Research should consider how parents/guardians demonstrate involvement (e.g., attending meetings, participating in activities, serving as leaders), and examine whether differences exist in relation to youth outcomes.

Limitations and Additional Future Directions

A primary limitation of our study was its small sample. Future research should examine potential differences between participating and non-participating units in Scoutreach and other YD programs based on analysis of administrative data, such as youth and leader retention rates or program benchmarks or milestones completed by units.

Our cross-sectional design precluded assessment of potential intra-individual variability. Although RDS metatheory informed this investigation and our interpretation of the results, this perspective involves individual-context relations across time and place, which could not be tested using a cross-sectional design. Thus, future longitudinal research should examine whether young people's Scoutreach-related experiences and outcomes inform their subsequent individual-context developmental regulations. Directional hypotheses should be tested, in light of our findings. For instance, leaders seemed to suggest that Scouts' emotional engagement, or employing an "emotional hook," helped to promote their cognitive and behavioral engagement in Scoutreach. This idea should be tested in subsequent research.

We collected data only from self-selected individuals affiliated with a specific YD initiative in a particular geographic area, thus limiting the generalizability of findings. In addition, Scouts enrolled in Scoutreach may differ in important ways from their uninvolved peers. Thus, future research should collect data from demographically similar comparison samples.

The study also contained threats to internal validity and reliability. For instance, there may have been issues associated with how the dimensions of engagement were operationalized. Future research should more rigorously examine the validity of these scales by performing exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses.

Characteristics associated with the researchers who conducted the interviews might also have impacted the validity of the data. Research on conducting qualitative studies suggests the importance of forming positive relationships with study participants, in particular members of marginalized populations, to help break down communication and trust barriers and to gain an insider's perspective on participants' experiences (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

Despite these limitations, the present study helps to expand developmental scholarship by examining the experiences of urban boys of color who participated in an arm of one of the oldest and largest youth-serving programs in the country. The mixed-methods research design supported a multifaceted understanding of which aspects of Scoutreach were linked to youth engagement. Although this study is an initial, exploratory attempt to examine in more depth the experiences of urban boys of color within a particular OST context, the findings raise important questions and considerations for future research and practice.

Conclusions

High-quality YD programs have the potential to function as key contexts in the lives of ethnically, racially, and economically diverse youth; in particular, youth from lower-resource communities (Francois et al., 2011). In-depth research is needed that examines the experiences of these youth and different stakeholders as part of efforts to enhance the quality of young people's experiences across OST settings. We aimed to enhance understanding of the phenomenology of the experiences of boys of color within a specific OST context, Scoutreach, and sought to elucidate how their experiences within this setting related to their engagement in the initiative and indicators of PYD (e.g., character attributes). Future research with Scoutreach and other programs that serve demographically similar youth may reveal greater insights into the developmental processes involved in youth program engagement.

Acknowledgements

of her dissertation committee: Richard M. Lerner (Chair), Ellen E. Pinderhughes, and Michael Cunningham. She would also like to thank her colleagues from the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development at Tufts University; in particular, Shaobing Su, Kaitlyn A. Ferris, and Jun Wang.

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Youth-Adult Partnerships in Work with Youth: An Overview

Heather L. Ramey
Humber College, Brock University, Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement
Heather L. Lawford
Bishop's University, Brock University, Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement
Wolfgang Vachon
Child & Youth Care Program, Humber College Resources

A B S T R A C T

Youth-adult partnerships in child and youth services engage the participants in collaborative, shared decision making, in areas such as governance, program planning and implementation, and advocacy. However, these partnerships often occur in isolation, and fail to engage in potentially useful, larger conversations about theory and research. Therefore, in an effort to provide common grounds for understanding and engaging in such partnerships, we offer an overview of current literature. We discuss definitions and discourses, describe models of youth-adult partnerships, and briefly consider current research on potential benefits for youth, adults, organizations, and communities. We also present challenges and promising practices for adult allies engaged in youth-adult partnerships.

Key words: youth-adult partnership, youth engagement, youth voice, adult ally, youth work

Introduction

Youth-adult partnerships in child and youth services situate young people as valued coparticipants in systems that have traditionally treated youth as recipients, by engaging youth and adults in collaborative decision making (Dupuis & Mann-Feder, 2013). Some of the services that have tended to promote youth-adult partnerships are public and mental health services, youth drop-ins, and recreation and community centers (Zeldin, Christens, & Powers, 2013).

Across various settings, youth can be engaged in governance, program planning and implementation, advocacy, or a range of other roles.

Although some research suggests that youth-adult partnerships are relatively common (e.g., Akiva, Cortina, & Smith, 2014), these partnerships appear to occur in isolation from one another, and at times without apparent foundation in current research literature. There are a number of examples in recent literature and practice manuals that do not reference existing definitions and frameworks (e.g., Pancer, Rose-Krasnor, & Loiselle, 2002; Rose-Krasnor, 2009; Zeldin et al., 2013), perhaps due to the cross-disciplinary nature of youth-adult partnerships.

To establish grounds for more unified efforts by researchers and practitioners, we herein offer an

overview of themes in literature and research on youth-adult partnerships, as they apply to direct work with young people, within a North American context. We begin with current definitions and language about youth-adult partnerships, then characterize the settings where youth-adult partnerships might occur, and describe models of and rationales for partnerships. We then briefly consider current research on potential benefits for youth and adults, and the organizational and community contexts of youth-adult partnerships. Finally, we discuss challenges and promising practices that arise from current literature on youth-adult partnerships. This review is meant to be useful to all stakeholders in the area of youth work, to offer a brief overview of the research literature as well as discuss some of the current conversations and controversies that are currently taking place in the literature.

Defining Youth-Adult Partnerships in Youth Work

In research articles and gray literature (e.g., published program reports) on youth-adult partnerships, a number of key terms can be found, including youth-adult partnerships, youth engagement, and adult allies (e.g., Pereira, 2007; Zeldin et al., 2013). Youth-adult partnership, a term used by some researchers, has recently been defined as "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" (Zeldin et al., 2013, p. 388). Zeldin and colleagues (2013) state that this definition is grounded in the "historical, community, and empirical foundations" of youth-adult partnership (p. 388), integrates the interpersonal nature of youth-adult partnership, applies across disciplines (e.g., psychology, civic engagement), and can be used across a variety of contexts.

In practice and in services for young people, youth engagement is the term perhaps most frequently used to refer to youth-adult partnerships (e.g., ACT for Youth Center of Excellence, 2017; Saito & Sullivan, 2011). Youth engagement has been defined as sustained, meaningful participation in an activity outside of the self (Pancer et al., 2002). In addition to the term youth engagement, other phrases are also used, including youth involvement in decision making, youth voice, youth empowerment, youth mobilization, and youth participation (Ministry Children and Family Development, 2013). Youth participation is a term used in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (The United Nations, 1989). Based on Articles 12 and 15 of the UNCRC, which outline young people's rights to participate in decisionmaking processes relevant to their lives, and to engage in political processes, Checkoway (2011) defined youth participation as "a process of involving young people in the institutions and decisions that affect their lives" (p. 341). Checkoway (2011) further argued that participation in contexts such as community agencies and intergenerational partnerships should be measured not only by scope,

scope, but also by quality. He thus added that participation is "the active engagement and real influence of young people, not to their passive presence or token roles in adult agencies" (p. 341).

A number of these terms have come under criticism. Some, such as youth engagement, youth participation, and youth empowerment, are unidirectional, implying a process of adults engaging youth, empowering youth, and evoking youth's participation (Ramey & Lawford, in press). Dupuis and Mann-Feder (2013) and Shaw-Raudoy and McGregor (2013) have highlighted some of the challenges and subtleties inherent in the use of the terms youth empowerment and youth-adult partnership. For example, Dupuis and Mann-Feder (2013) pointed out that the language of youth empowerment does not fit with the work done child welfare system, where adults are responsible for the welfare of the child, and are legally and morally obligated to make choices for them. In these contexts, young people are frequently involuntary recipients of services. Dupuis and Mann-Feder (2013) suggest that, given these circumstances, sweeping cultural changes to child protection would be required for the language of "empowerment" to be meaningful.

