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Editor’s Comments:
Welcome to our Winter Issue of the Journal of Youth Development. We begin with an examination of character development through youth development programs. We are pleased to present findings from the initial phase of a longitudinal study under way by Richard Lerner and colleagues at Tufts University in “Program Innovations and Character in Cub Scouts: Findings from Year 1 of a Mixed-Methods Longitudinal Study.” The theme continues as Ergüner-Tekinalp and Crabtree-Groff highlight an adolescent character education program and the role of out-of-school-time programs as “caring communities” is discussed by Browne and Sibthorp. Additional articles focus on youth purpose, afterschool sustainability, self-directed learning and equine facilitated learning. We invite you to join JYD as an author or reviewer. Contact patricia.dawson@oregonstate.edu for details.

Manuscripts for our Special Issue on “The Promotion of Character through Youth Development Programs” are due May 15, 2015. See details on following page.

Manuscripts for the Summer 2015 and Winter 2015 issues are now being accepted in the following areas:

- **Feature Articles** ~ informational, explanatory, or critical analysis and interpretation of major trends in the field or comprehensive reviews. Include clear implications for youth development research, practice and programming. 2,000-5,000 words
- **Program Articles** ~ discuss programs and outcomes or describe promising programs and pilot projects that have clear implications for youth development research, practice and programming. 1,500-4,000 words
- **Research and Evaluation Strategies** ~ describe innovative methodologies and strategies in the collection and analysis of quantitative or qualitative research and evaluation data. 1,500-4,500 words
- **Resource Reviews** ~ present analyses of materials, such as books, curricula or videos. 300-800 words

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Journal of Youth Development: Call for Papers

Special issue on “The Promotion of Character through Youth Development Programs”

Special Issue Editors:
Richard M. Lerner, Andrea Vest Ettekal, and Kristina Schmid Callina

Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development, Tufts University

Across the past two decades, burgeoning evidence from longitudinal investigations and from evaluation research has indicated that participation in out-of-school-time (OST) youth development programs is associated with thriving across the adolescent years. Thriving has been indexed through assessment of diverse variables, for instance, school engagement, academic skills and achievements, self-regulation abilities, the Five Cs of positive youth development, and youth contributions to their families, schools or active and engaged citizenship.

Increasingly, attributes of character – for instance, moral virtues (e.g., integrity, justice, caring, and respect), performance character (e.g., effort, diligence, perseverance, grit, and self-discipline), civic character (e.g., the knowledge skills, and commitments involved in being an active and positively engage citizen), or intellectual character (e.g., attributes such as love of learning seeking truth, creativity, and intellectual humility) – have been the focus of OST youth development programs, either wholly (e.g., through character education programs) or as outcomes of efforts to enhance other facts of thriving.

In this special issue, we seek to bring together findings from exemplary research and program evaluation efforts to understand the following integrative research questions. What facets of charter development (and other facets of thriving, if applicable to a given project) may be promoted by specific substantive features of your development programs? What is the effect of program designs, including intensity and duration of program dosage? For which youth (having diverse individual attributes and ecological characteristics) – during which periods of development – are different facets of character development programming most impactful?

Both submissions of regular length (up to 5,000 words, prepared in accordance with current APA style requirements) and shorter, “brief report” submissions (up to 2,000 words, prepared in accordance with current APA style requirements) will be considered. The later submissions are intended for reports of preliminary or pilot work. Both senior and junior scholars are urged to submit their work for review.

Submissions must be received electronically by May 15, 2015 (by 5:00 PM EST).

Submission should be sent to Editorial Office of the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development at:

iaryd.pubs@gmail.com
Volume 9, Number 4
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Program Innovations and Character in Cub Scouts: Findings from Year 1 of a Mixed-Methods, Longitudinal Study
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Youth development programs seek to promote positive development through mentoring and engaging youth in opportunities for individual growth and community connectedness. We present findings from the initial phase of a mixed-methods, longitudinal study aimed at assessing the impact of one such program, Cub Scouts, on character development. We assessed if Scouting, and a recent innovation in Scouting focused on program quality, are associated with the development of character and other positive youth outcomes. Participants were 1,083 Scouts and non-Scouts, aged 5-12 years. At the start of the study, there was no difference in indicators of character between Scouts and non-Scouts, once matched through propensity score analyses. Through content analyses of interviews and short-answer questionnaires administered to leaders, we found that leaders’ views of character and of their roles corresponded to those envisioned by Cub Scouts. Implications for character development, and for the role of program components in character development, are discussed.

Young Leaders of Character Program: A Model of Character Education Program for Improving Life Effectiveness Skills and Civic Responsibility of Adolescents
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Ergüner-Tekinalp, Bengü; Crabtree-Groff, Kris
Studies that examine character development programs are scarce. This study examines the effect of a week-long character education program in a range of life skills and civic efficacy. Thirty adolescents participated in the training. A no-control, quasi-experimental design incorporated baseline measures and a six-month follow-up. A Life Effectiveness Questionnaire and Civic Efficacy Survey were administered and open-ended questions further explored how participants incorporated program outcomes into their daily lives. The t-test comparison of baseline and pretest measures yielded no significant differences, but t-test comparison of pre-post-test analysis elicited statistically significant positive results. Findings indicate the program can provide a model for character education that fosters adolescents’ sense of agency as leaders and citizens.

Training Staff to Create Caring Communities: Promises and Challenges
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Browne, Laurie P.; Sibthorp, Jim
Caring communities support the healthy growth of young people by fostering caring youth-staff relationships as well as a sense of connectedness to the people and norms within that setting. Out-of-
school-time (OST) programs may be uniquely situated to serve as caring communities, particularly if staff are trained to facilitate caring activities and employ an ethic of care when interacting with youth. These processes can also be described as program design and staff implementation. Program design, which refers to the structured aspects of a program, differs from implementation, or the ways staff interacts with youth throughout the program, because design factors are typically robust to differences in individual staff members’ style. Implementation, on the other hand, varies with respect to the individual staff member. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of a two-part staff training intervention focusing on program design and staff implementation on youths’ sense of caring community. Findings from this study and their implications for managers of OST programs are discussed.

Afterschool Sustainability
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Joyce, Hilary D.; Wade-Mdivanian, Rebecca; Anderson-Butcher, Dawn; Gibson, Allison
Youth participation in quality extended learning opportunities (ELOs) results in positive academic, physical, mental health, and social/emotional outcomes. Funding is essential to implementing and sustaining quality ELOs; however multiple funding barriers and challenges exist. Understanding the types of funds available for ELOs and the factors that influence sustainability is critical. Through surveys and telephone interviews of ELO providers, this descriptive study identified and examined ELO funding streams, the ways ELO providers use these funding streams, and the barriers and challenges to sustainability. ELO programs often relied on one major funding stream coupled with nutrition supports as well as in-kind resources. Barriers to sustainability included year-to-year funding, transportation costs, reducing community partnerships, and difficulty in diversifying funds. Recommendations to enhance ELO sustainability are offered, particularly in relation to overcoming the challenges to diversification of funding resources and establishing mutually supportive partnerships and collaboration.

Evidence of Self-Directed Learning on a High School Robotics Team
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Dolenc, Nathan R.; Tai, Robert H.; Mitchell, Claire
Self-directed learning is described as an individual taking the initiative to engage in a learning experience while assuming responsibility to follow through to its conclusion. Robotics competitions are examples of informal environments that can facilitate self-directed learning. This study examined how mentor involvement, student behavior, and physical workspace contributed to self-directed learning on one robotics competition team. How did mentors transfer responsibility to students? How did students respond to managing a team? Are the physical attributes of a workspace important? The mentor, student, and workplace factors captured in the research showed mentors wanting students to do the work, students assuming leadership roles, and the limited workspace having a positive effect on student productivity.

Horses and At-Risk Youth: An Equine Facilitated Learning Program Focusing on Authentic Leadership Skill Development
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Adams-Pope, Brittany L.; Stedman, Nicole L.P.
Interesting and innovative youth development programs are important to further youth education. Programs focused on developing leadership skills in youth, specifically at-risk youth, are important when thinking of the future of our communities. The primary purpose of the study was to determine the impact of an equine facilitated, authentic leadership program on at-risk youth. Youth participated in a three-day equine facilitated learning program based on authentic leadership with focus groups
conducted three days before and three days after the program. In this article, we describe the development and methodology of the program and specific implications for practice.

**Feelings and Emotions in Youth’s Purpose**

*Article 140904RS001* ………………………………………………………………………………………………Page 101

Arantes, Valeria Amorim; Pinheiro, Viviane Potenze Guimarães; Araujo, Ulisses Ferreira

This article summarizes research that aimed to identify and analyze the Organizing Models of Thought - with its affective and cognitive dimensions - underlying the purpose of young Brazilians, and identifies possible relationships between values, feelings, emotions and purpose of 200 Brazilian High School students. Upon analyzing all the protocols, seven different ways of organizing thoughts were found when answering an open-ended questionnaire about purpose in life. It was observed that emotions and feelings play an important role in the construction of purpose for young people, exerting influence in organizing their thoughts and subsidizing their decisions, plans and justification for the actions.


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Dawson, Patricia

“Why So Few? Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics” (Hill, C., Corbett, C., Rose, A., 2010) reports on an extensive study of women’s underrepresentation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics professions. Funded by the National Science Foundation, the project was conducted by American Association of University Women. The resource includes findings from eight research studies which examined social and environmental factors which contribute to women’s underrepresentation in STEM fields as well as helpful tables, charts and bibliography resources. The 110 page resource will be particularly helpful for scholars working in program design to advance STEM opportunities for women.
Program Innovations and Character in Cub Scouts: Findings from Year 1 of a Mixed-Methods, Longitudinal Study

Lacey J. Hilliard
Tufts University
Medford, MA
lacey.hilliard@tufts.edu

Rachel M. Hershberg
Tufts University
Medford, MA

Jun Wang
Tufts University
Medford, MA

Edmond P. Bowers
Clemson University
Clemson, SC

Paul A. Chase
Tufts University
Medford, MA

Robey B. Champine
Tufts University
Medford, MA

Mary H. Buckingham
Tufts University
Medford, MA

Daniel J. A. Warren
Tufts University
Medford, MA
Kaitlyn A. Ferris
West Virginia University
Morgantown, WV

Richard M. Lerner
Tufts University
Medford, MA
Program Innovations and Character in Cub Scouts: Findings from Year 1 of a Mixed-Methods, Longitudinal Study

Lacey J. Hilliard, Rachel M. Hershberg, Jun Wang, Paul A. Chase, Robey B. Champine, Mary H. Buckingham, Daniel J.A. Warren and Richard M. Lerner
Tufts University

Edmond P. Bowers
Clemson University

Kaitlyn A. Ferris
West Virginia University

Abstract: Youth development programs seek to promote positive development through mentoring and engaging youth in opportunities for individual growth and community connectedness. We present findings from the initial phase of a mixed-methods, longitudinal study aimed at assessing the impact of one such program, Cub Scouts, on character development. We assessed if Scouting, and a recent innovation in Scouting focused on program quality, are associated with the development of character and other positive youth outcomes. Participants were 1,083 Scouts and non-Scouts, aged 5-12 years. At the start of the study, there was no difference in indicators of character between Scouts and non-Scouts, once matched through propensity score analyses. Through content analyses of interviews and short-answer questionnaires administered to leaders, we found that leaders’ views of character and of their roles corresponded to those envisioned by Cub Scouts. Implications for character development, and for the role of program components in character development, are discussed.
Introduction

The mission of major youth development programs is to develop positive attributes in young people (e.g., character virtues, prosocial behaviors, and positive civic actions; e.g., Eccles, & Gootman, 2002; Sherrod, Flanagan, & Torney-Purta, 2010; Vandell, Larson, Mahoney, & Watts, in press). The vision of these programs is aligned with the positive youth development (PYD) model of adolescent development (e.g., Damon, 2004; Larson, 2000; Lerner, Lerner, Bowers, & Geldhof, in press). The PYD perspective is a strength-based approach, derived from relational developmental systems (RDS) theories, models that use dynamic, systems concepts to represent mutually influential relations between individuals. The perspective includes the multiple (biological through cultural, physical, and historical) and integrated levels of organization within the ecology of human development (Overton, 2013a, 2013b, in press). The PYD perspective is one RDS-based model, and it posits that positive development emerges when the strengths of young people (e.g., intentional self-regulation skills; Gestsdottir, & Lerner, 2008) are aligned with key ecological developmental assets (i.e., supports in their environments, such as parental warmth, monitoring, and engagement and community-based, organized out-of-school time [OST] activities; Lerner et al., 2005; Vandell, et al., in press). For instance, OST youth development programs that promote a PYD perspective are designed to be safe spaces that:

1. provide youth with extensive opportunities for sustained, caring and supportive relationships with adults;
2. promote the development of life-skills through program activities; and
3. provide opportunities to contribute to, and assume a leadership role in, valued family, school, or community activities (Lerner, 2004).

Scouting constitutes an exemplar of such a program. The programs of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) aim to imbue youth with the life skills needed to thrive personally and to develop into adults of character and responsible citizens who contribute positively to American democracy. In other words, the goal of BSA programs is to enable youth to live honorably as people and to do their duties as citizens. Despite these important goals of BSA programs, across the organization’s more than 100-year history there has been little research that systematically or longitudinally investigates the impact of BSA programs on outcomes of youth involved in Scouting. The ability to conduct such longitudinal research in collaboration with major youth development programs, such as BSA, is challenging in light of continuous changes in program leadership, structure, and content. Furthermore, research efforts need to take into account social challenges related to program sustainability; for instance, challenges associated with participant recruitment or retention, expanding into new geographical areas, or engaging groups of youth who may have been underserved (Eccles, & Gootman, 2002; Mahoney, et al., 2009; Vandell, et al., in press). For instance, BSA recently created a new professional position, known as the Quality Unit Executive (QUE), to focus on improving the quality of programs and to enhance recruitment and retention of participants. As part of efforts to engage youth from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, BSA also implemented a program called ScoutReach, which has been designed to engage traditionally underserved populations (specifically youth of color and youth from low-income backgrounds) in Scouting.

Although community-based OST programs, such as BSA, continue to be regarded by researchers as key ecological assets involved in promoting PYD (e.g., Benson, et al., 2011; Vandell, et al., in press), such assets are “moving targets” in the actual ecology of youth development, given that they are always in the process of changing to improve their services and to address new challenges to program sustainability. As such, it is crucial that longitudinal research be conducted that is sensitive to the changing nature of this ecological asset. Such research is necessary in order to accurately
gauge the effects of these programs on youth development. Accordingly, the current article presents an initial description of a longitudinal study that has been designed to assess the impact of the BSA program and its leadership model on youth development, but does so by including an assessment of program innovations (specifically, in the current article, of the impact of the QUE on program quality and outcomes). In subsequent reports from the present data set, we will also discuss the development of youth participating in the ScoutReach program, which, as noted, is another recent innovation of BSA programs.

The present article, then, constitutes an initial step in pursuing the overall goal of the research we are conducting with BSA youth; that is, to assess the impact of the BSA programs on indicators of youth character. Our research has focused on the beginning level of BSA programs—Cub Scouts, which includes youth in first- through fifth-grade. At this level, Scouts are guided through the program by adult volunteers, with the explicit goal that, by the final level of the Cub Scouts program, youth will have gained sufficient autonomy in goal-seeking abilities and in leadership skills to aid them in succeeding progressively through the upper Boy Scout ranks (ideally, to attain the level of Eagle Scout) and, outside of Scouting, to live lives of honor and contribution in their local and global communities. In essence, then, the goal of BSA programs is to promote several domains of character (Lerner, & Callina, in press; Lickona, & Davidson, 2005; Seider, 2012): moral virtues (e.g., courage, honesty, fairness), performance character (e.g., attributes such as initiative, diligence, perseverance), and civic character (e.g., attributes such as social skills and social knowledge that enable responsible and engaged citizenship).

Current scholarship in the study of character development adopts this multidimensional conception of the content and structure of character that underlies the activities and curriculum of BSA programs (e.g., Lickona, & Davidson, 2005; Seider, 2012; Shields, 2011). However, current conceptualizations of the bases of character development adopt a RDS approach (e.g., Lapsley, & Narvaez, 2006; Lerner, & Callina, in press; Sokol, Hammond, & Berkowitz, 2010), and emphasize that character develops through mutually beneficial relationships between an individual and his or her contexts. This literature also notes that there is a relative absence of information about the role of specific individual-context relations in promoting the character development of youth, especially during childhood and early adolescence and in regard to OST settings (e.g., Lerner, & Callina, in press). Because community-based OST youth programs constitute an important context for positive developmental attributes, such as the domains of character of interest within BSA programs (e.g., Lerner, et al., in press; Vandell, et al., in press), the present article is useful and timely.

Scouting seeks to promote character attributes through engaging youth in skill-building activities and providing them with opportunities to apply these skills in different contexts (e.g., at camp or in other outdoor settings). BSA also strives to ensure that its programs are delivered with fidelity and quality across Scout packs, troops, and councils (levels of increasing participant aggregation in BSA, i.e., packs are embedded within troops, and troops are embedded within councils). Accordingly, the research we are undertaking seeks to describe the course of character development among youth participating in Cub Scout programs and, as well, to describe whether an innovation of BSA program delivery (i.e., the use of a new program professional, known as the QUE) is effective in enhancing the delivery of BSA programs at the level of packs and troops. Scout packs are led by adult volunteers (typically parents of participants), and the role of the QUE is designed to oversee and help these volunteer leaders deliver BSA programs with quality and fidelity. In short, the ultimate goal of the QUE is to enhance the success of BSA programs by improving the quality and fidelity with which pack leaders deliver the Scouting program to Scouts.

There is some prior research that has attempted to examine the impact of Scouting on the prosocial behaviors and positive development of youth who participate in Scouting (Harris Interactive, 2003;
Jang, Johnson, & Kim, 2012; Louis Harris & Associates, 1998; Polson, Kim, Jang, Johnson, & Smith, 2013). The findings of this research suggest that BSA programs help to enhance character development, well-being, values, social relationships, decision-making skills, and goal achievement among Scouts, as compared to youth not involved in Scouting. However, this research is largely non-developmental and, as such, lacks information about the specific processes through which components of the BSA program (e.g., leader-Scout interactions, BSA curriculum, or BSA activities, such as camping, outdoor recreation, etc.) influence specific developmental outcomes among Scouts.

Accordingly, in order to provide these descriptions, we have conducted a study that uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess multiple dimensions of the BSA program. We gathered data from Cub Scouts, adult volunteer leaders, and professional staff. The project – which we have labeled the Character and Merit Project (CAMP) – will include four waves of quantitative data (across three years) collected from youth involved in Scouting and, in an effort to account for the effects of endogeneity, from a propensity-score-matched group of youth who are not involved in Scouting. As discussed later in this article, in forming these matched groups we used demographic data (e.g., age) as well as measures linked to the assessment of PYD (e.g., academic performance) in order to assess potential character differences between BSA participants and non-participants. In addition, qualitative data were collected through interviews with QUEs and through short-answer questionnaires circulated to adult volunteers serving as pack leaders.

In sum, the present article is intended to serve as a foundational report about the CAMP study. As such, we present the overall design of the study, describe our quantitative and qualitative methods, and present initial findings from the first wave of data collection. These analyses addressed the following three questions:

1. What features of character do youth possess at their entry into the Cub Scout program, and do these attributes differ from those of youth who are not participating in Cub Scouts?;
2. How do QUEs and pack leaders describe their roles and experiences in Cub Scouting, and in regard to the innovation of the QUE program in particular?; and
3. Are leaders’ descriptions of their roles and experiences commensurate with BSA program goals in regard to character development?

Method

The Research Context

The Character and Merit Project (CAMP) is being conducted within the greater Philadelphia area. The BSA Council within this region is the Cradle of Liberty (COL) Council. The COL initiates its programs following the national mission of BSA programs throughout the U.S. The COL serves 10,000 Scouts, and is facilitated by volunteer leaders (mostly Cub Scout parents) from 250 packs throughout the region. In addition, the COL includes various professional staff members who provide support to volunteer leaders throughout the region. As we have noted, a new innovation in staff support to volunteers and their packs is the Quality Unit Executive (QUE). The key mission of QUEs is to enhance the probability that pack leaders will deliver BSA programs (i.e., curriculum/activities) to Scouts with fidelity. Other components of the QUE position included serving as a coach to pack leaders, teaching leaders to increase parent involvement, ensuring leaders complete training, and helping packs with scheduling, budgets, and communication. The personnel in the QUE role were hired to act as personal coaches, counselors, and support systems for the volunteer leaders. The goal of the QUE innovation is to enhance program quality and improve recruitment and retention of participants and, in turn, enhance the character outcomes envisioned by BSA. In the COL, eight QUEs were hired to support pack leaders in eight of the 12 districts in the Council.
Participants
This sample at the first wave of testing was comprised of 1,083 boys between 5 and 12 years of age ($M = 8.85$, $SD = 1.39$). There were 915 Cub Scout participants, with 407 boys (44.4%) embedded in QUE-serving Cub Scout packs and 508 boys embedded in non-QUE-serving Cub Scout packs. In addition, we collected data from 168 boys who did not participate in Cub Scouts. Participants were: 76.6% White or European American; 13.1% Black or African American; 4.6% Hispanic or Latino; .8% Multiethnic or Multiracial; 2.3% Asian or Pacific Islander; .2% American Indian; and 2.4% did not provide this information. Detailed demographic information about Scout and non-Scout participants can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1**
Demographic Information about Scout and non-Scout Participants

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<td>57.00</td>
<td>756</td>
<td>70.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in the table, there are some demographic differences between the Scout and the non-Scout groups. For example, although most participants in both groups were White or European American, the percentage in the initial sampling is much greater in the Scouts (80.1%) than in the non-Scout
(58.9%) participants. The non-Scout group had a greater proportion of Black or African American participants (26.6%) than the Scout group (10.5%). As Scout participants were recruited from more districts than the non-Scout participants, tapestry scores of the Scouts demonstrated more variability than those of non-Scout participants. A greater percentage of Scouts (72.7%) were recruited from religious institutions than non-Scouts (57%). However, Scouts’ presence in churches for weekly pack meetings is quite different from non-Scouts’ presence in Catholic schools for daily school activities. As explained below, any selection effects associated with differences in participants’ backgrounds were controlled through the use of propensity scores. To gauge the potential impact of QUEs on packs, we solicited the participation of pack leaders who either did or did not work in QUE districts. A total of 107 pack leaders (of whom, 38% worked with a QUE) completed a short-answer questionnaire with 11 open-ended items.

**Measures**

We used both quantitative and qualitative measures during the first wave of testing. To identify what features of character youth have at their entry into the Cub Scout program, and if these attributes differed from those of youth not participating in Cub Scouts, we administered the Assessment of Character in Children and Early Adolescents (ACCEA) measure (Wang, et al., 2014) to Scouts and non-Scouts. Qualitative measures included the QUE semi-structured interview protocol and the open-ended questions on the pack leader short-answer questionnaire. The interview protocol was designed to elicit QUE’s descriptions and understandings of their roles in Scouting and in relation to working with packs. We conducted the QUE interviews during the first wave of testing in order to be able to assess QUE’s understanding of their positions in BSA programs at the start of the study and therefore prior to assessing longitudinally the potential QUE impact on Scout outcomes.

The pack leader short-answer questionnaire was designed to gain more information about pack leaders’ experiences in Scouting and with QUEs. We also used the pack leader questionnaires to assess leaders’ views of Scouting and of character development through Scouting. It was important to garner information about the pack leader experience, as the leaders are the link between QUEs and Scouts, and because it is through the QUEs’ relationships and work with pack leaders that pack leaders are expected to deliver a high quality program to Scouts.

**Assessment of Character in Childhood and Early Adolescence (ACCEA).** As part of the CAMP project, we developed the ACCEA (Wang, et al., 2014) to assess seven character attributes derived from the Boy Scout Oath (obedience – operationalized as rule-following; reverence – operationalized as religiosity; cheerfulness; kindness; thriftiness; trustworthiness; and helpfulness) and one attribute (hopeful future expectations), associated with the PYD literature (Schmid, & Lopez, 2011). A study of the character strengths of a large sample of U.S. adults (McGrath, 2014), using the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (Peterson, & Seligman, 2004), found that Future Orientation is a key character attribute which is characterized by a positive outlook, hopefulness, and an interest in healthy living. The response scale for each item in ACCEA was 1 to 5, where 1 indicated “Not at all like me” and 5 indicated “Exactly like me.” Wang, et al. (2014) also studied Cub Scouts from the COL and, specifically, assessed the factorial structure of the ACCEA. They found a first-order model consisting of eight correlated factors, a second-order model consisting of one superordinate character factor and eight first-order factors, and a bifactor model consisting of one general character factor and eight specific character attributes. All models were theoretically plausible and fit the data well. Therefore, depending on the focus of the study, the ACCEA can be used to measure each of the eight individual character attributes as well as the general construct of character. In the current study, subscale scores of each of the eight character attributes measured by ACCEA were used to explore the character attributes of our sample. Cronbach’s alphas for the whole sample were .66 for rule-following (four items), .75 for religiosity (four items), .78 for cheerfulness (three items), .82 for
kindness (four items), .60 for thriftiness (four items), .81 for trustworthiness (five items), .81 for helpfulness (five items), and .71 for hopeful future expectation (three items). These coefficients did not vary appreciably or systematically across the Scout and non-Scout groups.

**Background Control Variables.** Youth age, race/ethnicity, school tapestry segmentation, institutional religiosity, and youth self-rated academic performance were collected from the parents and the organizations (Scout packs or schools) to control for potential demographic difference between Scouts and non-Scouts. As noted these data are summarized in Table 1. The Tapestry Segmentation is associated with the neighborhoods in which the packs or schools of all participating youth are located (ESRI, 2012). Based on data sources (e.g., Census, 2000, 2010), Tapestry Segmentation classified United States neighborhoods into 65 distinct segments by using several measures that distinguish critical characteristics of the residents, such as income, family type, education, and employment. Tapestry scores may range from 1 to 65, with higher scores for a district indicating better living situations, income, and housing. Institutional religiosity was a binary variable representing the religious versus non-religious nature of the institution from which our participants were recruited (e.g., church versus community center for pack meetings, Catholic versus regular school for comparison group participants). Youth self-rated academic performance was measured using five items from the academic competence subscale of the Self-Perception Profile for Children (SPPC; Harter, 1982, 1983), such as “I am very good at my schoolwork” and “I like to learn new things.” Cronbach’s alpha for this variable in the present dataset was .67.

**QUE Interviews.** In order to understand how individual QUEs understood their roles at the start of this study and, specifically, their roles in relation to pack leaders and Scouts, we developed a semi-structured interview protocol with the COL based on the specification of the QUE role (described above). The QUE interview protocol included questions about the QUE role in relation to BSA programs, in relation to pack leaders, and in relation to Scout outcomes. The protocol also included open-ended questions about the importance of BSA to the U.S. and the world, and about how QUEs understood their role in relation to the overall mission of BSA programs. To protect the identities of QUEs in this study, we do not provide any identifying information about the QUEs when we present findings from our analyses of their interviews.

**Pack Leader Short-Answer Questionnaire.** We used the online Qualtrics program to develop a pack leader short-answer questionnaire containing 10 background items, 12 QUE-specific items, and 11 open-ended items. We circulated this questionnaire throughout the COL with the hope of recruiting pack leaders for participation in this study who had a variety of experiences with and histories in Scouting. Items on the short-answer questionnaire, therefore, specifically inquired about leaders’ backgrounds in Scouting, motivations for becoming Scout leaders and their interactions with QUEs. Open-ended questions were also included, and these items aimed to elicit leaders’ understandings of the QUE innovation, definitions of character, and their views of how they and BSA programs influence character development in Scouts. We included these character-related questions because we believed it was essential to gauge leaders’ views of character and their role in its development at the start of the study (and before assessing character development longitudinally). Pack leaders have the most direct contact with Scouts and, presumably, the most influence over the positive outcomes they may foster through exposure to BSA programs and activities. Through this questionnaire, we could potentially ascertain, for example, if pack leaders adhere to the character program that BSA intends for them to deliver to Scouts. If we were to learn that these leaders did not adopt the character development goals of BSA programs, then we would be aware of potential challenges to accurately identifying and assessing the processes through which QUEs and pack leaders influence character development in the context of Scouting.
**Procedure**

To recruit participants, we asked adult leaders of Cub Scout packs to help make parents aware of the study, collect parental consent, and administer the questionnaires during pack meetings. In addition, we contacted pack leaders from across the COL to aid in recruiting, with the aim of having half of the participants be from QUE districts. In turn, we recruited a comparison sample of youth who are not in Scouting but who are from similar socio-demographic backgrounds as the Scouts in this sample. Schools within the greater Pennsylvania area surrounding Philadelphia were contacted, and we were able to involve nine public, charter, and/or Catholic schools that included youth in Grades 1-5. Within each school, students in all first through fifth grade classes were invited to participate. The youth we included in our comparison sample did not participate in any Cub Scout programs.

To obtain parental consent for Scouts, pack leaders gave each child an envelope to take home to his parent or guardian. The envelope contained a letter that described the study and provided researchers’ contact information if parents had questions or concerns. It also included a parent consent form, a parent questionnaire (PQ), and a plain letter envelope in which to return the parent questionnaire and consent form to the pack. The information requested in the PQ included family background information and data regarding youth activity participation (in addition to Scouting). When Scout packs reported experiencing difficulties in getting paperwork to and from parents, we provided self-addressed stamped envelopes. To thank pack leaders for participating in the data collection process, we provided each pack with a $50 gift card. Each Scout received a $20 gift card upon completion of the questionnaire. Questionnaire materials were administered by pack leaders, who followed a detailed protocol. Most participants were able to complete the survey within 15 minutes.

Interviews with the eight QUEs were conducted in the COL offices. Interviews were between 30 minutes to one hour in length. Seven of the interviews were audio-recorded; one interviewee preferred responses to be typed but not audio-recorded. The interviews were transcribed by members of the research team prior to being analyzed and interview transcripts were checked for errors and corrected accordingly. Links to the online pack leader questionnaires were circulated to leaders throughout the COL at several points during the study. Data were downloaded into an Excel file from Qualtrics for review and analyses.

**Plan of Analysis**

The goal of the larger CAMP study is to integrate longitudinal quantitative and qualitative analyses of data in order to examine if and how attributes of character develop in Scouts. We will also examine if specific program innovations, such as the QUE program, influence the development of character in Cub Scouts. In the present analyses, we used the quantitative and qualitative data collected at the first wave of testing to address the three previously-noted questions.

Quantitative data were used exclusively to answer our first research question: What features of character do youth possess at their entry into the Cub Scout program, and do these attributes differ from those of youth who are not participating in Cub Scouts? We specifically conducted analyses of baseline quantitative data collected from Scouts and non-Scouts using the ACCEA measure (Wang, et al., 2014). Qualitative analyses, drawing from QUE interviews and pack leader responses to the open-ended items on the short-answer questionnaire, were used to address the second research question: How do QUEs and pack leaders describe their roles and experiences in Cub Scouting (and in particular, in regard to the innovation of the QUE program)? Qualitative analyses conducted to address this question focused on QUE interview data pertinent to QUEs’ descriptions of their understandings of their roles in Cub Scouts and in regard to working with pack leaders and
influencing experiences of Scouts in the program. These analyses also examined pack leaders’ responses to an open-ended item about their experiences with QUEs.

Qualitative analyses of the pack leader short-answer questionnaire were also conducted to address the third research question: Are leaders’ descriptions of their roles and experiences commensurate with BSA program goals in regard to character development; that is, in regard to putting youth on a life path of honor and duty? To address this question, we specifically focused on pack leaders’ responses to open-ended items regarding their

1. Definitions of character development, and
2. Understandings of if and how they influenced character development.

Analysis Plan for Quantitative Youth Data. We present a comparison of ACCEA scores for the Scout and the non-Scout participants. We first make this comparison without statistical control and then with statistical control in order to account for the possible effects of endogeneity. In the latter comparison, we use propensity scores as a covariate to overcome possible selection effects in our data set (Rosenbaum, & Rubin, 1985). The use of propensity scores has been advocated as an effective approach for addressing concerns of nonequivalent groups in research and for making causal inferences when youth were not randomly assigned to a program versus a non-program group (Harder, Stuart, & Anthony, 2010; Heckman, Ichimura, Smith & Todd, 1997, 1998). Background variables which might influence participation in BSA and character attributes were used to create propensity scores, including youth age, race/ethnicity, school tapestry segmentation, institutional religiosity, and youth self-rated academic performance.

Analysis Plan for Qualitative Data. In order to identify the main topics discussed across the eight QUE interviews, two members of our team implemented a content coding procedure of the interview data (Hsieh, & Shannon, 2005). We followed the same procedure with responses from pack leaders to three of the open-ended items on the short-answer questionnaire: “Please describe your understanding of the QUE role,” “How do you define character?” and “Do you try to influence the development of character in Scouts? Please explain.” The coding procedure involved two of the authors independently assigning descriptive codes to the data and coming together to discuss these codes (Saldaña, 2012). Through discussion, we refined codes until we came to 100% agreement about which codes best represented the range of responses provided by leaders.