Shaw-Raudoy and McGregor (2013) argued that the term youth-adult partnership reinforces boundaries between youth and adults, and therefore reinforces youth as learners and adults as knowledge holders. They suggested that too much focus on youth-to-adult empowerment maintains youth's dependency upon adults, making it impossible for youth to become agents of change in their own right. Following Dupuis and Mann-Feder (2013) and Shaw-Raudoy and McGregor's (2013) arguments, however, none of the terms currently in use appear impervious to criticism. That is, in any organization that maintains adult-created mandates and structures, equal decision-making power and access to resources might be impossible. Despite limitations, we have adopted the term youth-adult partnership throughout the current paper. We acknowledge that this language might not reflect youth's or adults' experiences of power sharing but is inclusive of the youth and adults in youth-adult partnerships (see Ramey and Lawford [in press] for further discussion).

Adult allies is a term for adults engaged in youth-adult partnerships (e.g., Gordon, 2010; Khanna & McCart, 2007). Adult allies join in collaborative, equitable, mutual activities young people (Checkoway, 1996), sharing both power and accountability for the achievements and failures of the partnership (Khanna & McCart, 2007). Ethnographic research on the role of adult allies in youth social movements suggests that effective adult allies partner with youth, respecting their ideas and abilities, and open up spaces for youth voice in adult spaces, such as non-profit, education, and policy sectors (Gordon, 2016; Taft & Gordon, 2016).

Settings, Measurement, and Rates of Youth-Adult Partnership

Youth-adult partnerships occur in a variety of settings related to direct work with youth (Zeldin et al., 2013). These include national organizations, which might support youth projects, training, and conferences (e.g., The Students Commission of Canada, 2016). Youth-adult partnerships also can occur in politics and government, as a form of civic engagement, such as in city youth councils (e.g., Blanchet-Cohen, 2006). Finally, they can occur at local levels and in community organizations, such as youth services, community recreation and leisure organizations, and in youth advocacy. For example, former wards of the state might be engaged in advocacy and mentoring of other young people in care (Snow et al., 2013).

Youth involvement in youth-adult partnerships is multidimensional, as indicated by its measurement in research studies (Ramey, Rose-Krasnor, & Lawford, 2017; Zeldin, Krauss, Collura, Lucchesi, & Sulaiman, 2014). Youth's involvement has been measured quantitatively, through youth report (e.g., Ramey et al., 2017). Quantitative dimensions typically include youth voice or, similarly, youth input or ownership (Zeldin et al., 2014), as well as collaborative relationships with adults (e.g., Akiva et al., 2014). At times, researchers have described youth's program engagement as a third dimension, involving youth's perceptions of the work as valuable and of themselves as active participants (Ramey et al., 2017). Youth involvement in youth-adult partnerships also has been measured quantitatively through adult report although and at least one study has indicated that youth and adult reports of youth voice in program decisions were relatively well aligned (Akiva et al., 2014). Qualitative studies of youth involvement have similarly entailed interviews with youth and adults to uncover youth voice and engagement in the target program (e.g., Akiva & Petrokubi, 2016; Dawes & Larson, 2011).

Rates of youth involvement in youth-adult partnerships are not readily available. However, Akiva et al. (2014) conducted a survey of almost 1000 youth attending after school programs (average age 11.4) in the United States, in part to explore the prevalence of youth involvement in decision making. They found that almost 80% of these young people identified that they were involved in decision-making activities in their program. Depending on their role, youth volunteering can be considered a form of youth-adult partnership and, in the United States and Canada, young people consistently have high rates of volunteering, comparable to or higher than older age groups (Sinha, 2015; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). These numbers suggest that youth-adult partnerships are not uncommon.

Models of Youth-Adult Partnership

Several models of youth-adult partnerships exist, and can provide a basis for decision-making structures and organizational self-examination. Hart's (1992; 2008) landmark model (Figure 1), which took the form of a ladder, described and categorized children's and youth's participation in formal community programming. Hart's ladder was originally published in 1980, and was republished by UNICEF in 1992. It was intended to raise discussion on effective ways to involve children and youth up to the age of 18 in research, planning, and design of environments. Hart argued that, in North America and Europe, children and youth's informal participation with adults and meaningful community activity was limited because of children's and youth's segregation into schools and recreation programs. Hart's model outlined eight "rungs" in total. Five rungs represented meaningful participation: (a) children assigned roles, but kept informed; (b) children consulted and informed; (c) adult-initiated and shared childadult decisions; (d) child-initiated and directed; and (e) child initiated and shared child-adult directed participation. Hart (1992) also included three rungs for non-participation: manipulation, decoration, and tokenism. In tokenistic roles, children and youth appear to have meaningful participation, but actually do not have any opportunity to express their opinions, or their opinions have no influence. Hart (2008) stated that the primary benefit of his model was its utility in helping youth workers and other professionals rethink how they work with children and youth.

Children have the ideas, set up the project, and invite adults to join with them in making decisions.

8. Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults

Children have the initial idea and decide how the project is to be carried out. Adults are available but do not take charge.

7. Child-initiated and directed

Adults have the initial idea but children are involved in every step of the planning and implementation. Not only are their views considered, but they are also involved in taking the decisions.

6. Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children

The project is designed and run by adults but children are consulted. They have a full understanding of the process and their opinions are taken seriously.

5. Consulted and informed

Adults decide on the project and children volunteer for it. The children understand the project, and know who decided they should be involved and why. Adults respect their views.

4. Assigned but informed

Degrees of Participation

Non-participation

3. Tokenism

Children are asked to say what they think about an issue but have little or no choice about the way they express those views or the scope of the ideas they can express.

2. Decoration

Children take part in an event, e.g. by singing, dancing or wearing T-shirts with logos on, but they do not really understand the issues.