After applying codes to the responses from each individual leader, we calculated the percentage of responses that we identified under each code to aid in specifying the salience of particular codes. As Sandelowski notes (2001), calculating percentages in this way can allow for the identification of patterns in a data set, and lead to the development of new questions. After coding and analyzing the data, we examined our findings in relation to BSA program goals, to assess whether the multiple descriptions that QUEs and pack leaders provided of their Scouting and character-related experiences in BSA programs were reflective of the descriptions provided by BSA programs of the COL.

Results

The purpose of this study was to describe indicators of character in Scouts and non-Scouts, and to describe how QUEs and pack leaders understand their roles in Scouting and in relation to developing character in Scouts. We explored three research questions to bring data to bear on these aims of the study. We present results from our first wave of the study organized by these three research questions.
Results for Research Question 1
Question 1 asked if character attributes of Cub Scouts differ from those of non-Cub Scout youth. Before presenting the results of the analyses that we conducted to address this question, we present descriptive statistics for each ACCEA scale, including the means and standard deviations for the Scouts and non-Scout participants. These data are presented in Table 2. Bivariate correlations among the scales are also presented in the table. The data presented in the table indicate that most of the character attributes correlated with each other at moderate levels, and that the values were comparable across the Scout and non-Scout groups.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for the Assessment of Character in Children and Early Adolescents (ACCEA) Attributes in Scouts and non-Scouts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACCEA Attributes</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Obedience</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>.28*</td>
<td>.48*</td>
<td>.40*</td>
<td>.35*</td>
<td>.50*</td>
<td>.37*</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reverence</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.27*</td>
<td>.30*</td>
<td>.31*</td>
<td>.30*</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>.33*</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cheerfulness</td>
<td>.39*</td>
<td>.41*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.50*</td>
<td>.28*</td>
<td>.45*</td>
<td>.34*</td>
<td>.47*</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Kindness</td>
<td>.49*</td>
<td>.32*</td>
<td>.54*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.47*</td>
<td>.51*</td>
<td>.58*</td>
<td>.69*</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Thriftiness</td>
<td>.46*</td>
<td>.40*</td>
<td>.42*</td>
<td>.49*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.36*</td>
<td>.48*</td>
<td>.51*</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Hopeful future expectation</td>
<td>.39*</td>
<td>.41*</td>
<td>.51*</td>
<td>.54*</td>
<td>.49*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.47*</td>
<td>.50*</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Trustworthiness</td>
<td>.65*</td>
<td>.32*</td>
<td>.51*</td>
<td>.60*</td>
<td>.54*</td>
<td>.50*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.63*</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Helpfulness</td>
<td>.34*</td>
<td>.33*</td>
<td>.53*</td>
<td>.64*</td>
<td>.44*</td>
<td>.53*</td>
<td>.55*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Mean</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall SD</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Scout participants (N = 895) are above the diagonal and non-Scout participants (N = 168) are below the diagonal.

To address Question 1, we conducted two one-way between group, fixed effects multivariate analyses of variances (MANOVAs), with the between dimension being Scout versus non-Scout participation and the dependent variables being the vector of scores of the eight character scales included in the ACCEA measure. One MANOVA involved the non-propensity-scored data for the participants. However, the second MANOVA involved the use of propensity scores for the participants as a covariate (and hence this analysis was actually a MANCOVA). In the first MANOVA, a significant main effect was obtained for BSA status, $F(8, 987) = 7.65, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$. Follow-up univariate analyses of variance for this main effect indicated significant between-group differences for...
one of the eight attributes tested, reverence; for this difference, non-Scouts had higher scores, $F(1, 994) = 34.23, p < .001$, $\text{partial } \eta^2 = .03$. All other composite scales showed no significant between-group differences.

In the second, MANCOVA analysis, which adjusted for potential selection bias between Scouts and non-Scouts, the main effect for BSA status disappeared when the propensity score was simultaneously entered as a covariate. No significant differences in character attributes remained between Scout and non-Scout participants. As such, the difference in reverence in the first analysis may have been due to the presence of many Catholic school students in the comparison group. The second analysis controlled for potential demographic differences in youth age, race/ethnicity, institutional religiosity, and tapestry scores, as well as academic competence scores. No character difference between the Scout and non-Scout participants was found in the project’s first wave of data. This finding is useful as it allows unbiased (by endogeneity) comparative assessment of (1) the potential differential association between Scout participation versus non-Scout participation, and (2) youth character development in future waves of the CAMP study.

**Results for Research Question 2**

Question 2 asked how QUEs and pack leaders describe their roles and experiences in Cub Scouting, as well as their understanding of the QUE innovation. To answer this question, we conducted content analyses of both the QUE interviews and the open-ended item on the short-answer questionnaire regarding pack leaders’ understandings of the QUE. We first examined analyses of the QUE interview data to assess how QUEs describe their understandings of their roles in BSA programs at the start of the study, and whether these understandings were commensurate with BSA program goals. We then examined findings from our analyses of one of the open-ended questions on the pack leader short-answer questionnaire, to assess if the understandings of pack leaders, who are reportedly being served by a QUE, also reflect BSA program goals regarding the QUEs’ interactions with pack leaders.

In our content analysis of the QUE interview data, we identified 10 main codes that reflected various components of the QUE data. However, only some of these codes fit with each of the eight interviews. The codes that were most prominent in our analysis reflected the main goals for the QUE position, as described by BSA Programs of the COL. As illustrated below, all eight QUEs described their roles as involving:

1. Serving as a coach to the pack leaders with whom they worked and, thus, offering support in some way;
2. Ensuring pack leaders were trained; and,
3. Coordinating recruitment of Scouts.

Several other aspects of the QUE position were reported by some (but not all) of the QUEs. These reports helped to further illustrate the ways in which QUEs understood their roles and responsibilities within BSA programs and, specifically, in regard to working with pack leaders (see Table 3). Accordingly, we provide several excerpts from these QUE interviews to highlight the main components of the QUE roles that were discussed across interviews, and to elucidate the potential ways in which QUEs may effect change within BSA programs.
Table 3
Codes Applied to Quality Unit Executive (QUE) Interview Responses about Definitions and Purpose of the QUE Role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>N (% of total respondents)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serving as personal coach and counselor to pack leaders</td>
<td>8 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring pack leaders were trained</td>
<td>8 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinating recruitment of Scouts</td>
<td>8 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching pack leaders strategies for increasing parent involvement</td>
<td>7 (88%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retaining Scouts in program</td>
<td>7 (88%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with pack leaders to organize calendars</td>
<td>5 (63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with pack leaders to organize budgets</td>
<td>5 (63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with pack leaders to organize popcorn sales</td>
<td>5 (63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orienting pack leaders to the advancement program</td>
<td>4 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impacting character development</td>
<td>4 (50%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In describing his or her understanding of what the position of a QUE entailed, one QUE noted: 
*I am the program person. I'm the person that comes in and helps you, the Cub Scout leader, with running your program and making sure that you have that good program and making sure we have a budget for you...the right fundraising so that you can afford to do all the great events that you want to take your kids to do...camping, and make sure everyone is trained so that they know how to run the right program.*

In this excerpt, the QUE acknowledges that, in addition to helping packs run better, his or her role includes imparting knowledge and training to pack leaders around managing the budget, fundraising, and camping. In addition, this QUE articulated that he or she understood that helping leaders to be more successful fundraisers supports the larger objective of making Scouting more fun for youth, as more money means that packs can afford and plan “great events” for participants. Thus, this QUE described some of the main facets of his or her position within Scouting, and suggested how QUEs indirectly affect the experiences of Scouts whose packs are served by these staff.

Similarly, another QUE who was interviewed explained that the purpose of the QUE position was to make Scouting fun and to help packs perform at their best at all times. This QUE explained that his or her role consisted of:

* [Making] sure that they’re doing the program, they’re making it fun, they’re engaging the kids. Umm make sure they’re putting their best foot forward at all times... I guess my role right now is pretty much monitor the different Cub packs in the schools and make sure they’re giving the kids the best possible program.*

In addition to identifying the technical components of the QUE position in relation to training pack leaders (i.e., ensuring leaders are sticking to or “doing the program” and engaging Scouts to the best
of their abilities), this QUE also connected his or her roles and responsibilities to program outcomes and Scout experiences. In the beginning of this excerpt, for example, the QUE stated that his or her job is about making sure leaders “make it fun.” This QUE also saw his or her responsibilities as having indirect effects on Scouts’ experiences in BSA programs.

In contrast, a QUE who had less experience in Scouting said this about the QUE role: “My understanding of the position is as a support role of the existing Cub Scout packs [because] I focus more with the Cub Scouts. So to support the existing ones as well as to get new packs started.” This QUE may have not been aware of as many facets of the QUE position as were mentioned in the other QUE interviews because he/she was less experienced in the position. In addition, unlike in the other excerpts, this QUE did not connect his or her role with packs to Scout outcomes. Nevertheless, this QUE was clear that he or she understood that some of the objectives of the QUE position are to support Cub Scout packs and help leaders initiate new packs. Thus, this QUE’s articulations of some of the main QUE components also reflected the QUE role as described by the COL.

In sum, our analyses of QUE interviews suggested that, at Year 1, the “support” component of the QUE position was understood by all QUEs in this study, regardless of their experiences with, and histories in, Scouting. Moreover, QUEs generally understood that the support they were providing to packs had the aim of indirectly influencing character and other positive developmental outcomes in Scouts by enabling leaders to provide a more enjoyable and all around “better” program to Scouts. Such experiences could motivate Scouts to stay in Scouting for a longer period of time. These findings suggest that, although the eight QUEs were not aware of every facet of their position at the start of the study, they had some shared understanding that their QUE position was created because pack leaders, who are almost exclusively parents and volunteers, needed scaffolding and guidance as they set out to run BSA meetings and lead and grow their packs throughout the Scouting year.

**Pack-leaders’ experiences with QUEs.** In addition to assessing understandings of the QUE role through QUE interviews, and, thus, from the perspectives of QUEs themselves, the short-answer questionnaires circulated to pack leaders throughout the COL also included questions about their views of the QUE position. Specifically, of the 107 pack leaders who completed the short-answer questionnaires, 41 identified their packs as being served by a QUE and responded to questions that attempted to gauge their knowledge of and experiences with QUEs. In their responses, most of these 41 leaders described receiving direct support from QUEs, and many articulated the various forms of support they received. In our analyses, we specifically identified 10 descriptive codes that captured the range of responses pack leaders provided to the question about the role of the QUE. As presented in Table 4, almost all of the pack leaders who identified being served by a QUE shared that their QUE was there to provide a form of general support or assistance.
Table 4
Codes and Examples of Adult Volunteer Open-ended Responses about the Role of the Quality Unit Executive (QUE) Position. Leaders Responded to the Prompt: “Please describe your understanding of the QUE’s role”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>N (% of total respondents)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide general support</td>
<td>“To assist the pack in whatever is needed”</td>
<td>31 (76%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help units deliver quality program</td>
<td>“Makes sure pack has every resources it needs to bring a quality program to the boys”</td>
<td>18 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist with pack advancement</td>
<td>“The QUE's role is to provide the pack with knowledge, resources and encouragement to improve the pack's overall performance which is measured by the Journey to Excellence scores.”</td>
<td>10 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist with recruitment/retention</td>
<td>“Assist us with recruiting…”</td>
<td>7(17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure program is delivered with fidelity</td>
<td>“Make sure the units are delivering a program consistent with the plan of BSA”</td>
<td>6 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaise between packs and council</td>
<td>“Liaison with BSA through the local Council office”</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure of QUE role</td>
<td>“I am not sure what the role of our QUE is yet. The QUE is newly appointed.”</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUE unable to do prescribed role</td>
<td>“Unfortunately, our QUE at times gets pulled in to support the District Executive role, taking away time that he should be spending in his QUE role.”</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths of person makes for great QUE</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote camping</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Specifically, 31 of the 41 pack leaders echoed the eight QUEs’ responses, describing that the purpose of the QUE position is to provide support to the pack units. In turn, 18 of the 41 pack leaders who responded to the question specifically identified that the QUEs who served their packs were there to help them deliver a quality program to the Scouts. Several of these same leaders (n = 6) described that “quality program” means a program that also comports with the values of scouting and maintains fidelity to the Scouting program.

For example, one pack leader explained: “This person is there to make sure that the pack or unit is following the rules and understands how to put the Scout values in place when teaching the Scouts.” Other leaders (n = 10) described a quality program, and the QUE’s role in making a program higher quality, in terms of how well the pack as a whole was doing at advancing Scouts from one level of scouting to the next. For instance, one leader explained that the QUE role functions “to provide services to the pack so we may achieve 'Gold' on our 'Journey to Excellence’ and, thus, run an awesome program.”
Several leaders also described the practical facets of the QUE role in terms of helping pack leaders recruit and retain families \((n = 7)\), or helping packs promote summer camp \((n = 2)\). For example, similar to findings from the QUE interviews, more pack leaders identified the QUE position as related to recruitment and retention of families, compared to promotion of summer camp. These parallel findings suggest that QUEs show individual differences in the implementation of their position (e.g., attending more to retention of Scouts versus popcorn sales or fundraising) and in their dynamics with pack leaders, which could have differential impacts on the leaders and, in turn, on Scouts.

**Results for Research Question 3.**

Question 3 asked if leaders’ descriptions of their roles and experiences were commensurate with BSA program goals, with a specific focus on perceptions about character development in Scouts. Accordingly, and in addition to identifying how pack leaders understand the role of the QUE, we analyzed responses to short-answer questionnaires to ascertain pack leaders’ definitions of character and their views of how they influenced character in Scouting. As presented in Table 5, through our coding and analysis, we created seven main codes that captured various dimensions in the definitions of character provided by pack leaders. We also found that several of these dimensions of character co-occurred in their responses. This finding enabled us to understand some of the complexity involved in how pack leaders understood character and how they aimed to influence its development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>N (% of total respondents)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dictates social actions</td>
<td>“Character is how one conducts themselves in daily life. The choices one makes and how one deals with their interactions with others define one's character.”</td>
<td>32 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief &amp; value systems</td>
<td>“Character to me is how you present yourself. The values you hold true to yourself and demonstrate in your everyday life.”</td>
<td>31 (34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal attributes/</td>
<td>“The sum of a person's attributes, traits, and abilities, all of the things that make you who you are.”</td>
<td>27 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It makes you who you are&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing the right thing</td>
<td>“Doing the right thing, when no one is looking.”</td>
<td>17 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How you interact with others</td>
<td>“Character is what makes a person stand out. How they relate to others shows us their character. It is the qualities that allow them to relate and interact with adults and children.”</td>
<td>8 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>“Integrity. Doing what you say you'll do, even when no one is watching. Sticking to your beliefs even when it is hard.”</td>
<td>6 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scout Law &amp; Oath</td>
<td>“By the twelve points of the scout law.”</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 5, the definitions of character provided by leaders also complemented the components of character that we sought to measure with the creation of our ACCEA measure (Wang,
et al., 2014). The findings shown in the tabled suggested that the pack leaders adhered to BSA program goals. Several pack leaders, for example, explicitly defined character in terms of an attribute included in the Scout law (e.g., “I define character as someone, who is responsible, reliable and trustworthy”). Two leaders specifically reported defining character “by the 12 points of the Scout law.”

One dimension of character that was most frequently reflected across pack leaders’ definitions was that character is what determines one’s actions toward settings and/or other people. For example, one leader noted that: “Character is how one conducts themselves in daily life. The choices one makes and how one deals with their interactions with others define one's character.” Other leaders focused explicitly on character as the basis for one’s behaviors. One leader noted, for example, that character is: “How you act and behave, either on a routine basis or when extraordinary situations arise.” Another leader explained that character is simply: “The way one presents him/herself in public.”

Although character was described as dictating extrinsic behaviors and social interactions (with people or settings) in approximately one-third of responses from leaders, nearly the same proportion of responses (31%) included references to character as related to intrinsic processes, such as beliefs and values. One leader noted, for example, that character is “a person's mental, moral and ethical qualities.” In this response, the leader’s understanding of character was that it is based on internal thoughts and/or values. Another leader explained that character is “core beliefs that define one's reactions to any given question, situation, or circumstance.” Although this leader also mentioned “beliefs” in his or her definition of character, references to external processes (i.e., reactions to questions, situations, or circumstances) were also present.

In our review of codes, we identified this co-occurrence of dimensions in several more responses from leaders. This finding led us to re-examine responses that we coded as “beliefs and value systems,” as well as the responses coded as “dictates social actions.” Through careful reexamination of responses from leaders, we identified that this co-occurrence of dimensions was present in the majority of responses from leaders.

In most of their responses to the question of “How do you define character?,” leaders provided definitions of character as involving both intrinsic and extrinsic processes. Leaders defined character in terms of beliefs and values but, specifically, in terms of beliefs and values that determine or influence behaviors and actions toward settings and other people. One leader noted, for example, that: “Character is who and what we are on the inside - our inner most thoughts that determine our actions, decisions, and deeds. It is what we do when we think no one is looking.” In this excerpt, we can see that this leader defined character as involving what one thinks, feels, and does. This leader also explained that the result of this fusion of intrinsic and extrinsic features of a person is “what you do when no one is looking,” another code we attached to many of the responses from leaders (we refer to it as “doing the right thing” in Table 5). We note possible implications for the co-occurrence of these dimensions of character definitions below.

**Leaders’ influences on character development.** We applied six main codes or categories across responses from leaders to the question of if and how they influenced character development in the Scouts they serve (Table 6 provides a description of codes and examples).
Table 6
Codes and Examples of Adult Volunteer Open-ended Responses about Character Development. Leaders Responded to the Prompt: “Do you try to influence the development of character in youth? Please explain?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>N (% of total respondents)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching character attributes</td>
<td>“I always incorporate the scout law in my den meetings. This is a high priority to me and the boys must learn and abide by them.”</td>
<td>51 (59%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading by example</td>
<td>“Yes. I strongly believe that one must lead by example and I try to do that in my daily life both inside and outside of my scouting units.”</td>
<td>36 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing opportunities for learning character through active participation</td>
<td>“Yes. We encourage all the youth to be denners and practice leading as well as respecting others, youths and adults.”</td>
<td>12 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing/acknowledging Scout demonstrations of character</td>
<td>“I always try to enforce the Good traits &amp; downplay the Bad or use the Bad as a leaning tool.”</td>
<td>8 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with Scouts to solve problems/overcome challenges</td>
<td>“…In some instances, talking with the youth about a situation they may find themselves in and asking questions so they can figure out the answer on their own.”</td>
<td>5 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analogous to the coding of leaders’ character definitions, we frequently coded individual responses to this question with two or more codes in order to capture the full content of leaders’ responses. The code we most frequently applied to responses was “teaching character attributes.” We applied this code to responses wherein leaders described using specific strategies to teach character-related values and behaviors to Scouts as the main way in which they influence their character development.

Specifically, 51 leaders described conscientiously using particular strategies to teach aspects of character to Scouts. Many of these leaders also referenced using the specific BSA curriculum as the main way in which they try to influence character. For example, one leader noted: "We try to teach the core values of scouting and good citizenship through discussions, examples, and activities.” Another leader explained: "We use the character connections to talk about what we learn by completing the activities and how it applies to how we live our daily lives.” Another leader shared: "We are working to teach them the principles of the Boy Scout Law and how to be a good citizen. We expand their horizons by working on things and doing things that they would never otherwise do at home or in front of a TV or computer game.” In this excerpt, we also identified that this leader believed that he or she influenced character development through actively engaging youth in Scout-specific activities, or "things that they would never otherwise do.”
Additional codes applied to leaders’ responses about influencing character development were: leading by example, praising Scouts’ demonstrations of character, and assisting with problem solving. Several leaders also explained that they did not specifically try to influence character development in Scouts. However, these leaders did not describe further whether this was because they did not adhere to the character values in Scouting, or if it was because they did not consider themselves to be influential in the development of the Scouts with whom they interacted.

Taken together, the majority of leaders’ descriptions of if and how they influenced character development in Scouts suggests that they understood themselves to be vital to the process of character development in Scouting. Moreover, these findings suggest that leaders supported the character-based curriculum of Scouting and that many drew from it directly as they tried to influence the activities and daily development of the Scouts with whom they interacted. In addition, just as leaders frequently defined character as a feature of behaviors and beliefs, so, too, did they describe what actions they took to influence character development in terms of facilitating concrete activities for Scouts that are based on developing character, and ensuring their own behaviors as volunteer leaders reflected their character-based values. This fusion of behaviors and beliefs in leaders’ descriptions of how they try to influence character development is exemplified in this leader’s description of what he or she does to influence character in Scouts:

...When I’m in front of the boys discussing something, I ask a lot of questions. I will then craft the conversation/lesson around their answers, and around the follow-up questions that naturally arise. This is to show ways to work through challenges or problems, rather than settling or giving up. Looking for alternate answers, or better yet, finding different pathways to the same answer improves decision-making abilities, and hopefully illustrates the need for being mentally aware and awake. I try to model using Honesty as a foundation for all else; using an honest outlook about yourself and then extending that to an honest outlook towards those around you.

Although not every leader stated as clearly the learning objectives behind the teaching activities (and other behaviors) that he or she facilitated for Scouts, many espoused a similar commitment to engaging youth in meaningful character-based activities and to trying to model their own character values for Scouts.

Discussion

The CAMP project was launched in order to understand the role of Scouting in character development and to assess if innovations in Scouting programs were associated with such development. This study is one of the first longitudinal and mixed-method examinations of character development in a character-based youth development program context. Although prior research has been conducted in the context of Scouting programs, this past research was largely non-developmental. It did not elucidate the processes through which components of the BSA program (e.g., leader-Scout interactions, BSA curriculum, and BSA activities, such as camping and outdoor recreation) influenced character development or other positive outcomes among Scouts.

In the present article, we reported findings from the initial wave of data collection of the CAMP study. This initial work was aimed at establishing the key foundations of the study—that is, that youth who begin Cub Scouts are not already different than non-Scout youth, and that the BSA program and its new innovations are being implemented as designed in Scouting programs. Through such baseline assessments careful selection of comparison youth not participating in Scouting, and use of propensity score matching as a statistical means to control for endogeneity, we believed we could provide this foundation. Accordingly, in order to accomplish these aims, we asked three questions:
1. What features of character do youth possess at their entry into the Cub Scout program, and do these attributes differ from those of youth who are not participating in Cub Scouts?;

2. How do QUEs and pack leaders describe their roles and experiences in Cub Scouting, and in regard to the innovation of the QUE program in particular; and

3. Are leaders’ descriptions of their roles and experiences commensurate with BSA program goals in regard to character development; that is, in regard to putting youth on a life path of honor and duty?

As reported above, results in response to Question 1 were that, once propensity scores were used as a covariate in comparison analyses of ACCEA data from Scouts and non-Scouts, there was no difference in character attributes between youth enrolled in Cub Scouts and youth not enrolled in Cub Scouts. Both Scouts and non-Scouts had high and comparable levels of all of the character attributes assessed on the ACCEA measure. In the non-propensity score analyses, there was one difference, in reverence; this finding may have occurred because many of the youth in our comparison group were enrolled in parochial schools. Although non-Scouts were found to have significantly higher levels of reverence compared to Scouts in the initial analysis, this difference disappeared when propensity score analysis was used. This finding suggests that, when controls for endogeneity are introduced, Scouts and non-Scouts may be treated as having comparable levels of character. As such, through subsequent, longitudinal assessments, the CAMP study can gauge if experiences in Scout programs (indexed by content, intensity, and duration of these experiences) are associated with differences in character development in ways not evident in non-Scout youth.

In response to Question 2, qualitative data from QUE interviews confirmed that QUEs’ understandings of their positions in Scouting, and in relation to pack leaders and Scouts, was generally commensurate with the description of the QUE position in BSA programs. Most importantly, all eight QUEs identified that the main objective of their role was to provide support to pack leaders, which aligns with the main intentions of the QUE program developed by the COL council. All eight QUEs also identified their roles in BSA programs as focused on supporting pack leaders through providing coaching and counseling, as well as assistance with trainings and the recruitment of Scouts. There was variation, however, in the descriptions of the other facets of the QUE position. Several QUEs acknowledged, for example, that as QUEs they were also tasked with helping pack leaders develop calendars, budgets, and fundraising plans, organize popcorn sales, and maintain fidelity to the advancement program within BSA programs (e.g., the Journey to Excellence Program), whereas others could only articulate the general support goal of the QUE position. There was also variation in the connections that QUEs made between aspects of their positions in BSA programs, and how their work may relate to the experiences of Scouts.

It is likely that these variations in QUE interviews had much to do with individual differences in histories with Scouting. Several QUEs, for example, were newly hired as Scout leaders when the study began, whereas others had been involved in Scouting since they themselves were children. It will, nevertheless, be important to consider their different levels of experience in, and familiarity with, Scouting (and the objectives of the QUE role) as we continue to assess the impact of the QUE program on Scout outcomes at the aggregate level, and as we examine the impact of each QUE on the packs (and Scouts) that receive their support. In addition, it is essential that we recognize other individual characteristics of QUEs, aside from their experiences in Scouting, that may have an impact on their relationships with pack leaders and the ease with which they are able to offer support and guidance to pack leaders throughout the course of the study. In subsequent interviews, we will therefore continue to assess these individual differences and potential strengths, and whether QUEs’
reported understandings of, and commitments to, the QUE position are maintained and/or become more prevalent over time, and as QUEs gain more familiarity with the packs under their guidance.

In addition to assessing how QUEs understood their roles at the initial wave of the study, we explored how pack leaders viewed the QUE position and the responsibilities of QUEs in relation to their packs and their Scouts. From the analysis of responses from 41 leaders who reported being served by a QUE, it became clear that they, too, viewed the QUE position as being created in order to provide them and their packs with support. It will be important to recirculate the pack leader questionnaires at the conclusion of the CAMP study, however, in order to determine if leaders continue to view the QUE program as providing them with support, with enriching experiences as volunteers in BSA programs, and with enhancements of their capacity to deliver an organized and enjoyable program to Scouts.

In response to Question 3, we examined, through an analysis of responses to pack leader questionnaires, how pack leaders defined character and understood their roles in influencing character in Scouts. It was important to gauge leaders’ views of character and their role in its development, prior to the assessment of character development longitudinally in subsequent waves, because pack leaders have the most direct contact with Scouts. If we found that leaders did not adopt the BSA character program, then we would be aware a key obstacle in actualizing the hope of BSA personnel; this is, that their programs promote youth character development.

Based on analysis of pack leaders’ responses, it was clear, however, that most pack leaders defined character in accordance with the ways in which it is defined within BSA programs. Pack leaders defined character as one’s beliefs and values, and/or as influencing (and reflected in) one’s actions and interactions with other people and settings (or as some combination thereof). Some leaders defined character in more grounded terms, and even went so far as to list the attributes of character described in the Scout Oath, in the BSA curriculum and, thus, in the ACCEA measure, as the way in which they themselves defined character.

Pack leaders’ definitions of character by and large supported BSA program goals reflecting that pack leaders will influence character outcomes in Scouts through delivering and implementing the values-based curriculum and activities (that are at the core of BSA programs). Pack leaders’ specific definitions of character also frequently reflected some of the complexity with which character is defined in the youth development literature (see Sokol, et al., 2010, for example), as a blending of both internal and external processes. From the perspectives of leaders in Scouting, character is one’s beliefs, values, and moral compass, as well as how one acts “when no one is looking.” The complexity in the definitions provided by pack leaders of what constitutes character, however, also suggests that youth development scholars and practitioners should further explore how leaders go about influencing such a complicated process within the context of youth development programs.

Accordingly, our longitudinal examination of the process of character development in Scouting, including QUEs’ and pack leaders’ roles in this process, will attend more explicitly to investigating how they influence the intrinsic components of character (values and belief systems), as well as the extrinsic components they identified (actions toward and interactions with other people and settings). Nevertheless, based on our initial findings from the short-answer questionnaire, we have information from pack leaders that begins to shed light on this question.

The most common responses provided by pack leaders to the question of how they influenced character were coded as “teaching character attributes.” In our analyses of responses, we found that pack leaders were conscientiously trying to use strategies to teach the attributes described in the BSA
curriculum to Scouts as they ran pack meetings and facilitated Scout activities. Pack leaders also frequently described “leading by example” as the way in which they tried to influence character in Scouts. Some of the examples leaders provided of how they “led by example” focused on demonstrating the character values they sought to foster in Scouts, whereas others focused more on extrinsic processes or behaviors (e.g., “I try to act the way I want them to act”). Other facets of the pack leader role that were mentioned in leaders’ descriptions of how they influenced character included facilitating their active participation in character-promoting and problem solving activities, as well as publicly recognizing and acknowledging when Scouts demonstrated character attributes that were in line with the Scouting context.

In sum, we found that leaders’ descriptions of how they intend to influence character development in Scouts generally reflect the ways in which they define character. In addition, the responses provided by leaders to the questions about character development were consistent with the Scouting context. Leaders’ descriptions of the particular behaviors they tried to influence in Scouts were commensurate with those behaviors targeted by BSA programs (e.g., contribution). Leaders’ commitments to developing “good citizens” who are contributing members of their peer groups, Scout packs, and the larger society, through serving as role models to Scouts, was clear from analyzing leaders’ responses to the short-answer questionnaire. In short, the leaders believed that they were helping to launch youth on a life path marked by honorable living and duty.

It is important to note, however, that pack leaders’ descriptions of how they aimed to influence character development did not include a focus on trying to keep youth in Scouting for longer periods of time, although retention was a clear goal articulated by the QUEs in this study. From the pack leaders’ perspectives it seems the strategies that they used to directly engage Scouts in BSA programs, and especially the character-based behaviors and values that are a part of the BSA curriculum, were the main ways in which they aimed to influence positive development and character outcomes. This discrepancy between QUEs’ and pack leaders’ goals will be considered as we continue to assess character outcomes in Scouts in future waves of the study, as well as the processes through which QUEs influence pack leaders, and how the QUE-pack leader relationship influences Scout outcomes.

Although pack leaders do not mention the goal of retention in their responses of how they tried to influence character in Scouts, they did express their commitment to BSA programs as well as their passion for the values-based BSA curriculum. Pack leaders as well expressed trying out many strategies to engage Scouts in the curriculum and activities, and articulated the ways in which they tried to model Scout values. It is possible that, by focusing on delivering a more effective and enjoyable character-development program to Scouts, while QUEs focus on technical components of BSA programs (e.g., recruitment and retention of Scouts), pack leaders are placing their energy in the right place, and that the QUE program is working out as intended. Whether this potential balance is maintained throughout the course of the CAMP study, and with positive influences on Scout outcomes, will be assessed in future waves.

**Conclusions**

There are, of course, several limitations of the present research, ones pertaining to sampling (e.g., the participants were volunteers), measurement (e.g., our index of character pertained to the attributes associated with BSA), and analysis (e.g., the present data are all cross-sectional). Although these data provide important information about individual variables (regarding character attributes) and contextual variables (the roles of the QUEs and pack leaders in regard to youth character), only longitudinal data (to-be-generated in the subsequent waves of the CAMP study) will suffice in testing
the RDS ideas about individual-context bidirectional relations that are integral to the RDS/PYD model framing this research (e.g., Lerner, et al., in press; Overton, in press).

Indeed, as this study continues through several waves of testing, we will assess character development within historical time and, as such, within a period in which the programs of Boy Scouts of America are evolving in the context of social issues, involving inclusion and social justice. As such, our future reports from this study will elucidate the importance of historical time and place (Elder, Shanahan, & Jennings, in press) on the context of a youth development program for the positive development of the youth it serves.

In sum, the evidence gathered during this initial phase of a larger longitudinal study supported the descriptions of character in Scouting, and of the roles of QUEs and adult leaders, described by BSA programs. In addition, through qualitative analyses of pack leader responses in particular, we have generated understandings of how leaders in a youth development program define character and character development. We have also confirmed that pack leaders’ views of character fit well within the context of BSA programs; this is an important corroboration given that pack leaders are charged with delivering BSA curriculum and activities to Scouts.

Moreover, through qualitative and quantitative data collection and analyses from the initial wave of the study, we were able to describe what character attributes may look like in Scouts participating in the CAMP study at baseline. Furthermore, we have illustrated that Scouts and non-Scouts have generally similar levels of character attributes, in particular when matched through propensity score analyses. This comparability allows us to make useful assessments between the Scouts and the non-Scouts as we move into subsequent stages of data collection and longitudinal analysis. As such, this project has the potential to provide novel information about contributions to character development of a major youth development program in the United States.

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**References**


Young Leaders of Character Program: A Model of Character Education Program for Improving Life Effectiveness Skills and Civic Responsibility of Adolescents

Bengü Ergüner-Tekinalp
School of Education
Drake University
3206 University Avenue
Des Moines, IA
bengu.tekinalp@drake.edu

Kris Crabtree-Groff
Education Division
Briar Cliff University
3303 Rebecca Street
Sioux City, IA
kristen.crabtree-groff@briarcliff.edu
Young Leaders of Character Program: A Model of Character Education Program for Improving Life Effectiveness Skills and Civic Responsibility of Adolescents

Bengü Ergüner-Tekinalp
Drake University

Kris Crabtree-Groff
Briar Cliff University

Abstract: Studies that examine character development programs are scarce. This study examines the effect of a week-long character education program in a range of life skills and civic efficacy. Thirty adolescents participated in the training. A no-control, quasi-experimental design incorporated baseline measures and a six-month follow-up. A Life Effectiveness Questionnaire and Civic Efficacy Survey were administered and open-ended questions further explored how participants incorporated program outcomes into their daily lives. The t-test comparison of baseline and pretest measures yielded no significant differences, but t-test comparison of pre-post test analysis elicited statistically significant positive results. Findings indicate the program can provide a model for character education that fosters adolescents’ sense of agency as leaders and citizens.