1. Manipulation

Children do or say what adults suggest they do, but have no real understanding of the issues, OR children are asked what they think, adults use some of their ideas but do not tell them what influence they have had on the final decision.
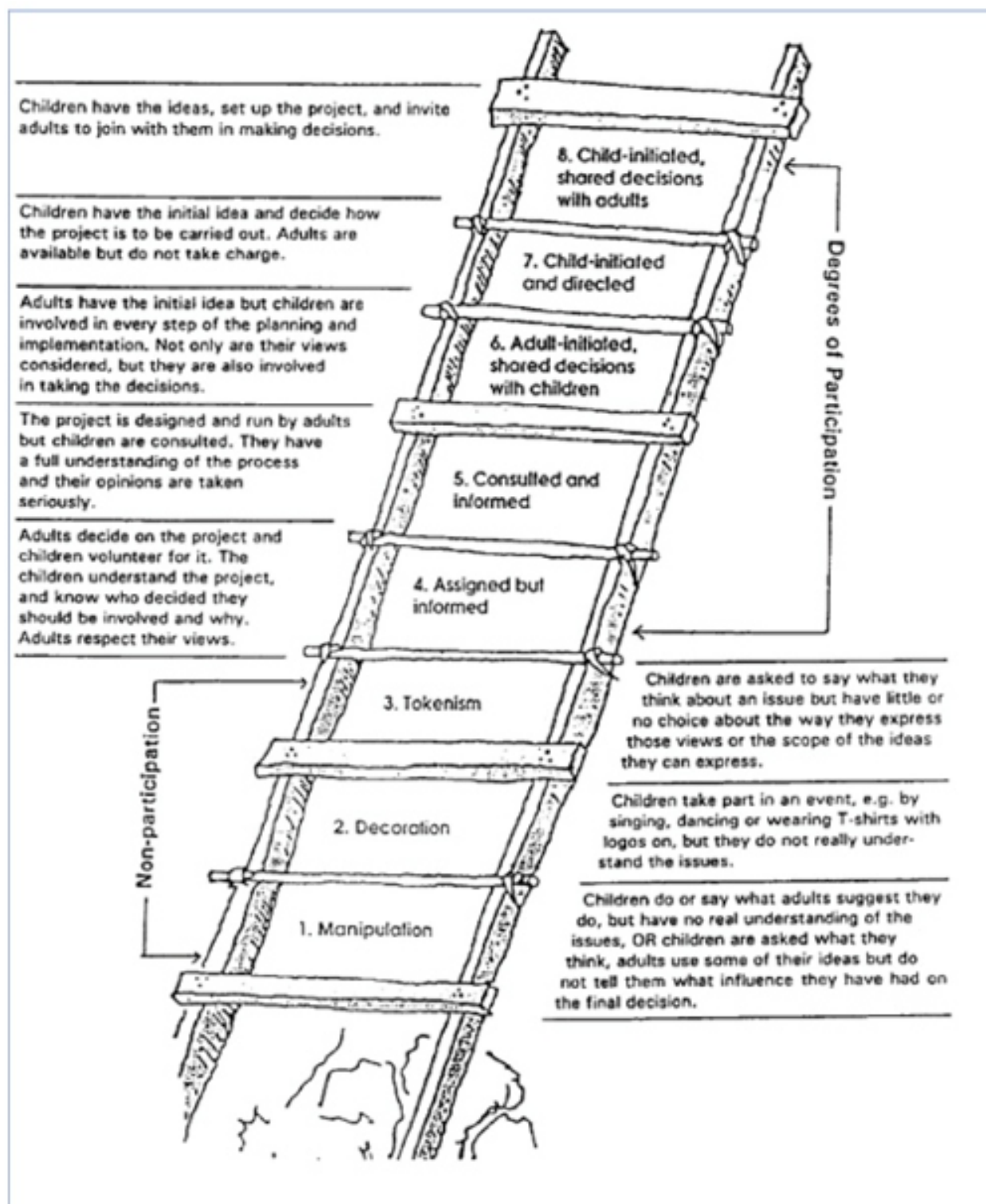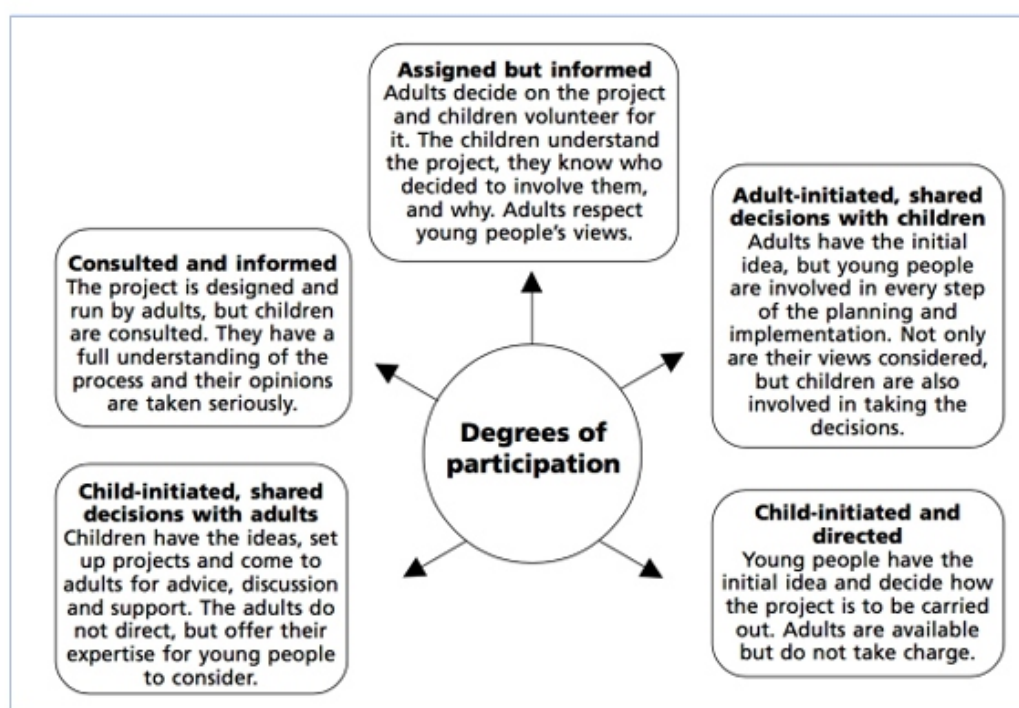
figure 1. Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation

Treseder's (1997; Treseder & Crowley, 2001) Degrees of Participation model (Figure 2) reconstructed Hart's five levels of participation, shifting them out of a ladder, and into a nonhierarchical frame. Treseder and Crowley (2001) stated that a circular model moved away from the assumption that there is

an ideal level of youth participation, as represented by Hart's (1992) highest rung. Instead, they argued that young people should have choice regarding their participation, and the appropriate degree of youth's participation should be tailored to the needs of participants, rather than aspiring to any specific ideal. In making this argument, they cite United Kingdom government reports that highlighted the importance of youth's own choice, priorities, and needs regarding their participation. Following Treseder's model, the best level of participation is whichever fits the needs of those involved.

Figure 2. Treseder's (1997) Degrees of Participation (Save the Children)

In 2001 Shier proposed a model of participation (Figure 3) based on children's participation rights and the UNCRC. Shier argued that the model, which focuses more on organizational indicators of youth participation than Hart's (1992) model and produces a sequence of questions, provides a more practical tool for organizations. Unlike Hart's model, Shier's model did not include levels of non-participation. Shier's model included five levels: (a) children listened to; (b) children supported in expressing views; © children's views taken into account; (d) children involved in decision making; and (e) shared child-adult decision making. Within each of these five levels, Shier included three stages of commitment: openings (e.g., adult readiness to share power); opportunities (e.g., a procedure for shared power); and obligations (e.g., a policy requirement for shared power). Shier's model highlighted the importance of policies, as formal organizational requirements, emphasizing different aspects of youth participation.

Figure 3. Shier's (2001) Pathways to Participation
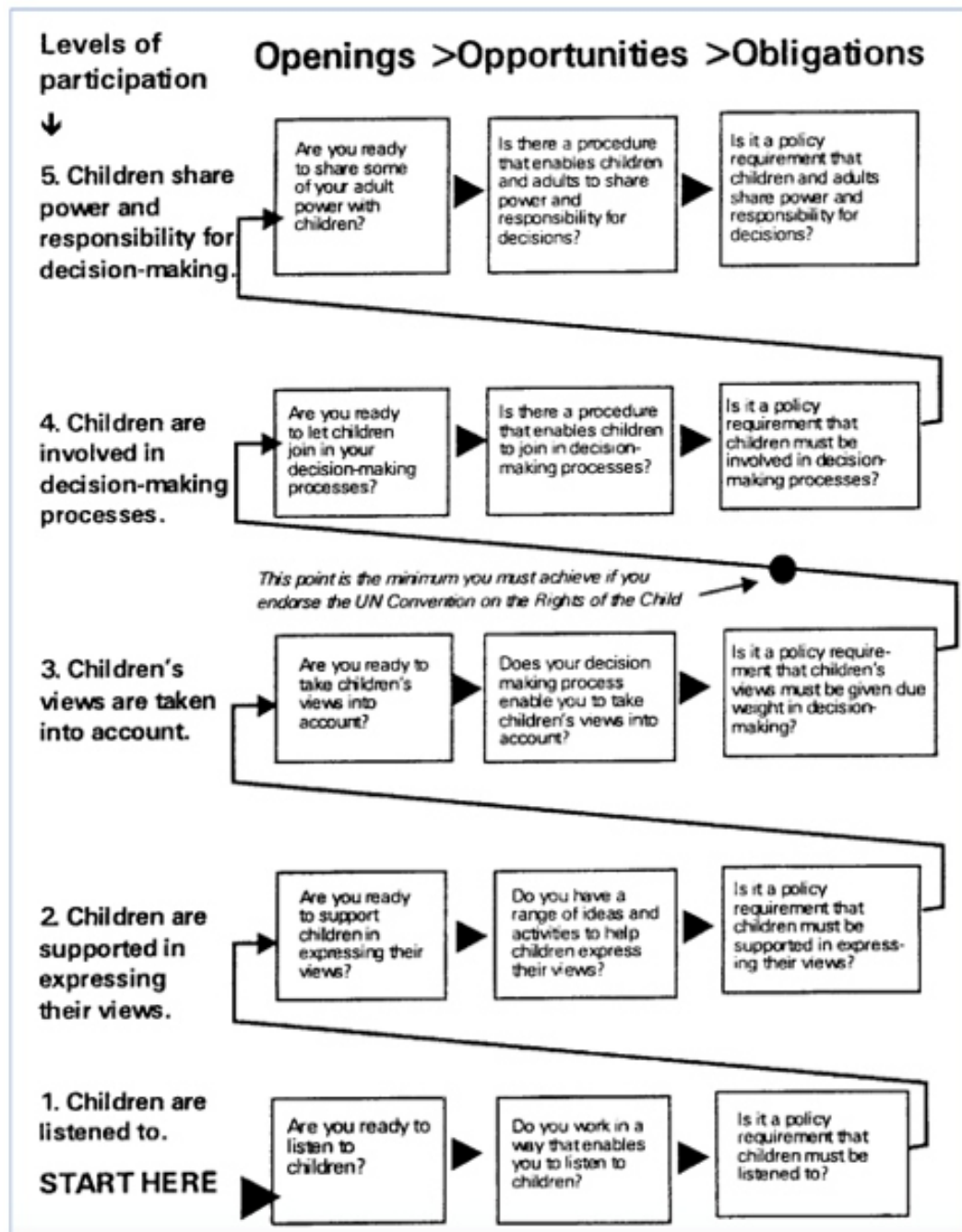
More recently, Wong, Zimmerman, and Parker (2010) presented a model that uses what they describe as an empowerment framework (Zimmerman, 2000). An empowerment framework, as they define it, focuses on shifted control and access to resources, in both its process and outcomes. It also takes into account sociopolitical forces as influencing the quality of people's lives, and requires that individuals become engaged with the organizations and communities that affect their lives. Empowerment thus becomes a process toward shared control as a way to initiate change. In that shared, transactional process, youth and adults bring their own strengths to decision making. Youth's strengths might include