Introduction

As young people discover themselves they also discover their world. They want to make an impact on this newly discovered world, as well as on their communities and schools. They are eager to explore issues, discover new perspectives, collaborate on authentic and meaningful activities, and are willing to reflect and apply new learning to real-life situations. Character education and citizenship education share similar characteristics: active participation by students, relevance to students’ lives, dialogue, an opportunity to make a difference, and a respectful community of learners (Deakin, Crick, Coates, Taylor, & Ritchie, 2004; Lickona, Schaps, & Lewis, 2007). These characteristics of quality reflect developmentally responsive practices in adolescent education.
**Character Development**

Lerner, Fisher, and Weinberg (2000) define positive youth development in terms of five attributes (Five Cs) that adolescents need to thrive: cognitive and behavioral competence, confidence, positive social connections, character, and caring. Adolescence embodies positive attributes where students can practice and learn to be tomorrow’s leaders and today’s citizens (Ersing, 2009). Positive youth development encourages healthy development through “positive identity, social competence, and independence and views young people as assets rather than liabilities” (Thurber, Scanlin, Sceuler, & Henderson, 2007, p. 1).

Good character is at the core of positive youth development (Nansook, 2009) as it decreases problematic behaviors (Botvin, Baker, Dusenbury, Botvin, & Diaz, 1995) and allows healthy, positive life span development (Colby & Damon, 1992; Nansook, 2009). A growing body of research recognizes that effective character development programs “support improvements in school safety and climate, academic achievement, and caring relationships” (Sojourner, 2014, p. 72). Investigating character development in adolescence is multi-dimensional. “It is both child and parent but it is also neurons and neighborhoods, synapses and schools, proteins and peers, and genes and government” (Sameroff, 2010, p. 7).

**Adolescent Development**

Adolescents can process and investigate complex, real-life, ethical dilemmas through social dialogue – they are developmentally ready to explore moral issues, and want to learn how to participate in society as citizens. Adolescents have the ability to hypothesize, synthesize, and reflect to make sense of their world and their purpose within that world. As they move from Inhelder and Piaget’s (1958) Concrete Operational Stage to Formal Operation Stage, young people are increasingly capable of logical, empathetic, idealistic thinking. Such developmental characteristics of adolescence are naturally suited for character education programming to support young adolescent positive development. Character education programs provide opportunities for adolescents’ positive development by allowing them to discover and discuss personal and global issues, use creative and critical thinking processes, practice collaboration, and enhance initiative and self-direction (Kay, 2009).

At the onset of puberty, developmental change is intertwined. Cognitive growth is influenced by physical and emotional growth that influences self perception and beliefs. As their bodies and brains develop, adolescents are ready for “more mature and abstract ways of thinking” (National Middle School Association, 2003, p. 3). Character development and identity development occur as adolescents see themselves and their world through a new and more mature lens. They search for an identity, start to think more abstractly, consider multiple perspectives, and demonstrate a passionate interest in the world around them. “[t]he emergence of self and the formation of identity are intricately intertwined with the development of perspective taking” (Martin, Sokol, & Elfers, 2008, p. 301).

**Character Education Programming**

Adolescents’ notion of themselves, their values and philosophies take shape through social interactions and personal experience. They “differentiate, integrate, coordinate, react, and apply an active and passive accumulation” of experiences and perspectives “to develop self-understanding and first-person experience of themselves” (Martin, Sokol, & Elfers, 2008, p. 302). Adolescents begin to discover who they are and who they want to be. The middle school years is a period that literally determines individuals’ and, in a way, society’s future (Lounsbury, 2009). Adolescent identity development evolves by exploring social roles and establishing personal ethics that guide individual
decisions and behaviors (Jackson, & Davis, 2000). By age 12, young people have predispositions to act morally as their cognitive ability matures (Inhelder, & Piaget, 1958).

As children transition through adolescence, they become capable and interested in participatory democracy. Character education affords middle and high school students the chance to practice life skills and democratic principles (Lickona, Schaps, & Lewis, 2007). For adolescent learners, character education is intrinsically motivating and personally meaningful. These students have the capability to affect change in their communities and their world by actively engaging in social activism (Beane, 2005). Natural to this age group is the issue of justice and fairness, to be democratic and moral, and to act with good character. Since adolescents are at a point in their lives when they are developing moral attitudes, values, and beliefs (Brighton, 2007) developing programs that incorporate the essence of quality character development, model morality, and practice citizenship is important. Experience and a supportive learning environment are fundamental contributors to cognitive and moral development (Brighton, 2007).

The fundamental need for sustaining social relationships with adults and peers validates that youth development programs should focus on social relationships with parents and peers in the settings in which young people live (Zaff, Malanchuk, & Eccles, 2008). Successful youth development programs can not only foster good character and moral identity development, but also provide a basis for supporting positive self-esteem, developing trustworthy and close relationships, and creating a sense of belonging (Jackson, & Davis, 2000). Although literature on positive youth development has been established, interventions that contribute to positive development have just begun to emerge. Lapsley and Yeager (2012) explain, “[C]haracter education, to be effective, must be comprehensive, have multiple components, address overlapping ecological contexts, be implemented early and be sustained over time” (as cited in Lapsley, 2014, p. 20).

**Purpose of the Study**
The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of a character education program aiming to enhance adolescents’ positive development and active civic engagement. It is hoped the findings add to the discussion of quality character education and positive youth development programming. This study examines effectiveness of the Institute for Character Development (ICD) Young Leaders of Character (YLC) training program. The effectiveness of the program is explored through adolescents’ positive psychosocial development. The inherent link among character education, positive youth development, and civic engagement is at the core of this research project.

**Method**

**Participants**
Data were collected from the Institute for Character Development (ICD) Young Leaders of Character (YLC) summer of 2008 Training Program. Participants consisted of 30 adolescents between the ages of 13 to 16, with the mean age of 14. One participant did not take part in the pre test and one participant did not complete the post-test; therefore, these participants’ data were omitted from the analysis. Of the participants, 22 were females (78%), and six were males (22%). The participants were selected to the program through an application and interview process.

**Training Program**
Young Leaders of Character is a week-long leadership and character training program that was centered on a youth and adult partnership structure. YLC program has the following core tenets:
a) commitment; to learn about and make decisions based on character and ethical decision making,

b) consciousness; to understand that universal ethical moral rules are needed and everybody is responsible for their own choices and how these choices affect others, and

c) competency; to develop the ability to identify and use strategies to make ethical and moral decisions (Institute of Character Development, 2008).

Upon completion of the program, these students become leaders and advocates of character. They design various workshops and presentations using the Six Pillars of Character (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship) then present them to students, faculty, and staff, along with community-based civic and service organizations. The program provides an opportunity for civic involvement in terms of being leaders of character that increases adolescents’ opportunities to engage in positive development as leaders and advocates in their communities.

**The Objectives of YLC Summer Training:**

*Build community feeling and group cohesion.* Participants in YLC live and train together to enhance a community feeling, to develop a sense of belonging, and to establish closeness and rapport. Multi-faceted activities build a feeling of community and trust, enabling participants to be both the model and the learner. Critical aspects of the YLC training program connect with the Six Pillars of Character and include elements of youth leadership development.

*Develop knowledge.* Six Pillars of Character, the philosophical foundation of the ICD, were taught through direct instruction and experiential learning.

*Develop leadership skills.* Participants learned presentation and public speaking skills for their leadership and facilitator roles.

*Youth and adult partnership.* A signature element of YLC training was that this program was not designed as an adult-to-youth format; rather it was a collaborative effort of both students, previous participants in the program, and adult trainers. Participants were empowered and encouraged to take active roles in the training process.

*Moral decision making.* Throughout the training, participants were involved in moral decision making through role playing and interactive activities.

**Measures**

*Life Effectiveness Questionnaire.* To assess the psychological impact of the program on several dimensions, Life Effectiveness Questionnaire (LEQ-H) was used. The Life Effectiveness Questionnaire was originally developed by Neill, Marsh and Richards (1997) for measuring the effect of outdoor adventure programs. Life effectiveness could be described as the factors that help an individual to achieve his/her desires and wishes in life; these skills were considered to be learned and developed (Neill, Marsh, & Richards, 2003). The LEQ-H, a 24 item self-report instrument, measured the effect of adventure and other experiential education intervention programs on eight factors (Neill, Marsh, & Richards, 1997).

Subscales consisted of:

- *Time Management* – measuring the extent that an individual perceived she/he might make optimum use of time;
- **Social Competence** – measuring the degree of personal confidence and self-perceived ability in social interactions;
- **Achievement Motivation** – measuring the extent to which an individual might be motivated to achieve excellence and put the required effort into action to attain it;
- **Intellectual Flexibility** – measuring the extent to which an individual perceived he/she could adapt his/her thinking and accommodate new information from changing conditions and different perspectives;
- **Task Leadership** – measuring the extent to which an individual perceived she/he could lead other people effectively when a task needs to be done and productivity was the primary requirement;
- **Emotional Control** – measuring the extent to which an individual perceived he/she could maintain emotional control when faced with potentially stressful situations;
- **Active Initiative** – measuring the extent to which the individual liked to initiate action in new situations; and
- **Self Confidence** – measuring the degree of confidence the individual had in her/his abilities and the success of their actions.

Subscale scores were calculated by adding point values of the responses for each of the subscales. The LEQ utilizes an 8-point scale from 1= ‘False, not like me’ to 8= ‘True, like me.’ Neill and Flory (2000) found the LEQ scales to have high internal consistency and moderate test-retest reliability, internal consistency reliabilities (Cronbach’s alphas) for the subscales range from .83-.88, and test-retest correlations are .59-.81. In this current study, coefficient alpha reliabilities for the eight subscales were achieved as follows: Time Management, .68; Social Competence, .78; Achievement Motivation, .80; Intellectual Flexibility, .66; Task Leadership, .87; Emotional Control, .49; Active Initiative, .82; and Self Confidence, .66. The coefficient alpha scores indicated strong reliability for this instrument.

**Civic Responsibility Survey.** To assess the impact of the training on participants’ social development, the Civic Responsibility Survey (CRS) (Furco, Muller, & Ammon, 1998) was used. The CRS was designed to measure the impact of service learning programs on participants’ civic responsibility or engagement. The survey consisted of three different subscales or clusters measuring students’ attitudes and feelings on Connection to the Community, Civic Awareness, and Civic Efficacy. The CRS had been designed on three levels of language capacity. In this study, the High School (Level 3) version of the survey was administered. The CRS-Level 3 had 24 items where participants responded on a 6-point scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (6). The overall reliabilities and subscales of CRS-Level 3 had been reported as the following: Overall, .93; Connection to Community, .63; Civic Awareness, .88; and Civic Efficacy, .85. These scores suggest moderate to high reliabilities. In this study, the reliability scores were: Overall, .93; Connection to Community, .73; Civic Awareness, .85; and Civic Efficacy, 84, which indicates high reliability for this instrument.

**Qualitative Assessment.** During the follow up assessment, the three following open-ended questions explored the extent to which participants used the information they learned in the program:

a) Think of a time when you were challenged to exhibit good character. What was the situation?  
b) How did you decide what to do?  
c) What specifically did you do that was good character?
Open-ended questions allowed participants to determine and describe personal incidents and provided contextual data for the program evaluation process.

**Procedure**

Participant assent and parental consent were obtained prior to data collection. To increase the reliability of this no-control-pre-post-test, quasi-experimental design, baseline measures were obtained. Surveys were administered four times to participants. The first administration for baseline data comparisons occurred when selected participants were notified of their acceptance to the program approximately one month prior to the training. It was hoped the time between baseline and pre test administrations would demonstrate that changes were attributable to the YLC training rather than a possible artifact of the testing process or by natural development. Participants also completed the surveys as a pre test just before the training program began and as a post-test immediately following completion of the training program. Six months after completion of the program, surveys were sent to participants as a follow up measure to test the continual effect of the program.

**Data Analysis**

To explore the effect of the training program, paired samples t-test statistical procedures were administered to compare baseline, pre test and post-test measures. In addition to the significance test, standardized mean effect sizes (ESs) (Cohen's $d$) were calculated to determine how much effect the program had on the dependent variables. Effect size can be a more descriptive measure of change (Neill & Richards, 1998) and has been described as the relative extent of differences in the dependent variable attributed to the independent variable (Cohen, 1977).

**Results**

**Baseline and Pre Test Comparisons**

To compare baseline, pre test and post-test scores on each subscale of LEQ-H and CRS, paired sample t-test statistical analysis was employed. The descriptive statistics and t-test results for the variables are shown in Table 1. Results showed no significant difference between the baseline and pre test scores on the LEQ-H and CRS subscales.
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**Table 1**
Means, Standard Deviation, and T-Test of Baseline and Pretest Scores for LEQ-H and CRS Subscales

**Pre Test Post-Test Comparisons**
Paired sample t-test statistical method was employed between pre test and post-test scores of LEQ-H and CRS subscales. Additionally, to explore the effect of the program, standardized mean effect sizes (ESs) (Cohen's $d$) were calculated. Analysis followed the principle that an Effect Size 0 meant no change occurred, a negative sign indicated decrease, and a positive sign indicated improvement after participating in the program. Values from .01 to .2 designated small effect, .3 to .5 designated medium effect, and .6 to 1 designated large effect. Descriptive statistics and t-test results for pre test and post-test comparisons with effect sizes are shown in Table 2.
**Table 2**
Means, Standard Deviation, and T-Test for Pre test, Post-test and Follow up Scores for LEQ-H and CRS Subscales and Effect Sizes

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<td>5.63311</td>
<td>1.14985</td>
<td>-4.392*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*pre test- follow up
** post-test- follow up

Results illustrated a significant difference between the pre test and post-test scores on LEQ-H subscales of Time Management (t=-4.7, p=.00), Social Competence (t=-2.6, p=.013), Task Leadership (t=-2.22, p=.035), Emotional Control (t=-2.65, p=.013), and Self-Confidence (t=2.18, p=.038). Results suggested participants developed significantly positive changes in Time Management, Social Competence, Task Leadership, Emotional Control and Self Confidence. Since there was no significant difference between baseline and pre test measures, the significant changes could convincingly and reliably be attributed to the youth training program.

In addition to the significance, the results also yielded positive effect sizes. Time Management (Cohen’s d=.80), and Emotional Control (Cohen’s d=.62) had a large effect size, Social Competence (Cohen’s d=.36), Intellectual Flexibility (Cohen’s d=.36) and Self Confidence (Cohen’s d=.44) had a medium effect size and Achievement Motivation (Cohen’s d=.27), Task Leadership (Cohen’s d=.25) and Active Initiative (Cohen’s d=.20) had a small effect size. Achievement Motivation, Intellectual Flexibility, and Active Initiative scores did not yield significant results on a .05 significance level; however, positive effect of the program was still evidenced by positive effect size measures.

For the Civic Responsibility Survey, findings implied a significant difference between the pre test and post-test scores on Civic Awareness (t=-3.8, p=.001), and Civic Efficacy (t=-3.2, p=.003). There was no difference on Connection to Community Scores (t=-1.5, p=.134). Since there was no significant difference between baseline and pre test measures, the significant changes on Civic Awareness and Civic Efficacy were considered reliable. Civic Awareness (Cohen's d=.50) and Civic Efficacy (Cohen's d=.48) both generated positive medium effect sizes. Although not significant, Connection to Community (Cohen's d=.22) showed a positive small effect.

**Six Month Follow up**

Follow up data were collected six months following the completion of the training program. The same survey package along with open-ended questions was mailed to the participants. For the qualitative component, the following three questions were asked:

a) Think of a time when you were challenged to exhibit good character. What was the situation?

b) How did you decide what to do?

c) What specifically did you do that was good character?
Investigators believed the open-ended responses would provide examples of experiences from an early adolescent perspective to further describe the impact of the training program. Of the 28 program participants, 24 responded to the follow up surveys. Two participants did not complete the Life Effectiveness Questionnaire; therefore, they were omitted from the comparisons. The response rate was 86%.

The means and standard deviations for follow up measures are shown in Table 2. In general, results suggested six months after the training, participants maintained and improved in the majority of the domains. The comparison of pre test and follow up measures indicated participants kept improving in Time Management (t=-6.46, p=.00), Task Leadership (t=-2.492 p=.021), Civic Awareness (t=-2.139, .043), and Civic Efficacy (t=-4.392, .000). Self-Confidence (t=-2.068, p=.051), approached significance. The results showed participants maintained the change in many areas except Social Competence and Emotional Control. The post-test follow up comparisons denoted that participants further improved in Time Management (t=-3.360, p=.003). Overall, higher mean scores of follow up measures revealed that participants maintained the changes gained in the training program.

The responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed with the constant comparative method of data analysis. Three coding procedures were used: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Seong-Young, Olszewski-Kubilius, Donahue, & Weimholt, 2008). The first process, open coding, organized data according to themes, overarching concepts or categories. Axial coding was then used to determine relationships across data categories, themes, or concepts. Finally, selective coding sorted the data into representative phenomena for reporting study findings.

Several themes naturally emerged from the coding of participant responses. These themes paralleled the literature regarding adolescent development and experiences, adolescent moral development, and the Six Pillars of Character.

For question one, “Think of a time when you were challenged to exhibit good character. What was the situation?” participant responses fit into three typical adolescent situations: school (n=54), peer relationships (n=12) and going to a party (n=4). Two responses lay outside the three main situations. Representative responses for the three major situations follow:

- “People I knew were going to a party but I knew bad things would be there so I didn’t go.”
- “There was a lot of drama going on in my group of friends. They were making me choose sides.”
- “We were going over a test in class after the teacher graded it and I found a wrong answer she had missed.”

Young adolescent developmental characteristics, interests, and needs were evident within the situations described by participants. A common adolescent social experience, the party, was a central issue for some respondents. Learning to negotiate with authority figures like teachers and coaches was also highlighted by comments such as the following: “At my high school basketball game a [referee] made and extremely bad call against me that made me foul out of the game.” A third developmental issue, exemplified by the next statement, involves identity development: “My church is applying for a new pastor. He had 3 girls that were homeschooled and very shy. I included them in games, talked to them, got to know them a little better.” This participant was demonstrating a move from egocentrism to empathy (Erikson, 1968). A maturing intellect was also apparent, “I just weighed the outcomes in my head and choose the better one.” “I used the 6 pillars to filter my decision through.”
The responses to question two, "How did you decide what you should do?" paralleled the moral development and character development literature. Responses included the following:

- "I decided not to go [to the party] because it goes against my morals and my character."
- "I thought about how it [two students cheating on a test] was unfair to other students and how they were disrespecting the teacher. I thought how it would affect everyone involved."
- "I first thought, ‘wow that’s awesome!’ then I honestly thought about YLC and what all my friends in YLC would think about me, so I got up and told him [the teacher] that I missed a day and needed to make it up."

Respondents demonstrated an inner voice of conscience as well as the ability to see beyond their own selves. They used the words “morals,” “character,” and “philosophy.” The notion of fairness, an important value in both character development and cognitive development was described. Participants wrote how they “weighed the outcomes” and “used the pillars to filter” thinking. Several respondents wanted to be “nice” or to choose “the right thing to do.”

The responses to question three, "What specifically did you do that was good character?" elicited direct language from the YLC Training and the Six Pillars of Character. This item solidified promising statistical findings. All of the pillars were represented in at least one response. Although the Responsibility pillar was the most commonly mentioned, many responses named two or three pillars.

- Trustworthiness: “I told the teacher I had one more wrong. She did not lower my grade and liked that I was honest.” “Trustworthy – I could be trusted to do what’s right.”
- Respect: “Respecting my parents wishes by staying home.” “I respected her even though I was upset with her.” (fighting with a friend)
- Responsibility: “I was responsible and went to class.” (didn’t skip with a friend). “I walked away. I showed responsibility for not fighting.”
- Fairness: “I chose to tell people to stop. I started saying good characteristics and different things about the person to make the others stop.” “Fairness – It wouldn’t be fair to other kids that were there every day.”
- Caring: “I try to be caring and respectful by doing little things like holding doors open.” “I used the pillar of caring to be nice to them instead of being mean and it ended up working because now they want to be friends.”
- Citizenship: “I kept my head up and positively cheered my teammates to a victory.” “Open the door said ‘have a good day.’”

Open-ended responses demonstrated the positive long-term impact of the YLC training on participants’ lives. Participants were able to identify specific instances where they used good character, could explain their thinking process, and could name the pillar associated with the situation. Their actions and descriptions directly aligned to the goals of the YLC Training Program as well as general character education programming.

**Discussion**

Baseline and pre test comparisons did not yield any significant difference; therefore, the results are more convincingly attributable to the training program. Pretest posttest comparisons show that there is a significant change in Time Management, Social Competence, Task Leadership, Emotional Control, and Self-Confidence and Civic Awareness and Civic Efficacy scores. The encouraging findings suggest
after participating in the program, participants have developed better abilities to perceive and effectively use their time, feel more confident in social interactions, believe they can be leaders, and think they have better control over their emotions when they are faced with stressful situations. In addition, participants are more aware of their responsibilities as citizen-leaders to improve their communities, and they felt more efficacious to create change.

Six-month follow up measures confirm maintenance of the gains and further improvement in some domains. Although Social Competence and Emotional Control subscales follow up measures are higher than the post-test scores, t-test comparison of pre test and follow up measures did not yield a statistically significant difference. After the training, participants took on active roles in their schools and communities as leaders, advocates, and role models of good character. Results imply this type of active involvement supports maintenance of the skills from the training. Examining the longer-term effects of the program is particularly important since the significant results of the post-test could have been attributed to the ephemeral effect of the cloistered experience. It appears that a one-week program can be effective in developing necessary skills to be leaders and advocates of good character. Taken as a whole, six-month sustainability suggested that YLC training appeared to have longer lasting effects on participants. The follow up measures offer more evidence for continual personal growth, providing a cumulative and additive effect of a newly created youth development program. When adolescents apply their learning into personal contexts they take ownership of the attributes of good character and behaviors of leadership. They are able to develop positively and can constructively participate in society (Larson, 2006).

The results of this study should be interpreted with caution due to some limitations. First, self-reporting measures have been used in this research and may have caused some higher-reporting or social desirability effects. In particular, since the social desirability effect has not been controlled, it is possible participants may have been responding to surveys in a way that reflect response bias. However, there is no evidence to believe the participants of this study would exhibit more response bias than any other groups in general. Limited dependent variables have been used to test the effectiveness of the program; therefore, the variables used in this study do not provide a comprehensive explanation of positive psychosocial development of adolescents. Other variables should be taken into consideration for future research. Generalizing the findings is challenging because of the limited sample size (n=28) and the characteristics of this convenient student sample. A replication of the study is recommended in different geographical areas with diverse groups of students to assess whether these results are generalizable.

Although results show positive change, some measures did not show significant change. Achievement Motivation, Intellectual Flexibility and Active Initiative subscales of LEQ-H and Connection to Community subscale of CRS were not significant on post-test measures. It is recommended that creation of future character development programs include adding content and additional activities to develop participants’ dispositions in these psychological domains. It is possible a significant difference is not observed on the domains that require a longer period of time for development, reflecting more attitudinal change or more opportunities to practice and show these personal characteristics. In addition, the YLC training program is designed for students who already have some interest in civic involvement. In other words, the program has been implemented with select students who are already highly motivated. The effect and impact of similar programs working with at-risk or other unique adolescent groups may be another interesting facet worth investigating. YLC is a flexible program that can be implemented with various groups on multiple levels and can serve as a foundation for future research. The strengths of this program are worthy of replication and the instruments used in this study are appropriate for examining character and citizenship education leadership training programs.
This study has several implications to character education and positive youth development programming literature. Unique to many character education programs, YLC is implemented outside of the school environment where participants take that learning into the school setting. This study provides results for comparative data analysis in future character education studies.

To date, the vast majority of character education programs have focused on elementary education implementations and school-wide initiatives. Adolescence is the time when individuals explore and develop a sense of identity, are more interested in social issues and civic implications, and are capable of abstract complex thinking. Youniss, Bales, Christmas-Best, Diversi, McLaughlin, and Silbereisen, (2002) stipulate “[i]t is youth’s task to make history in the future and society’s obligation to provide youth with sufficient resources and an honest basis for hope in carrying out this task” (p. 122). Character education affords students a chance to practice life skills and democratic principles. Adolescence is an appropriate time to develop civic attitudes and social responsibility, but they need support and mentorship to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of character and social responsibility.

The encouraging findings of this study suggest adolescents can benefit from similar character development programs and even a short-term character education program can be effective. This study is an example of a unique program to train leaders of character; however, more programs and evaluation studies are needed to create a body of literature regarding character development of adolescents. Adolescents are eager to explore issues, discover new perspectives, collaborate on authentic and meaningful activities, and willing to reflect and apply new learning to real-life situations. The findings of this research project affirm both the developmental attributes of adolescence and align to best practices in character education programming.

References


Training Staff to Create Caring Communities: Promises and Challenges

Laurie P. Browne
California State University, Chico
Chico, CA
lpbrowne@csuchico.edu

Jim Sibthorp
University of Utah
Training Staff to Create Caring Communities: Promises and Challenges

Laurie P. Browne
California State University, Chico

Jim Sibthorp
University of Utah

Abstract: Caring communities support the healthy growth of young people by fostering caring youth-staff relationships as well as a sense of connectedness to the people and norms within that setting. Out-of-school-time (OST) programs may be uniquely situated to serve as caring communities, particularly if staff are trained to facilitate caring activities and employ an ethic of care when interacting with youth. These processes can also be described as program design and staff implementation. Program design, which refers to the structured aspects of a program, differs from implementation, or the ways staff interacts with youth throughout the program, because design factors are typically robust to differences in individual staff members' style. Implementation, on the other hand, varies with respect to the individual staff member. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of a two-part staff training intervention focusing on program design and staff implementation on youths' sense of caring community. Findings from this study and their implications for managers of OST programs are discussed.

Introduction

Caring communities support the healthy growth of young people through caring one-on-one relationships as well as through connectedness to the people and norms that characterize the setting in general. Through caring and connectedness, caring communities are critical contexts for positive youth development. In the school setting, for example, fourth grade students who felt cared for by their teachers reported lower trait anxiety, anger, and higher coping skills than their peers who did not feel cared for by a particular teacher (Rice, Kang, Weaver, & Howell, 2008). Connectedness to
the school setting as a whole similarly contributes to desirable outcomes such as improved mental (Shochet, Dadds, Ham, & Montague, 2006), behavioral (McNeely, & Falci, 2004; Resnick, Bearman, Blum, et al., 1997), and academic (Catalano, Haggery, Oesterle, Fleming, & Hawkins, 2004) health. Given the breadth of evidence linking caring and connectedness to positive youth outcomes, it is not surprising that caring communities are considered protective environments (Resnick, et al., 1997).

Like the school setting, out-of-school-time (OST) programs offer opportunities for youth to experience a caring community. Youth-staff relationships are a particularly important characteristic in these settings because youth often form meaningful relationships with OST program staff (Rhodes, 2004). Summer day camps are OST programs that offer unique relationship-building opportunities and, as such, are considered contexts for positive youth development (Garst, Browne, & Bialeschki, 2011). Summer camps are particularly known for positive youth-staff and youth-peer relationships (Bialeschki, Henderson, & James, 2007; Thurber, Scanlin, Scheuler, & Henderson, 2007), which suggest they are ideal contexts for youth to experience a caring community. Peer relationships in OST programs are not always positive, though, as documented in Moore’s (2002, 2001) examination of processes related to race and gender discrimination among youth in day camps. Furthermore, staff in OST programs typically encounter unexpected situations and dilemmas that may inhibit the development of positive relationships (Halpern, Barker, & Mollard, 2000; Larson, Rickman, Gibbons, & Walker, 2009). Given the importance yet somewhat variable nature of youth-peer and youth-staff relationships in OST programs, it is critical that staff are trained specifically to foster a sense of caring community. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the effects of a two-part staff training focused on program design and staff implementation on youths’ sense of caring community within an OST program.

**Training Staff to Foster Caring Communities**

Training staff to foster a sense of caring community can include two primary components:

a) providing staff an intentionally designed program and training them to use it, and  
b) training staff to engage an ethic of care when they interact with youth at the point of service.

Program design represents aspects of the program that are intentionally planned in order to reach a desired outcome (Roark, Gillard, Evans, Wells, & Blauer, 2012). As extensions of a program’s goals, design features should remain consistent over time. Staff implementation, on the other hand, represents the ways individual staff members deliver structured activities. Because these factors depend on individual characteristics, implementation generally varies in relation to staff member skills, attitudes, and personalities (Ewert, & Sibthorp, 2014). Implementation factors can also include “artistic features” of a program, such as program themes and overall climate (Ellis, & Rossman, 2008). Together, design and implementation factors represent two ways OST staff can promote a sense of a caring community. These mechanisms and their conceptual underpinnings are discussed below.

**Program Design**

Intentionally designed activities are an example of a program design factor known to promote desired outcomes in youth programs (Roark, et al., 2012). Effective OST programs prioritize structured, purposeful activities over unstructured time (Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2003), perhaps because they are generally robust to individual staff members’ styles and day-to-day fluctuations in the program (Ewert, & Sibthorp, 2014). Training staff to effectively facilitate activities intentionally designed to promote caring is one way an OST program might promote a caring community. This approach may be especially promising when training young and inexperienced OST staff. In their investigation OST program staff, Halpern and colleagues (2000) found that inexperienced staff members struggled
adapting to unexpected changes in the program, leading them to conclude that program design factors, such as structured activities, provided much needed support to inexperienced staff members.

One example of an intentionally designed program is the Caring School Communities (CSC; Battistich, Solomon, Watson, & Schaps, 1997) curriculum. CSC classroom, whole-school, and community-based activities are designed to foster caring community through student-teacher relationships, student-student relationships, and within the school as a whole (Battistich, et al., 1997). Researchers have demonstrated positive effects of the CSC in the school setting, including student outcomes such as social skills and overall connectedness to school (Battistich, Schaps, & Wilson, 2004). Furthermore, the CSC appears to be relatively robust to staff implementation (Domitrovich, & Greenberg, 2000). The CSC curriculum provides a promising framework for training staff to facilitate structured activities designed to promote a sense of caring community.

**Staff Implementation**

Despite the robust nature of activities like the CSC, design factors in general depend on staff members’ implementation styles. OST program staff interact closely with youth during structured and unstructured time and each individual staff member brings personal attributes that characterize the ways they connect to program participants. Implementation factors refer to the qualities of a program that depend on the individual staff member, such as social norms, organizational climate (Eccles, & Gootman, 2002), and other “artistic factors” (Ellis, & Rosman, 2008). Smith, Devaney, Akiva, and Sugar (2009) describe the ways individual staff members interact with youth at the point of service. The effects of training teachers (Tarlow, 1996), mentors (Rhodes, 2004), and athletic coaches (Newton, Watson, Gano-Overway, Fry, Kim, & Magyar, 2007) to promote caring community is well documented; however, effective methods for training youth workers in general are less clear (Shek, & Wai, 2008).

One approach to training staff to foster caring communities focuses on helping staff to engage an ethic of care when interacting with youth at the point of service. Noddings (2003) describes an ethic of care as a bidirectional exchange between a care-giver and one in-need that starts unequal (the one in-need relies on the care giver in some way) but, through the caring exchange, both parties in time benefit equally. The point of service, or the point at which youth interact with program staff (Smith, et al., 2010), is where youth might experience a staff member’s ethic of care. Larson and colleagues (2009) contend that staff training should focus on the expertise staff need at the point of service because, when staff are trained to engage personal reasoning, they are better able to connect meaningfully with youth while navigating unexpected situations within the program. To create a caring community, then, staff must be trained how to employ an ethic of care when they interact with youth at the point of service.

Given these intertwined approaches to training staff to foster a caring community, two specific research questions informed this study:

a) Will a two-part staff training session that focuses both on program design and staff implementation increase youths’ sense of caring community more so an OST program without this staff training? and

b) Will a combination of trainings specific to program design and implementation factors affect youths’ sense of their OST program as a caring community more so than either training in isolation?
Methods

This study employed a mixed methods design to answer the research questions. Quantitative data were collected from campers via a self-report questionnaire at three different times during the program in order to examine the within-and between-subjects effects of the staff training sessions. Qualitative data were gathered from program staff at the end of the program.

Setting and Participants

Twelve male (\( N = 7 \)) and female (\( N = 5 \)) program staff members between the ages of 21 and 33 (\( M_{\text{age}} = 26 \) years) participated in this study, eight of whom attended both staff training sessions. Half of the counselors (\( N = 6 \)) had worked at the study site for two to three years, two were in their first year, and four had worked on site for four or more years. With respect to level of educational attainment, half (\( N = 6 \)) of the staff members indicated they were currently working towards an undergraduate degree, four had already earned a bachelor’s degree, and one had completed a master’s degree.