culturally specific understandings, and adults' strengths might include experience with organizational practices and procedures. Wong et al.'s Typology of Youth Participation and Empowerment (TYPE) is represented as a pyramid, or inverted "V" (Figure 4). The pyramid is organized as a continuum, with greater adult and less youth control represented on the left, and greater youth and less adult control represented on the right. Shared, "pluralistic" adult-youth control is centered, at the apex of the pyramid. Wong et al. argued that pluralistic control is ideal, based on current research findings regarding youth development and project success.
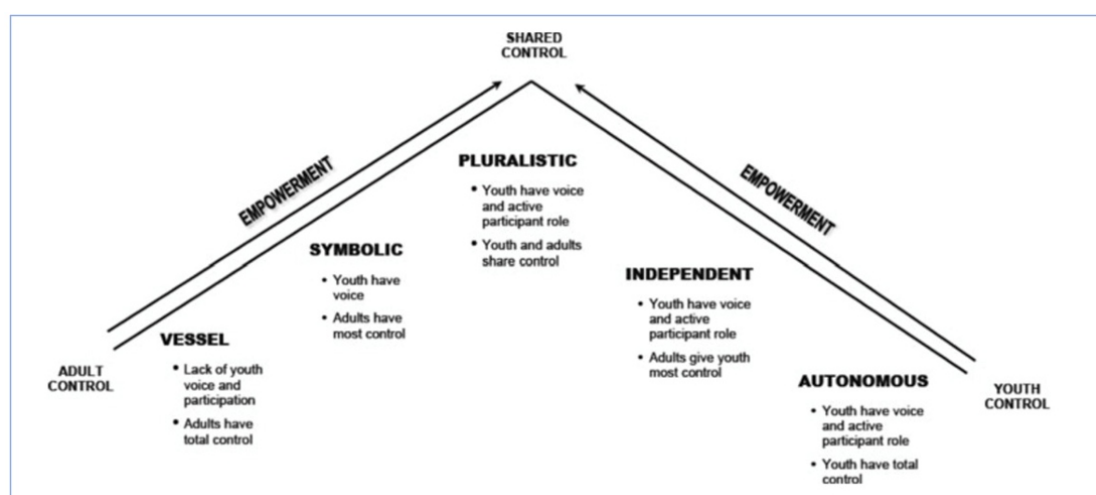

Figure 4. Wong et al.'s (2010) TYPE Pyramid

The principal controversy regarding model choice, described by the authors of each of the models, concerns the ideal level of youth and adult decision making and control. The arguments focus on whether all levels are inherently equivalent, compared to a hierarchical framework, and whether youth power is preferable to adult control. Both Hart (2008) and Wong et al. (2010) critiqued models, such as Treseder's (1997), which treat all degrees of participation asequal. The authors argued that tokenism should not be treated as positive, for example, and that shared youth-adult decisions are clearly better than having children in assigned but informed roles (e.g., Hart, 2008). Hart (2008) defended the location of child-initiated, shared decision making with adults, as the highest rung of the ladder, stating that that the highest degree of citizenship for youth or adults occurs when people recognize the merits of inviting others to join decision-making processes because issues affect them, too. However, Hart (2008) also stated that the appropriate rung of the ladder depends on the age, abilities, and preferences of the child, and the task at hand. In contrast, Wong et al. (2010) argued that models in which youth ideally have primary decision-making power undervalue the contribution of adults and that shared power is ideal for youth empowerment and youth development. The authors stated that research has indicated that

initiatives are more likely to be successful (that is, with less struggle, risk, and fewer disempowering outcomes) when there is a high level of support from adults, and that youth require opportunities to develop skills around organizing projects. Wong et al. (2010) further argued that youth and adults each bring different skills to the table, and decision making should be equitable, although it cannot be equal. Dilemmas regarding the ideal balance of power (i.e., youth-led, adult-led, or shared) in youthadult partnerships are evident not only in discussions of models, but also in and programming. Larson and Walker (2010) described adult allies' dilemmas in knowing when to step back and how to provide guidance without interfering with youth ownership. Larson and Angus (2011) subsequently described the need to provide non-directive assistance or, put differently, to lead from behind. Youth described the need to have some structure and sufficient adult support (e.g., with problem solving), as well as the ability to use adults' access to resources that might be unavailable to youth (Ramey & Rose-Krasnor, 2015). Research has also, however, pointed to difficulties in getting adults to relinquish their existing power in decision making (Roach, Wureta, & Ross, 2013).

Rationales for Youth-Adult Partnerships

Benefits to Youth

Youth-adult partnerships are hypothesized to benefit youth's development, as youth are engaged in structured activities; developing skills; adopting new roles and responsibilities; building relationships with peers and adults; learning about values and ideals; and taking action on behalf of others (Akiva et al., 2014; Hardy, Pratt, Pancer, Olsen, & Lawford, 2011; Krauss et al., 2014; Zeldin, Krauss, Kim, Collura, & Abdullah, 2015). Lawford, Ramey, Rose-Krasnor, and   initiatives are more likely to be successful (that is, with less struggle, risk, and fewer disempowering outcomes) when there is a high level of support from adults, and that youth require opportunities to develop skills around organizing projects. Wong et al. (2010) further argued that youth and adults each bring different skills to the table, and decision making should be equitable, although it cannot be equal. Dilemmas regarding the ideal balance of power (i.e., youth-led, adult-led, or shared) in youthadult partnerships are evident not only in discussions of models, but also in empirical literature, and programming. Larson and Walker (2010) described adult allies' dilemmas in knowing when to step back and how to provide guidance without interfering with youth ownership. Larson and Angus (2011) subsequently described the need to provide non-directive assistance or, put differently, to lead from behind. Youth described the need to have some structure and sufficient adult support (e.g., with problem solving), as well as the ability to use adults' access to resources that might be unavailable to youth (Ramey & Rose-Krasnor, 2015).

Youth also have been found to develop new friendships through their participation, and to gain interpersonal skills, including learning to listen and work collaboratively with others 2014; Howe et al., 2011). Youth involvement in youth-adult partnerships also has been connected to young people's beliefs that they are able to express their thoughts and feelings to others, and to their level of empathy (Akiva et al., 2014). Youth also appear to gain connections at a community level. Krauss et al. (2014) found that supportive youth-adult relationships in youth-adult partnerships were related to greater community connectedness broadly within community, with both peers and adults. Youth organizing is a specific form of youth-adult partnership focused on advocacy and political change, and appears to have specific benefits. In comparison to traditional youth development programs, youth organizing initiatives have a greater focus on grassroots empowerment and on community change, which tend to focus more on individual youth change (Gambone et al., 2006). Participation in youth organizing has been related to youth's perception that they have greater knowledge of their community, more opportunities to give back, and greater capacity for community problem solving, than through more traditional youth development programs (Gambone et al., 2006).

Youth in youth-adult partnerships have reported additional perceived benefits over the course of their involvement, which Larson and colleagues (e.g., Larson & Angus, 2011) have argued indicates cognitive and emotional development. They have found that youth report increased self-regulation in focus, attention, and strategic thinking on tasks during their participation (Larson & Angus, 2011). Youth's skills appear to develop as youth face real-world challenges in youth-adult partnerships (Larson & Angus, 2011). These challenges require that young people use higher-order thinking to appraise the challenges they are facing, that they maintain their motivation in working toward their goals, and manage emotions, such as anger towards others in the partnership, or disappointment when facing setbacks (Larson, 2011). This process of taking on tasks, experiencing challenge, and maintaining motivation, appears to lead to the development of greater responsibility (Salusky et al., 2014). Relatedly, youth's feelings that they are engaged in the youth-adult partnership, in particular, also have been linked to identity development (Ramey et al., 2017).

A number of studies indicate that young people have felt empowered by their involvement in youth-adult partnerships, at least in part because their participation was seen as giving them credibility and legitimacy (e.g., Blanchet-Cohen, Manolson, & Shaw, 2014; Howe et al., 2011). A qualitative study by Cargo, Grams, Ottoson, Ward, and Green (2003) showed that empowerment in youth-adult partnerships occurred though a adults created a welcoming atmosphere, supporting youth's voice and responsible action. More recently, collaborative youth-adult relationships and youth voice have been related to youth's general levels of empowerment and personal agency, outside of the youth-adult partnership

(Krauss et al., 2014). However, youth's perception of empowerment might depend upon the youth-adult partnership model being used, and is more likely to occur in youth-driven rather than adult-driven collaborations (Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005). Greater voice as early as possible in the design phase of projects and partnerships also appears to increase the likelihood of youth's feelings of empowerment (Morciano, Scardigno, Manuti, & Pastore, 2014).

Research on youth development in youth-adult partnerships suggests that youth derive benefits from both youth-led and adult-led decision making, but that these benefits differ (Larson et al., 2005). Larson et al. (2005) compared an adult-led theatre program and a youth-led program. They found that in the adult-led program, youth learned specific skills related to the project (e.g., voice projection, painting techniques) and also gained self-confidence and interpersonal skills. In the youth-led project, in contrast, youth reported learning leadership skills and reported feeling more empowered.

Potential benefits appear to depend not only on the activities of the youth-adult partnership, but also on the organizational context. For example, Ramey et al. (2017) found that the connection between youth involvement and successful identity was stronger in youth services and recreation centers than in health organizations, suggesting that different types of organizations provide different contexts for youth's development. This suggests that it is not just about the adult(s), or what youth and adults are doing; the broader organization appears to make a difference for youth's development. It is unclear at this point what specific role the organization plays, but among the factors that might make a difference are the integration of youth-adult partnership principles at the broader organizational level (Roach et al., 2013) and ongoing contact with youth as a regular part of organizational practices (Ramey et al., 2017). In summary, research to date suggests that participating in youth-adult partnerships has benefits for youth development, although it might depend on how and where youth are engaged.

Benefits for Organizations and Society

The grounds for promoting youth-adult partnerships go beyond the wide-ranging benefits to youth. Youth's contributions to the contexts of their lives, however, and particularly contexts such as organizational settings, appear to have received less attention from researchers youth's developmental benefits. A review by Ramey (2013) found that youth-adult partnerships were perceived to have benefits for services (e.g., youth programs, recreational and community organizations), adult allies and other staff, and organizations. For services, included more service utilization and greater connection with youth, leading to improvements. For staff, perceived benefits included increased motivation and confidence. However, it should be noted that involvement in youth-adult partnerships was also

perceived to increase stress, in part due to lack of staff training, time, and other resources. Finally, perceived benefits for organizations involved in youth-adult partnerships included positive reputation in the community and improvements in achieving organizational goals. More recent (Iwasaki et al., 2016) similarly concluded that youth-adult partnerships helped build organizational capacity in community organization settings, strengthening the potential to meet organizational goals.

Youth-adult partnerships also appear to have benefits for broader communities, beyond the boundaries of the youth-adult partnership and the organizational setting. For example, a study of youth-adult partnerships in youth journalism concluded that youth's writing informed readership, which included both local youth and adults. Articles covered topics, such as abuse against women, that youth saw as important to young people and the larger community (Neely, 2015). Youth also perceived their activities in youth-adult partnerships to change the perceptions of other youth and adults in the community, by demonstrating youth's capacities to make contributions in the community, and by youth serving as role models for others (BlanchetCohen et al., 2014; Neely, 2015).

Building a Civil Society

A further rationale for participation in youth-adult partnerships is the importance of building a civil society (Zeldin, 2004). In a civil society, organizations and society work better when all perspectives, including youth's, are represented in governance and problem solving (Zeldin, 2004).

Supporting Youth Rights to Participate

Youth-adult partnerships are a means of supporting youth's right to participate (The United Nations, 1989). Article 12 of the UNCRC enshrines children and youth's right to participate in all decision-making processes relevant to their lives and to influence decisions affecting them, in accordance with their age and development. In addition, Article 13 states that children have the right to freedom of expression, including seeking, receiving, and sharing information, and Article 15 states that children have the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly. Checkoway (2011) argued that these articles recognize young people's rights to share perspectives and to participate as decision makers in broader society. Rights to express political opinions, engage in political processes, and participate in decision making require that youth have necessary information about available options and their consequences. These rights also require that youth have opportunities to gain skills and confidence related to these rights, as a prerequisite for informed and free decision making (Checkoway, 2011).

Funding Requirements

A final rationale is related to funding. Although historically, funding for youth-adult partnerships within the settings of child and youth care has been limited (Blanchet-Cohen, Linds, MannFeder, & Yuen, 2013; Dupuis & Mann-Feder, 2013), youth engagement has become a program requirement for some funders, both for established programs or for new funding opportunities (e.g., Laidlaw Foundation, 2016).

Challenges to Implementation

Researchers have identified several practical challenges to youth-adult partnerships. At youth and adult levels, barriers include constraints on time, as youth balance multiple scheduling demands (Larson & Walker, 2010). A further barrier is sustaining youth's motivation over time and even when decisions and planning are not successful (Larson & Walker, 2010). Adult allies have reported the need to manage group dynamics, as youth might challenge group norms and expectations, and to balance structure and guidance with youth ownership over (Collins, Augsberger, & Gecker, 2016; Larson, Walker, Rusk, & Diaz, 2015). Adults were found to be resistant to sharing power and treating youth as partners (Collins et al., 2016). Youth were also found to be reluctant to take on decision-making power, out of doubt about their actual levels of control in decision making, as egalitarian relationships with adults fall outside their prior experiences, because of actual lack of power, or experiences of adult resistance (Collins et al., 2016; Roach et al., 2013).

Youth ownership over projects might be presented with constraints at organizational or systemic levels. Smith, Peled, Hoogeveen, Cotman, & the McCreary Centre Society (2009) found that, once youth had a "seat at the table" in decision making, they could be frustrated by the limits of their decision-making power. Larson et al. (2015) also described adult allies' challenges in interfacing with organizational mandates, and the agencies upon which project funding may depend. A finding by Morgan (2016), that the issues and themes that youth choose to focus on could differ from the agendas of the funding bodies, or even be critical of them, suggest the nature of engagement sought by funding bodies (e.g., consultation versus shared decision making) should be clarified.

Promising Practices for Implementation

Research points to a number of promising practices for adults and organizations engaged in youth-adult partnerships. We present several below

1. Maintain youth at the center of decision making. In response to the need to learn to share power more equitably, as well as to maintain youth's ownership over initiatives, successful adult allies have been found to be youth-centered (Collins et al., 2016; Larson et al., 2015). Experienced adult allies demonstrate the ability to shift dilemmas into opportunities, engaging youth in problem solving around these issues (Larson et al., 2015). For example, adult advice-giving is restrained, and aimed at helping succeed in projects, avoiding taking on the role of an authority figure, and supporting youth learning to solve problems on their own (Larson, Izenstark, Rodriguez, & Perry, 2016).