Youth at three different sites of a summer day camp completed the research questionnaires. Program fees varied depending on household income ($10/month to $400/month), with most families paying roughly $200 for each of the two available 4-week sessions. While enrollment varied from session to session, each site served between 45 and 60 youth per session; approximately 75% of whom attended both 4-week sessions. Each site maintained a 1 to 10 staff to participant ratio for a total of four to seven staff members on site each day. The overarching goal of the program was to promote positive youth development through a variety of skill-building activities. Daily activities included arts and technology, drama, sports, cooking, and outdoor adventures; field trips, guest performers, and special themed events rounded out the session. Participants were divided into age groupings (e.g., 9 and 10 year olds, 11 and 12 year olds) for certain activities each day but most activities integrated participants of all ages. Ages ranged from 7 to 14 years old.

Measurement

To measure the multidimensional nature of caring community, the concept was defined to include caring (youths’ one-on-one connections with program staff) and connectedness (youths’ connections to their peers and norms of the program in general). Independent measures of caring and connectedness were combined to form a single paper and pencil self-report instrument completed at three different times during the summer. Caring was measured with the Caring Climate Scale (Newton, Fry, Watson, Gano-Overway, Kim, & Magyar, 2009) which considers two facets of caring: (a) youth-adult interactions and (b) youths’ interactions with the group as a whole. This scale, which was developed for use in a youth sport program, is based largely on Noddings’s (2003) concept of caring and includes 14 items to which participants respond using a five-point Likert-type rating scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Items asked respondents to reflect specifically on program staff (“The leaders are kind to me”) as well as on the group as a whole (“Everyone likes one another for who they are”). This scale has demonstrated evidence of internal structure (\( \alpha = .92 \)) and content validity among 9- to 17-year-old participants in the youth sport setting (Newton, et al., 2009).

Connectedness was measured using the Camp Connectedness Scale from the American Camp Association’s Youth Outcomes Battery (ACA, 2011). This scale assesses youths’ overall relationship with the people and norms within the setting in general. In the camp context, this scale has demonstrated sound psychometric properties among 8- to 12-year-olds (\( \alpha = .87 \)). The scale is largely based on Libbey’s (2004) work on school connectedness and includes six domains: belonging, discipline and fairness, likes camp, youth voice, peer relations, safety, and staff support. Sample items included “I like the other kids” and “I feel like I belong.” Respondents completed each of the 12
items by responding to a five-point Likert-type rating scale (1 = strong disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Qualitative data were gathered through staff interviews. The site coordinators and select program staff from each of the three sites were interviewed following the intervention periods. The researcher posed open-ended questions designed to elicit reflection on the intervention and the features of the program session that may have impacted the goals of the training. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was recorded and transcribed by one of the authors.

**Procedures**

Two staff training sessions served as the intervention, one session targeted the intentional use of caring activities; the second session focused on how to engage an ethic of care at the point of service. The two treatment sites, Site A and Site B, participated in each of the training sessions at two different times; Site C served as a non-treatment condition and did not receive any study-specific staff training. Training sessions were scheduled approximately two weeks apart to allow time for the intervention to take effect. The first trainings took place following a baseline period just prior to the start of week 3 of the camp session. The second trainings took place between weeks 4 and 5. Trainings were counter balanced to account for order effects and to compare the effects of the two different training approaches (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Intervention Timeline</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Session 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time 1:</td>
<td>Baseline Phase</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Treatment Phase 1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site B</td>
<td>No Treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site C</td>
<td>No Treatment</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Youth completed questionnaires at the end of Time 1, 2, and 3, which aligned with program weeks 2, 4, and 6 respectively.

The questionnaire was administered at each site at three different times over the course of the summer: Time 1 (week 2 of the program), Time 2 (week 4), and Time 3 (week 6). Time 1 represented a baseline condition as neither sites had received the training intervention; Times 2 and 3 were selected to capture the effects of the two training sessions independently (Time 2) and in combination (Time 3). Independently, the trainings targeted program design and staff implementation respectively; the combined sessions represented the unified caring communities intervention.

The first staff training session, Caring Activities Training, targeted program design factors. Program design factors included caring activities adapted from the Caring School Communities (CSC) curriculum (Battistich, et al., 1997). The one and a half hour training took place in the evening immediately following the program and was conducted by one of the authors at the program facility. The general structure of the training included an overview of each caring activity, practice
implementing the activity, and discussion about how and when each activity would be included in the program schedule.

Staff were trained to deliver four specific caring activities. The first activity was a cross-age buddy activity designed to foster interpersonal connectedness among youth participants. The second activity was a team meeting that was used to foster behavioral norms for caring within small age-based groups. The third set of activities included caring-based team challenges designed to promote an overall sense of community in the small, age-based group. The fourth activity was a program-wide activity that was used to foster a sense of care for the community at large (Solomon, Watson, Battistich, Schaps, & Delucchi, 1996).

The second training session, the Ethic of Care Training, targeted implementation factors. Staff implementation factors were defined to include the ways staff members engage an ethic of care at the point of service. This session was based on Noddings’ (2003) conception of pedagogical caring, which includes four processes by which people adopt an ethic of care: modeling, practice, reflection, and confirmation. For modeling, the trainer role-played a caring exchange and staff discussed the elements of the exchange that were unique to caring. The trainer then facilitated dialogue about the differences between relational caring and justice-oriented caring. Discussion questions focused on when each approach is appropriate and why caring is critical for positive youth development. Each staff member practiced the caring exchange through an ethical scenario in which the primary actor faced a dilemma that involved caring for other people. Finally, the trainer facilitated a round of confirmation in which staff members shared their caring intentions for the upcoming sessions.

Data Analysis
Analysis of within- and between-subjects effects was used to examine potential differences between sites as well as changes in youths’ sense of caring community over time. Qualitative data gathered from the staff interviews were analyzed by one of the authors using thematic reduction (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2011). Interview data were inspected for themes related to staff members’ implementation of caring activities and adoption of an ethic of care. Themes were then confirmed with interviewees to ensure accurate representation of their experience with the caring communities intervention.

Results
Results of Quantitative Data
Fifty-five youth between the ages of 7 and 14 years old completed the questionnaire all three times. Fifty-three percent of the participants were male (N = 32) and 42% were female (N = 23). The average age was 10.8 years old. Table 2 outlines the means on the questionnaire at Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3 between the treatment group (Sites A and B combined) and nontreatment group (Site C). The two facets of caring community, caring and connectedness, are reported here separately.

For caring, analysis of variance between treatment and nontreatment groups revealed a significant time by treatment interaction (F(2,106) = 3.442, p < .05; partial $\eta^2 = .061$). Table 2 depicts the complete results of the analysis of variance for caring.
Table 2

Average Scores on the Caring Community Questionnaire for Sites Receiving Staff Training and Comparison Site (with Standard Deviation in Parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th>Time 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CCLS</td>
<td>CCOS</td>
<td>CCLS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A &amp; B</td>
<td>5.39 (.567)</td>
<td>5.03 (.733)</td>
<td>5.35 (.728)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site C</td>
<td>5.09 (.588)</td>
<td>4.86 (.644)</td>
<td>4.88 (.685)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Significant difference between treatment and non-treatment sites at Time 2 ($p > .05$)

The significant time by treatment interaction for caring necessitated a simple effects analysis. Results of this test revealed a significant difference between the two conditions only at Time 2 ($t = 2.17, df = 52, p = .018$). The significant difference between treatment and non-treatment groups at Time 2 suggested that Site A and B together had higher scores on caring than the comparison camp following the intervention at Time 2. However, findings at Time 3 did not show a sustained difference between the treatment and non-treatment groups.

Unlike caring, results for connectedness did not show significant differences between the treatment and non-treatment groups. Results of a polynomial contrast revealed, for connectedness, a significant and negative linear trend for time ($F(1, 53) = 7.483, p < .05$); therefore, it was determined that both the treatment and non-treatment means for connectedness decreased over time.

To address the second research question, the means of the two treatment conditions independently were compared within the combined mean of both treatment conditions. The findings did not reveal significant differences between the two trainings independently when compared with the training sessions in combination.

Results of Qualitative Data

Follow-up interviews with the site coordinators and staff members revealed the caring activities were incorporated with minimal adaptations or omissions; however, there were unexpected factors which may have influenced the impact of the staff training interventions. Youth and staff members from the comparison site (Site C), for example, were forced to relocate their program early in the summer due to a large environmental disaster that negatively impacted the park where the facility was located. The two experimental sites (Sites A and B) described a difficult cohort of youth and a notable degree of staff burnout.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of a two-part staff training intervention targeting program design and staff implementation on youths’ sense of caring community within an OST program. Caring communities were defined to include two distinct yet overlapping constructs: caring youth-staff interactions and an overall climate of connectedness within the setting as a whole. Training staff to facilitate structured activities and to engage an ethic of care at the point of service are two mechanisms through which youth might experience caring community; the findings from this study indicate that these mechanisms might impact some, but not all, aspects of caring community.
The first research question asked if the staff training intervention, which included the combined effects of the Ethic of Care and the Caring Activities sessions, impacted youths’ sense of caring community more so than traditional OST program activities. Notable among the findings specific to this question were differences between treatment and non-treatment sites on the caring aspect of the caring community variable. These differences were not found in the connectedness variable; nor were there notable differences between the two design- and implementation-focused training sessions. Therefore, the following discussion highlights the relation between the combined staff training intervention and caring youth-staff relationships within a caring community.

With respect to youth-staff relationships, youths’ perceptions of caring depended on whether or not their program leaders received the staff training intervention. A significant difference between treatment and non-treatment conditions at Time 2 suggests that the first round of staff training sessions may have impacted youths’ sense of caring. However, this difference did not result from an increase in caring at Time 2; rather, caring merely stayed level at the treatment sites and declined at the non-treatment site.

There are three potential explanations for the findings specific to the youth-staff relationships. First, it is possible that staff members receiving a specialized training implemented the activities with greater fidelity immediately following the training than in the weeks afterwards. It is also possible that the training might offset declines in caring that can occur over time. Finally, the one-time training might not have provided the dosage necessary to sustain an impact for the duration of the program. Previous studies suggest that staff training is a mechanism for promoting caring community (e.g., Battistich, et al., 2004; Newton, et al., 2007; Solomon, et al., 1996) and this study supports this notion, if only in part.

The decline in caring between Time 2 and Time 3, then, calls into question the durability of a staff training designed to promote caring community. In this study, the first program session ended and the second session began in between Time 2 and 3. While the participants of this study attended both sessions of the OST program, there was a higher than expected turnover between the two sessions. Interestingly, Sites A and B, which received each training session but in the opposite order, declined in a similar fashion, while Site C, which did not receive either of the training sessions, actually increased, albeit non-significantly, between Time 2 and Time 3. One possible explanation for this trend is that the staff training did not effectively buffer Sites A and B from the effects of challenging dynamics within the youth population and an overall sense of burnout among staff.

Post-intervention interviews revealed a relation between the staff training and a consistently disruptive youth cohort. Staff at treatment Site A, for example, reported that a large group of 12- and 13-year-old boys, most of whom had attended the program for several years, were particularly problematic, especially during the second session of the summer. In contrast, staff members from Site C indicated that the camper population was without notably disruptive cohorts; in fact, the group faced an unexpected event that, according to staff interviews, actually drew youth together and compelled them to function as a team throughout the summer.

Groups of program participants that challenge norms and processes are a known barrier to staff effectiveness in youth programs (Larson, & Walker, 2010), particularly when they go beyond staffs’ expertise at the point of service (Larson, et al., 2009). Likewise, even robust, intentionally designed activities are prone to the influence of youth characteristics (Durlak, & DuPre, 2008). OST programs with highly transient youth populations in particular often experience difficulty targeting and achieving positive youth development outcomes (Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2003), especially if youth interactions are affected by complex social dynamics related to race (Moore, 2002) and gender (Moore, 2001). In
general, the ways peer dynamics impact the extent to which a given staff training session achieves its intended outcomes are well documented (e.g., Durlak, Weissberg, & Pechan, 2010; Grossman, & Bulle, 2006).

In addition to the challenging youth cohorts, staff members from both treatment sites reported that staff member burnout negatively impacted program processes toward the end of the summer. Staff burnout is a major concern among OST practitioners, especially in programs that employ inexperienced emerging adults (Paisley, & Powell, 2007). It is possible that young adults lack the emotional maturity to withstand the dynamic nature of the youth program environment, which, in some cases, becomes increasingly stressful as the summer unfolds (Larson, & Walker, 2010). Emotional exhaustion may have caused burnout among program staff members, which, in this case, explains differences between the treatment and non-treatment sites.

It is also possible that caring, as it was conceptualized in this study, actually contributed to staff burnout. Noddings’ (2003) care theory was the framework used here to predict the nature of caring between youth and staff; Noddings’ (2003) concept of pedagogical caring served as the conceptual basis for the staff training interventions. While this study acknowledged the limitations young people might face in adopting an ethic of care, it was hypothesized that program participants could enter into a caring relation with their leaders without necessarily adopting an ethic of care of their own. According to Noddings (2003), ethical caring is not possible without a reciprocal exchange, meaning if a caring staff member does not receive care in some way, then the ethic of care is not confirmed. While Noddings does not speak explicitly to the emotional effects of an unmet extension of care, burnout, in the OST setting, is a plausible result.

In this study, OST staff participated in two trainings, one focused on program design factors and one on implementation factors, in order to assess their independent and combined effects on caring community. While no differences were found between the two training sessions, results indicate that the combined staff training may have offset the effects of negative peer cohorts and staff burnout. Declines in caring community over time are particularly interesting because they suggest staff training is promising but not necessarily sufficient mechanism to promote this multidimensional outcome.

**Limitations**

OST programs in general encompass an array of participant, staff, and program factors and the combination of these factors present many challenges to applied research in this setting. Sample size was a limitation. Staff member absenteeism and reduced meeting time may have imposed additional limitations on the findings of this study. Site coordinators in the program used in this study do not normally hold formal meetings with their staff members throughout the program and, although staff members were paid to attend the training sessions for this study, their attendance was voluntary.

**Implications for Practice**

OST programs may be uniquely situated to promote a sense of caring community, yet the ways in which program administrators train staff to foster caring community requires further attention. This study suggested that staff training may be an effective way to impact youths’ sense of caring community but, despite this finding; it is possible that a training that focuses both program design and staff implementation does not sufficiently prepare staff to promote caring community in the OST environment. Staff training “booster sessions,” or short, focused trainings that are conducted at regular intervals throughout the program session, may be one way program administrators might improve the durability of staff training sessions designed to promote caring community.
In addition to training durability, program administrators should also consider the extent to which OST staff can engage an ethic of care when interacting with youth at the point of service. While several scholars recommend OST staff are trained to respond to the dynamic nature of the OST context (e.g., Borden, et al., 2004; Larson, et al., 2009; Rhodes, 2004), this study demonstrated that training staff to engage an ethic of care has limitations. Little is known about effective staff training mechanisms in youth programs in general (Shek, & Wai, 2008), yet OST programs increasingly rely on staff to promote a myriad youth development goals (Borden, Schlomer, & Wiggs, 2004). Practitioners should make provisions for staff members’ developmental readiness to adopt an ethic of care or other areas of “expertise” that might improve staff-youth interactions at the point of service.

It is also worth considering mechanisms other than staff training, such as youth-centered initiatives, that might support the development of caring communities in OST settings. Engaging youth in meaningful decision making within the OST context is an emerging area of interest among professionals. Weiss, Little, and Bouffard (2005), for example, describe engagement as a key process by which youth participants gain the intended outcomes of the program. Practitioners interested in promoting caring community might consider ways to give youth participants the skills necessary to actively form supportive relationships with staff and with their peers.

Professionals and scholars alike should keep in mind that the techniques and processes related to OST staff training are rich in opportunities for future research. While it is generally accepted that program staff members are critical to youths’ experience in OST programs, this study suggests that staff members may be limited in their attempts to foster an overall sense of caring community among youth. Research partnerships between scholars and professionals might provide critical insight into the processes for training staff to foster a caring community.