2. Provide resources, including but not limited to training for youth and adults, support, and time. Practitioners have reported the need for more resources for youthadult partnership work, including training and time (Larson et al., 2015; Ramey, 2013). Youth work practitioner and adult ally roles are not the same (Ramey & Rose-Krasnor, 2015). Further, youth-adult partnerships might focus on issues with which practitioners lack familiarity (e.g., human rights, environmental issues) (Cooper, Nazzari, Kon Kam ing, & Pettigrew, 2013), creating the need for topic-specific training. Additionally, adult allies appear to be expected to fit youth-adult partnership work into already busy workloads, creating additional stress (Ramey, 2013). This requires that policies and organizational practices provide sufficient resources and flexibility to support the needs of successful youth-adult partnerships (Heffernan et al., 2017).

3. Adult allies should view their work through a social justice, anti-oppressive
lens. As reflected in the definition of youth-adult partnerships, as involving involve youth and adults acting collectively in social justice, organizational or community work (Zeldin et al., 2013), the concept of ally contains a social justice agenda. This explicit awareness of the socio-cultural systems of oppression that impact young people can be absent in other forms of work with youth. To be an ally is to engage actively towards ending oppressions. In writing of being allies outside of youth social services, some advocates have stated that members of the privileged group need to take direction from the oppressed group, as the oppressed understand their oppression better than the oppressor (e.g., Bishop, 2015). A phrase from disability studies (and disability which has been adopted by some people working with children and youth (Vachon & McConnell, in press) is "nothing about us without us." This framing of working with young people requires adult allies to understand the historical and current oppression of young people, and how adults have contributed to this oppression. Further, adult allies need to know how to take direction from young people, while simultaneously integrating and supporting the many elements required for effective youth-adult partnerships. We note that this understanding of "allyship" might pose challenges to seeing the relationship(s) as shared, equitable, and mutual, and potentially moves away from youth-adult partnership and more towards what Hart (1992) identified as youth-

adult partnership and more towards what Hart (1992) identified as youth-initiated and directed.

4. Integrate the principles underlying youth-adult partnerships across the broader organization. A challenge exists in the realm of organizational culture, where governance and agendas are adult driven (Cooper et al., 2013; Roach et al., 2013). This might be attributable to the reality that in many organizations, youth-adult partnerships are an additional aspect of some programs, or exist as stand-alone programs within larger organizations (e.g., Heffernan et al., 2017). Blanchet et al. (2013) argued that youth's engagement in youth-adult partnership should be extended "beyond a mere trend or project, to constitute a value system that underlies practice" (p. 321). Roach et al. (2013) argued that the principles underlying authentic youth-adult partnerships need to be integrated broadly across the organizations.

5. Engage the broader community. Successful youth-adult partnerships engage the broader community. The community is an important context of youth's lives, and youth should therefore be engaged in community decision making (Checkoway, 2011). For many organizations, too, achievement of program goals is strengthened by engaging the broader community, as community engagement furthers advocacy work, and engages larger numbers of youth in the work of the youth-adult partnership (Ramey, 2013).

6. Demonstrate an actual effect, through program evaluation. Successful youth adult partnerships demonstrate a real effect over decisions, process, and/or outcomes (Checkoway, 2011). Youths' and adults' perception that substantive change is occurring appears to be important in contributing to youths' and adults' sense of empowerment, and add to the belief that the partnership is meaningful (Collins et al., 2016; Cooper et al., 2013). Demonstrating an actual effect requires evaluation. Moreover, evaluation should be implemented at program onset, rather than as an afterthought (Arnold, Cater, & Braverman, 2017).

7. Consider the unique needs of specific youth-adult partnerships and interest areas. Specific contexts require their own considerations. For example, Howe et al. (2011) found that practitioners in a children's mental health organization with a youthadult partnership had concerns pertaining to youth's presence and roles while in the physical office space, and confidentiality regarding current clients. This suggests that, in these specific settings, youth-adult partnerships also require open communication and planning to address concerns regarding boundaries and confidentiality. All partnerships must consider their own unique needs regarding the form of the youth-adult partnership. This includes the choice of models, and agreement in how decision making is shared among youth and adults. Such agreement requires ongoing communication, to ensure that models and decision-making processes continue to be effective (e.g., see

Ramey & Rose-Krasnor, 2015).

Conclusion

In this paper, we provided an overview of youth-adult partnerships, in a primarily North American context. Youth-adult partnerships are an increasingly important area for practice and research in the field of youth development, with value for youth and adults. Despite significant pressure to involve youth in decision making, there are limited best practices available for practitioners to follow. To address this gap, we have herein provided a cross-disciplinary overview of some key issues and relevant findings in youth-adult partnerships as a reference.

We reviewed current definitions, and described existing youth-adult partnership models and rationales for youth-adult partnerships. We reviewed research on benefits as well as challenges, and end with recommendations for researchers and practitioners. Taken together, research indicates that youth-adult partnerships should maintain youth at the center of decision making, provide sufficient resources, integrate youth-adult partnership throughout the larger organization and engage the broader community, operate through a social justice lens, evaluate program effectiveness, and address the unique needs of each youth-adult partnership. Integrating youth-adult partnerships throughout the organization; taking a critical, social justice approach; and establishing program effects might be areas particularly in need of focus by existing organizations and peer-reviewed literature (e.g., see Arnold et al., 2017). We hope that, when organizations engage in partnership, they can use existing literature as a basis for their work, and find models and practices that will work for their organizations.

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The Career Maturity of 4-H Healthy Lifestyles Program Participants

Courtney F. Dodd
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service College Station, TX
Summer F. Odom
Texas A&M University College Station, TX
Christopher T. Boleman
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service College Station, TX

A B S T R A C T

This study examined the readiness of youth involved in the 4-H healthy lifestyles program to make career decisions, identified as career maturity. A random sample of youth involved in the 4-H healthy lifestyles program was used to participate in the research study, which entailed the completion of an online survey. The findings indicate that youth in the 4-H healthy lifestyles program have a high level of career maturity with some significant differences found based upon age; however, no significant differences were found based upon gender or years of involvement in the 4-H program.

Introduction

Young people need to be connected to programs, services, activities, and a support system that helps them learn about the various options available after completing school. Such career preparation and work-based learning experiences are essential for youth to develop aspirations and make informed choices about careers (Department of Labor, 2013a). According to the United States Department of Labor (2013b), all youth need information on career options, including

• Career assessments to help identify youths' school and post-school preferences and interests
• Structured exposure to post-secondary education and other life-long learning opportunities
• Exposure to career opportunities, including information about educational and entry requirements
• Training designed to improve job-seeking skills and work-place basic skills.

Exposure to career options is a major component of the Texas 4-H Youth Development Program and can help youth develop career maturity.

4-H and Career Development

The Texas 4-H Youth Development Program gives youth the opportunity to explore a wide variety of project areas. Within the positive learning experiences offered through each 4-H project youth are also given the opportunity to explore higher education and career opportunities which may influence future

life decisions.

Various studies have identified the positive impact 4-H involvement has had on the choice of and success with one's career. Williams, et al. (2010) discovered that long-term participation in the 4-H Youth Development Program, such as 4-H community clubs and after-school programming, has a positive impact on the career choice of youth ages 14-19. Their findings indicated that 4-H exposes youth to specific careers and occupational experiences. However, the results also demonstrate that youth in 4-H learn about careers not only through participation in 4-H but also through non-4-H activities.

In another research study, alumni perceived the greatest impact of 4-H to be general career awareness concerning recognition of interests and abilities leading to a career, knowledge of career exploration resources, career considerations, and a sense of need to make a career choice (Matulis, Hedges, Barrick, & Smith, 1988).

Rockwell, Stohler and Rudman (1984) studied a sample of Nebraska 4-H alumni to determine how they felt 4-H helped them select a career and assume adulthood roles 10 to 20 years after their 4-H experiences. It was found that 4-H activities and people involved with leading the 4-H program, including 4-H leaders and Extension Agents, influenced their choice of a career. As youth remained in 4-H over a longer period of years, they were more likely to indicate that 4-H influenced their choice of an area of study or their selection of an institution of higher education.

Career Maturity

Career exploration has been noted as a prerequisite to achieving career maturity (Ochs, & Roessler, 2004), which is one aspect of career development (Super, 1990). Being career mature implies that an individual is able to accomplish the tasks that are appropriate for his or her age and stage of development (Brown, & Lent, 2005).

According to Super (1990), career maturity is defined as "an individual's readiness to cope with the developmental tasks for that stage of development" (p. 213). It involves an individual's ability to make appropriate career choices, including awareness of what is required to make a career decision and the degree to which one's choices are both realistic and consistent over time (King, 1989; Ohler, Levinson, & Hays, 1996).

Career maturity has also been referred to as the extent to which an individual has acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to make intelligent, realistic career choices. It is the readiness of an individual to

make an informed, age-appropriate career decision and cope with appropriate career development tasks (Luzzo, 1993; Savickas, 1984).

Career maturity can be broken down into stages, along a continuum, classified as exploratory, establishment, maintenance, and decline stages. Adolescents are in what is called an exploratory stage of career maturity, which is made up of sub-stages, including and described by Super (1955) and Crites (1973) as:

• Orientation to vocational choice: This stage involves one being concerned with making a choice and developing awareness that a choice needs to be made and what factors may influence the choice.
• Information and planning about preferred occupation: Within this sub-stage, adolescents are acquiring specific information about their preferred occupation, such as the requirements, duties, work conditions and opportunities. Mapping out a plan for what needs to be accomplished in high school, post-high school and entry into the profession is also explored.
• Increasing consistency of vocational preferences: Adolescents within this sub-stage are developing consistency with their preferences over time. Their vocational preferences are also becoming more consistent within an occupational field.
• Crystallization of traits relevant to vocational choices: Adolescents developing career maturity will begin to more clearly define their interests and accept the responsibility they have to make a career choice.
• Increasing wisdom of vocational preferences: In this sub-stage, viewed as the most complex and difficult to manage yet most satisfying, a relationship among one's activities, abilities, interests and preferences is formed as the adolescent gains knowledge of his or her accessibility of their preferred occupation.

A variety of research studies have focused on the numerous correlates of career maturity, including age (Stern, Norman, & Zevon, 1991) and gender (King, 1989; King, 1990; Patton, & Creed, 2001), as well as personal characteristics, such as self-esteem (Ohler, Levinson, & Sanders, 1995). While various researchers have discovered girls to show more career maturity at a given age than boys (Omvig, & Thomas, 1977; Westbrook, Cutts, Madison, & Arcia, 1980), Erol and Orth (2011) found male adolescents to have higher self-esteem than female adolescents.

Patton and Creed (2001) found developmental differences with 15-17 year olds scoring higher on career maturity attitude and knowledge than the 12-14 year olds. King (1989) found that while age was the most important determinant of career maturity for boys, a sense of family cohesion and an internal locus of

and an internal locus of control were the main determinants for girls.

Because of the role the 4-H Youth Development Program plays in the career development of youth, it is important to examine the impact if any, involvement in the 4-H program has on the development of youths' career maturity.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to examine the readiness of youth involved in the 4-H healthy lifestyles program to make career decisions, identified as career maturity. The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. Determine the career maturity level of youth involved in the 4-H healthy lifestyles program.
2. Explore gender differences in career maturity of youth involved in the 4-H healthy lifestyles program.
3. Compare the career maturity of youth involved in the 4-H healthy lifestyles program based upon age.
4. Assess if there is a relationship between the career maturity of youth involved in the 4-H healthy lifestyles program based upon the number of years in 4-H.

Methodology

Healthy living has been a part of the 4-H and Youth Development Program since its inception in 1902 (4-H National Headquarters, 2011). On the national level, the 4-H Healthy Living Mission Mandate "engages youth and families through access and opportunities to achieve physical, social, and emotional well-being" (4-H National Headquarters, 2011, p. 1). In Texas, the healthy lifestyles program encompasses the food and nutrition, health and safety projects (Texas 4-H & Youth Development, 2013b). Through involvement in these projects, youth are given the opportunity to participate in educational activities, career camps, contests, and serve in leadership positions.

Population and Sample

The target audience for this study was youth who met the following criteria
• Member of the Texas 4-H Youth Development Program in the current (2012-2013) year;
• Classified as a senior 4-H member (at least 14 years of age, but not 19 at the start of the 2012-2013 4-H year);
• Enrolled in at least one of the 4-H healthy lifestyles-related projects; and

• Have an e-mail address.

The online 4-H registration and enrollment management system used by the Texas 4-H program was used to determine 4-H members that met the criteria for the research study. The system stores contact information, demographics, as well as program involvement for each 4-H member.

From the sampling frame of 2,590 youth, a random sample of 350 4-H members was selected to participate in the research study, representing 155 counties.

Instrumentation

The Career Maturity Inventory (CMI) Counseling Form C was used to assess the maturity of 4-H members enrolled in the 4-H healthy lifestyles program. The original CMI was developed to assess career attitudes and competencies of children and adolescents in grades 5-12 and was the first paper-and-pencil measure of vocational development used to measure a student's readiness to make occupational choices (Savickas, & Porfeli, 2011). Savickas and Porfeli (2011) point out that pertaining to the CMI as youths' ability to adapt increases, so too does their general readiness to make realistic occupational choices.

The instrument consists of 24 statements about choosing the kind of job or work one will probably do when they finish school, to which respondents either agree or disagree, earning a point for each statement answered correctly. The instrument is made up of four sub-scales, each consisting of six statements, and produces five different scores:

• **CCC score**: This total score for career maturity is based on the 18 items in the concern, curiosity and confidence scales.
• **Concern:** The extent to which an individual is oriented to and involved in the process of making career decisions. Becoming aware of choices that must be made in the immediate and intermediate future is the first step in the career decision-making process.
• **Curiosity:** The extent to which an individual is exploring the work world and seeking information about occupations and their requirements. Confusion about the career decision-making process can be minimized when one explores their own abilities and interests along with occupations that fit the individual's personality and talents.
• **Confidence**: The extent to which an individual has faith in his or her ability to make wise career decisions and realistic occupation choices. When one is confident in the career decision-making process

it means he or she can anticipate being successful in overcoming challenges and problems he or she may encounter.

• **Consultation:** This score measures the extent to which an individual seeks assistance in career decision-making by requesting information or advice from others. The score for these six questions are not included in the total adaptability score in recognition of one's preference to consult significant people in their lives while others choose to make decisions on their own (Savickas, & Porfeli, 2011).

In a research study conducted by Savickas and Porfeli (2011), the coefficient alpha for the CMI Form C total score was .86. The authors of this research study ran a Cronbach Coefficient Alpha reliability coefficient, which was calculated to be .82.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was performed using an online instrument with the researcher following the guidelines for web survey implementation proposed by Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2009). This included recruitment and follow-up e-mails delivered to participants after one, two and three weeks, which included a link to the online survey. Since the responses were anonymous, the researcher could not follow-up solely with non-respondents. After three weeks, an was sent by the state 4-H leader, endorsing the research study and encouraging participation. A final reminder was sent to all participants one week later, notifying them of the final day to complete the survey and provide feedback. The survey was closed after being open for four and one-half weeks.

Due to a low response rate (28.5%) after four and one-half weeks, additional measures were taken to increase participation. The researcher used procedures outlined by Lindner, Murphy, and Briers (2001), specifically using method three to compare early respondents with laterespondents. Phone calls were made to all participants in the random sample to introduce and remind youth about the research study and asked if they had completed the survey. After phone calls were placed, one final reminder was e-mailed to all participants about the survey with one final opportunity to complete it. This process resulted in an additional 70 (20%) participants responding to the online survey, which is greater than the minimum of 30 responses recommended by Lindner, et al. (2001).

The results of an independent samples t-test did not reveal any significant differences between early respondents and late respondents at the p<.05 level.

Findings

Profile of Participants

Of the 127 complete and usable responses, 91 (71.1%) were female and 36 (28.3%) were male. The mean age of participants was 15.91 years (SD=1.21) with ages ranging from 14 to 18 years and grades nine through 12 represented. The average years in 4-H among the 127 participants was 7.43 years with responses ranging from one year to 10 years with the most frequented response being eight years.

Objective One

The first objective was to determine the career maturity level of youth involved in the 4-H healthy lifestyles program. The overall mean score on the CMI was calculated at 17.94 (SD=4.21, n=127). Career maturity scores were calculated for each of the sub-scales of the CMI, as well as the CCC score, which is based on the sum of the concern, curiosity and confidence sub-scales, as noted by Savickas and Porfeli (2011). Participants ranked highest for the sub-scale of concern, which is the first step in the career decision-making process (Savickas, & Porfeli, 2011). Although the lowest sub-scale was confidence, the participants still outscored the high school norm.

When compared to the study provided by Savickas and Porfeli (2011). More to the point, it is evident that the 4-H members scored higher on three of the four sub-scales. Participants scored lower than the high school norm on the consultation construct. Career Maturity Inventory scores are presented and compared to the high school norms in Table 1.

Table 1 Rank Order of Career Maturity Inventory Sub-Scale Mean Scores (N=127)

Sub-Scale	Mean	SD	Norm Mean[c]	Norm SD[c]
CCC[a]	13.65	4.01	9.88	1.28
Concern[b]	5.39	1.13	4.6	1.4
Curiosity[b]	4.79	1.72	2.72	2.56
Consultation[b]	4.31	1.50	4.94	1.4
Confidence[b]	3.46	1.96	2.56	1.97

Objective Two

To meet objective two, the researchers explored gender differences in career maturity of youth involved

in the 4-H healthy lifestyles program. A t-test was calculated to determine if any significant differences existed between males and females for the scores associated with the CMI. Mean scores that were compared for gender include the total score, CCC, and then each of the four sub-scales.

The results are displayed in Table 2 and indicate that males outscored females on all scores except the concern sub-scale. Overall, the t-test did not reveal a significant difference (p<.05) among males and females for any of the mean scores calculated.

Table 2 Comparison of Career Maturity Inventory Scores by Gender

Scale	Males		Females				
	Mean[a]	SD	Mean[b]	SD	t-value	df	Sig.[c]
CMI Total[d]	18.53	4.58	17.73	4.06	.968	125	.335
CCC[e]	14.08	4.21	13.47	3.94	.963	125	.442
Concern[f]	5.28	1.23	5.43	1.09	-.678	125	.499
Curiosity[f]	4.86	1.79	4.77	1.69	.271	125	.787
Confidence[f]	3.94	1.85	3.27	1.97	1.754	125	.082
Consultation[f]	4.44	1.16	4.25	1.62	.646	125	.520

Objective Three

The third objective involved the comparison of the career maturity of youth involved in the 4-H healthy lifestyles program based upon age. Analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were calculated with the dependent variable being the CMI mean scores and the independent variable being age, with a range of 14 to 19. The results of the analyses are displayed in Table 3. The highest total mean score was the 18 year olds, followed by the 14 year olds. The lowest total mean score was for the 15 years olds, which indicates a drop in career maturity after age 14.

The ANOVA also revealed a significant difference (p<.05) between age groups for the total score, CCC score, and the curiosity and confidence sub-scales. A REGWF post hoc analysis revealed that 18 year olds scored significantly higher than 15 year olds for the total score of the CMI. For the CCC score, as well as the curiosity and confidence constructs, the 15 and 16 year old participants scored significantly lower than 18 year olds at the p<.05 level.

Table 3 Analysis of Variance for Career Maturity by Age

	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years	18 years	F	Sig.
Mean Score by Age							
	n=16	n=37	n=31	n=29	n=14		
CMI Total[c]	18.88[ab]	16.46[a]	17.52[ab]	18.45[ab]	20.79[b]	3.357	.012
CCC[d]	13.88[ab]	12.43[a]	12.90[a]	14.48[ab]	16.50[b]	3.461	.010
Concern[e]	5.19[a]	5.16[a]	5.52[a]	5.41[a]	5.86[a]	1.216	.307
Curiosity[e]	5.00[ab]	4.41[a]	4.35[a]	5.14[ab]	5.86[b]	2.832	.027
Confidence[e]	3.69[ab]	2.86[a]	3.03[a]	3.93[ab]	4.79[b]	3.584	.008
Consultation[e]	5.00[a]	4.03[a]	4.61[a]	3.97[a]	4.29[a]	1.919	.111

Objective Four

For the final objective, the researchers sought to assess if there was a relationship between the career maturity of youth involved in the 4-H healthy lifestyles program based upon number of years in 4-H. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) was calculated to determine the relationship between career maturity and years in 4-H, with results displayed Table 4. Very low, positive correlations were found for the CMI total score and four of the five sub-scales that were not significant at the .05 level. A low, negative relationship was found for the consultation sub-scale, which also was not significant at the .05 level.

Table 4 Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients for Career Maturity Inventory Scores and Years in 4-H

Career Maturity	r	p*
CMI Total	.094	.29
CCC	.159	.08
Concern	.076	.40
Curiosity	.075	.40
Confidence	.132	.14
Consultation	-.050	.57

Conclusions

In this study, the CMI was used to measure the readiness of youth involved in the 4-H healthy lifestyles program to make decisions about career choices. The participants' CMI scores were also compared based upon gender, age, and years of involvement in the 4-H program. Based upon the findings of this study, the researchers concluded that the duration of youths' involvement in the Texas 4-H healthy lifestyles program does not have an impact on their career maturity. Aside from the years in 4-H, the results revealed that the youth involved in this study were career mature.

Differences in career maturity based upon gender also lacked significance. Males outscoring females on all scores except the concern sub-scale is consistent with research indicating adolescent males have higher self-esteem than females (Erol, & Orth, 2011). This is important for youth development professionals to know, realizing what factors are most important in the development of career maturity based upon gender, especially the varying levels of self-esteem among males and females (King, 1989).

Researchers discovered a significant difference in career maturity between 18 and 15 year olds for the total score of the CMI. Fifteen and 16 year olds also scored significantly lower than 18 years olds for the CCC score and the curiosity and confidence sub-scales, which was consistent with trends in adolescent self-esteem found by Erol and Orth (2011). Understanding the development of career maturity based upon age can help understand at what age youth require the most support in acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to develop career maturity.

Although most analyses lacked significance, it is important to note that participants in this research study exceeded the high school norms for career maturity. The CMI scores revealed higher scores than the high school norms (Savickas, & Porfeli, 2011) for the CCC score and three of the four sub-scales. The lower scores on the consultation sub-scale indicate preference to make career choices with an independent relational style (Savickas, & Porfeli, 2011). These higher scores reflect more advanced development among youth in the 4-H healthy lifestyles program and lead the researchers to conclude that the youth are indeed career mature, indicating a readiness to make informed career decisions and cope with career development tasks.

Even though results of this study lead researchers to conclude that youth in the Texas 4-H healthy lifestyles program are, indeed, career mature, further research can be conducted to expand beyond this one program area. The findings of this current study were limited by the population of youth involved in the Texas healthy lifestyles program and, therefore, cannot be generalized to youth involved in other

organizations. Future research that involves 4-H members as well as youth not involved in the 4-H program may also be of benefit to show the impact 4-H involvement may have on youths' career maturity.

Implications for Practice

Although the researchers found the youth involved in the 4-H healthy lifestyles program to be career mature, there are some key recommendations that practitioners should keep in mind as they continue to foster career development among youth.

• Ensure career development is integrated into each 4-H project. Not only the healthy lifestyles program, but each 4-H project should give youth the opportunity to explore careers through various methods including activities, interactions, and special programs.

• Expand career exploration experiences. Lippman and Keith (2009) suggested youth are more likely to succeed in the workplace when they are given the opportunity to explore different careers. Albion and Fogarty (2002) also pointed out that career decisionmaking difficulties can be effectively relieved by providing access to relevant, up-to-date resources and information. Therefore, the 4-H program should give consideration to incorporating various career exploration experiences, such as career fairs and career camps, into the program.

Train adult volunteers to help in career choices, goal setting and interests. Training 4-H volunteers at the local level on how to promote careers related to 4-H projects areas, methods of fostering career exploration, and the positive impact they can make by serving as a role model will benefit youth career development.

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