References


Afterschool Sustainability

Hilary D. Joyce
Auburn University
Auburn, AL
hdj0002@auburn.edu

Rebecca Wade-Mdivanian
College of Social Work
The Ohio State University
Columbus, OH
wade-mdivanian.1@osu.edu

Dawn Anderson-Butcher
College of Social Work
The Ohio State University
Columbus, OH
anderson-butcher.1@osu.edu

Allison Gibson
College of Social Work
The Ohio State University
Columbus, OH
gibson.422@osu.edu
Afterschool Sustainability

Hilary D. Joyce
Auburn University

Rebecca Wade-Mdivanian, Dawn Anderson-Butcher and Allison Gibson
The Ohio State University

Abstract: Youth participation in quality extended learning opportunities (ELOs) results in positive academic, physical, mental health, and social/emotional outcomes. Funding is essential to implementing and sustaining quality ELOs; however multiple funding barriers and challenges exist. Understanding the types of funds available for ELOs and the factors that influence sustainability is critical. Through surveys and telephone interviews of ELO providers, this descriptive study identified and examined ELO funding streams, the ways ELO providers use these funding streams, and the barriers and challenges to sustainability. ELO programs often relied on one major funding stream coupled with nutrition supports as well as in-kind resources. Barriers to sustainability included year-to-year funding, transportation costs, reducing community partnerships, and difficulty in diversifying funds. Recommendations to enhance ELO sustainability are offered, particularly in relation to overcoming the challenges to diversification of funding resources and establishing mutually supportive partnerships and collaboration.

Introduction

Many youth fall behind academically due to multiple barriers to learning and healthy development. To improve youth outcomes, one key emergent strategy involves gaining control of young people’s time through extended learning opportunities. Extended learning opportunities (ELOs) are educational and positive youth development programs, services, or activities that take place before and after school, on weekends, and/or during summers (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2005). ELOs might include after school programs, extracurricular activities, tutoring interventions, and leadership clubs. ELOs occur in both school-and community-based locations and may be funded
through public and/or private dollars. They often are operated by schools, childcares, and non-profit organizations such as churches and Boys and Girls Clubs.

Research demonstrates the importance of these settings. Youth participation in high quality ELOs results in positive academic, physical, mental health, and social/emotional outcomes. More specifically, ELOs have been linked to improved student attendance and school engagement, better work habits and homework completion, reductions in grade retentions, decreased school dropout, and higher reading and mathematics scores (Afterschool Alliance, 2013; Durlak, & Weissberg, 2007; Hamilton, Le, & Klein, 1999; Lauer, et al., 2006; Vandell, Reisner, & Pierce, 2007). In addition, ELOs improve a number of social and emotional outcomes for youth such as increased self-confidence and self-esteem, enhanced school bonding, and reduced problem behaviors such as aggression (Afterschool Alliance, 2013; Durlak, & Weissberg, 2007; National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 2006; Vandell, et al., 2007). Young people participating in ELOs also derive health benefits such as increased levels of physical activity, as well as are less likely to use drugs and alcohol (Durlak, & Weissberg, 2007; Harvard Family Research Project, 2007).

Not all ELOs, however, achieve these outcomes. The degree to which ELOs create results depends on a number of quality implementation factors. Eccles and Gootman (2002) and others (Miller, 2003) identify essential quality components, including: physical and psychological safety and security; appropriate structure; the provision of emotional and moral support, supportive adult-youth relationships, strong social norms and values; and strong links among families, schools and the community. They also point to the value of ELOs in providing opportunities for skill building and mastery, belonging, and making a contribution to the community. Oftentimes the degree to which programs can implement these effective strategies and be sustainable over time depends on sufficient, stable, and diversified funding.

Funds to support ELOs support a number of different line-items. Staff and facility costs often constitute the largest share of program expenditures (Lind, Relave, Deich, Grossman, & Gersick, 2006). Funding also is needed to purchase equipment, program supplies, and food. Furthermore, sufficient funds are needed to maintain facilities and conduct program evaluations. In the end, research indicates that the cost of delivering high-quality ELOs depends on a number of variables such as the choice of program model, program location, program size, as well as participant’s age and times of operation (Grossman, Lind, Hayes, McMaken, & Gersick, 2009). Various combinations of these factors help account for the lack of firm estimates of per-student costs. But overall, costs to operate ELOs may vary from $449 to $7,160 per child per year (Lind, et al., 2006). Elementary and middle school programs cost $24 per day during the school year ($32 per day during the summer); whereas teen programs average $33 per day during the school year ($44 per day during the summer; Grossman, et al., 2009).

Despite the costs, economic analyses show that each dollar invested in at-risk children through ELOs brings a return ranging from $8.92 to $12.90 (Brown, Frates, Rudge, & Tradewell, 2002). The funding should also be stable so students, parents, and staff can rely on it from year to year. In essence, stable and sufficient funding is critical to implementing and sustaining quality ELO programs and in turn better youth outcomes. Therefore, it becomes important to look more specifically at how ELOs are funded, as well as how these funds might be further maximized and leveraged to support ongoing programming.

**Funding Mechanisms**

ELOs often rely on federal, state, and local investments to support ELOs (Finance Project, 2007). The Finance Project estimates that the annual federal investment for ELOs or afterschool initiatives is
approximately $3.6 billion dollars. In a study conducted by Grantmakers for Education (2005), a significant number of funders reported that their foundations currently provide approximately $150 million dollars per year for out-of-school time programs. Another critical element is diversifying funding streams. The degree to which programs are able to diversify funds (i.e., utilize multiple funds from different entities) impacts their ability to ensure sufficient funding. Understanding what funding streams ELOs utilize and the degree to which they diversify funding is therefore critical to examining program sustainability.

Funding Barriers and Challenges

At the same time, a number of barriers prevent the sustainability of quality programs for youth. ELO finance is often cited as one of the largest barriers to providing youth with quality opportunities (Halpern, 1999), the most common barrier is the seaming maze of different funding streams that ELO leaders confront. Leaders must figure out how to identify, access, and then utilize multiple funding streams (Eisner, 2008; Halpern, 1999; New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN, 2008). Some ELOs utilize four different funding sources, while other ELOs rely on as many as eight or nine (Halpern, 1999). Funding diversity is an asset because it enables ELOs to provide an array of programs and services to meet the often diverse needs of youth. However, these multiple sources and streams tend to have unique rules, regulations, and reporting requirements. ELOs must do more than satisfy each source’s funding requirement, they must prioritize their objectives and target populations.

In the end, what ELOs prioritize, do, and accomplish is heavily constrained if not determined by their funding sources (NYSAN, 2008). For example, many funding sources (e.g., foundations, federal grants) support starting new programs or replicating quality programs but they do not provide stable, ongoing funding to sustain existing quality programs (Grantmakers for Education, 2005). Consequently, many federally funded ELOs for low-income youth are unable or struggle to provide the same level of services after their federal grants end (Eisner, 2008). Sustainability is then compromised when ELO program developers depend on short-term grants.

Administrative management capacities are also a challenge for ELOs. In particular, contract reporting requirements, together with low administrative reimbursement rates, significantly limit providers’ abilities to effectively plan, implement, and manage cost-effective ELOs (Summers & Price, 2008). This problem is especially apparent in ELOs that rely on multiple funding streams. Place and local context also matter. In contrast to urban and suburban ELOs, rural providers face an even tougher road in trying to fund their ELOs. Specifically, leaders of rural ELOs often face lack of provider partners (i.e., rural areas may lack community businesses, universities, and foundations), limited tax base due to low socio-economic status of residents, high transportation costs, fewer funding streams that target rural areas, and may not meet the concentration of low-income students needed for some funding streams (Sandal & Bhat, 2008).

Thus, understanding the types of funds available for ELOs and the factors that influence sustainability is critical to supporting and maintaining quality programs. Data on existing funds to support ELOs and the ways in which those funds are used is a valuable place to start. As such, the purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the ways in which current programs fund and sustain ELOs and the barriers to sustainability. This might shed light on what funding streams are used and the ways these funds sustain quality programming. Additionally the examination of barriers will point to recommendations to enhance sustainability of quality ELO programs.
Study Purpose

This descriptive study had two aims:

1) To identify and examine the diverse funding streams that support extended learning opportunities (ELO) and the ways ELO providers use these funding streams to sustain quality programming and
2) To identify barriers and challenges to sustainability so that recommendations may be made to enhance the sustainability of quality ELO programs.

Methods

This study included two parts. The first part was a survey of ELO program providers across one Midwestern state, which addresses the first research aim by identifying and examining the diverse funding streams that support ELOs and the ways these funds are used. The second part examines barriers and challenges to sustainability and consisted of follow-up interviews with ELO providers. This research was approved by the university’s Office of Responsible Research Practices’ Institutional Review Board.

Participants and Data Collection

Survey participants included ELO providers in one Midwestern state. A questionnaire was administered by the state Afterschool Network to their members for completion both at a quarterly meeting and through the Afterschool Network’s listserv. Support staff from the state department of education also distributed the questionnaire to 21st CCLC grantees across the state. Data were then provided to the authors for secondary analysis. One hundred and thirty-one (N=131) ELO providers responded to the questionnaire. Respondents consisted of community-based providers (58.2%), school-based providers (25.5%), and faith-based organizations (23.4%). The respondents served pre-K children (24.1%), youth ages 5-12 (49.6%), and youth ages 13 and older (28.4%).

For the telephone interviews, the state department of education agency provided the researchers with a list of all the schools whose fifth year of the 21st CCLC funding cycle had just ended. Using this list as a sampling frame, fifty-nine participants were solicited to participate via email. Sixteen individuals returned the email. Ultimately, six (n=6) ELO providers participated in follow-up telephone interviews on sustainability. A graduate research assistant conducted and transcribed the interviews. The participants included a program coordinator (n=1), community organization representative (n=1), educational learning center staff (n=3), and a school superintendent (n=1). Of the six ELO programs, 1 ended after the 21st CCLC grant ended, 4 programs continued with some programming cuts, and 1 program was renewed for a new five year cycle with 21st CCLC grant funds. None of the programs maintained without any program changes after the 21st CCLC grant ended.

Measures and Data Analysis

In collaboration with leaders at the Afterschool Network, the authors developed the Afterschool Funding Survey, to elicit input from a large ELO stakeholder group. The first part of the survey asked about program information such as location of the program (e.g., school-based, community-based). The second part consisted of items related to the financial resources utilized. Financial resources used were measured with a list of 52 financial resources (Table 1). For each financial resource the response categories included “currently receive this funding,” “have received this funding in the past but not currently,” “have never used this funding source,“ or “don’t know.” At the end of this section, one open-ended item asked respondents to indicate any other financial resources they use that were not listed. The third section assessed use of in-kind resources. One open-ended item asked respondents to list the source of any in-kind services or resources they have secured for the ELO
program. The final section measured funding barriers. Funding barriers were assessed with a list of nine funding barriers. Survey respondents were asked to indicate to what degree they believed the funding barriers were evident in their experiences. The nine barriers included stringent eligibility requirements, administrative requirements (such as paperwork), funding that is year-to-year, reimbursement-based funding, narrowly defined allowable services, funding transportation costs, funding professional development costs, and evaluation. Response categories included “not a barrier,” “somewhat of a barrier,” or “a significant barrier.” Survey responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Table 1
Afterschool Funding Survey Funding Streams

**Education Funding**
- 21st Century Learning Centers
- Title I: Supplemental Education Services Funds
- Title I: Grants to Local Education Agencies
- Safe and Drug Free Schools Funds
- GEAR UP: State Grants and Partnership Grants
- Inexpensive Book Distribution Program
- Arts in Education Federal Funds
- Poverty-Based Assistance Funds
- Safe Schools/Health Students Initiative
- District General Revenue Funds

**Health and Human Services Funding**
- Community Development Block Grant-County
- Community Development Block Grant-City
- Title XX Social Services Block Grant
- Title IV-E: Foster Care for Independent Living Funds
- Title IV-B: Child Welfare Funds
- Medicaid
- Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities Initiative
- Health Schools, Health Communities
- Drug-Free Community Program
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Funds-County
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Funds-County

**Labor and Economic Development Funding**
- AmeriCorps
- Cooperative Extension: 4-H Youth Development Program
- TRIO: Upward Board or Talent Search
- Federal Work Study Program
- Job Corps
- Volunteers in Services to America (VISTA)
- Workforce Investment Act (WIA)
A semi-structured interview guide consisting of 12 questions helped guide the sustainability interviews. The questions related to topics such as the status of the program, sustainability, and partnerships. Example questions included “What strategies did you use (or do you recommend using) to promote the sustainability of the 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) program?” and “What barriers/challenges have you encountered related to program continuation?” The interview responses were examined by a content analysis of themes using an inductive approach (Patton, 1990). Conceptual themes emerged through the data coding process, as recommended in qualitative research (Glaser, & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln, & Guba, 1985; Miles, & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). To establish trustworthiness and ensure integrity of the data analysis, two researchers independently reviewed the interview responses (Barker, & Pistrang, 2005; Miles, & Huberma, 1994).

**Results**

**Financial Resources Utilized**
Table 2 illustrates the funds most frequently used organized by fund area (e.g., education, health and human services). Across the fund areas, the most often used funding source was 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) funds (62.7%, n=82). The second most commonly used was
Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) county (29%, n=37) and state (21.8%, n=28) funds and Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) funds (19.7%, n=25). 21st CCLC funds are intended to extend the school day and/or year to provide opportunities for academic enrichment, while TANF funds may be used to support afterschool and summer programs for low-income youth. CCDF funds are geared to support the childcare needs of low-income families. Among the nutrition funds, respondents reported that their ELOs used the Summer Food Program (33.6%, n=44), National School Lunch Program (29.5%, n=38), Child and Adult Food Care (22%, n=28), and the School Breakfast Program (20.2%, n=26). In addition, many ELO programs received funding and other resources from key local entities, particularly United Way, local foundations, local businesses/corporations, and local food banks. In addition, ELO programs utilized a fee-for-service/parent pay system (39%, n=51), fundraising (21.3%, n=27), and community-based organizations (13.1%, n=17).

Reliance on one major funding stream, coupled with food/nutrition supports was the most common funding combination. Respondents whose ELOs received 21st CCLCs often did not have other types of funding resources supporting their programs. For instance, only 11% (n=14) of respondents with 21st CCLCs also received Supplemental Educational Service (SES) funds; only 17.6% (n=23) used fee-for-service; and only 20% (n=26) also received TANF dollars. Only 20% (n=26) receiving 21st CCLC also tapped into general revenue, poverty-based assistance, or United Way supports. Respondents whose ELOs used fee-for service/parent pay systems rarely used other funding streams.

Less Frequently Used Financial Resources
Few respondents indicated that their ELOs used competitive federal funding streams that support afterschool (i.e., federal programs such as the Drug-Free Communities Support Program). Few respondents reported that their ELOs accessed juvenile justice and delinquency prevention and/or WIA dollars. For example, only 1.6% (n=2) of respondents utilized Title V: Block Grant Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention funds and only 1.6% (n=2) accessed Local Law Enforcement Block Grant funds. With the exception of poverty-based assistance funds, respondents reported that their ELOs tended not to access potential funds within school districts. Specifically, only 14.9% (n=19) of ELO respondents received Supplemental Education Services funds; 10.6% (n=13) accessed Safe and Drug-Free School funds; and 14.4% (n=18) utilized Title I dollars in their programs. Respondents indicated that very few ELOs were able to capitalize on funds available through city governments. Only 4.3% (n=5) of respondents were tapping city general revenue funds and only 10.7% (n=14) were using local tax dollars for their ELOs.

A few respondents (< 5) mentioned that they had accessed other competitive, federal programs, not mentioned in the survey, such as the Carol White Physical Education Grant and Full-Service Schools Program through the U.S. Department of Education. Others mentioned funding from a Center for Disease Control HIV Prevention program grant. Still others received dollars from their national organizations such as pass through dollars within the Boys and Girls Club of America. Some sites tapped into permissible line items, such as the Ohio Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs, in the state’s budget.
## Table 2
Funding Streams Utilized by ELO Providers in one Mid Western State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Stream</th>
<th>% Utilizing Funding Stream</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21st Century Community Learning Center</td>
<td><strong>62.7</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District General Revenue Funds</td>
<td>20.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poverty Based Assistance</td>
<td>18.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supplemental Education Services</td>
<td>14.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title 1 LEA</td>
<td>14.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safe and Drug-Free Schools</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gear Up</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe Schools/Healthy Students</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts in Education</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health and Human Services</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)-County</td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TANF-State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Development Block Grant-City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities Initiative</td>
<td>4.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Development Block Grant-County</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicaid</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title IVE Foster Care or Independent Living Funds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title IVB Child Welfare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drug-Free Communities Program</td>
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<td><strong>Local and Private Dollars</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fee-for-Service/Parent Pay</td>
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<td>United Way</td>
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<td>Local Foundations</td>
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<td>Fundraising Activities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Nutritional</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer Food Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>National School Lunch Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child and Adult Food Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Breakfast Program</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Multipurpose Funds</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prevention, Retention, and Contingency Program Funds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Tax Dollars</td>
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<td>City General Revenue Funds</td>
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**Labor and Economic Development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workforce Investment Act</td>
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</table>

**Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Funding</th>
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<tr>
<td>Local Law Enforcement Block Grants</td>
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**In-Kind Resources Utilized**

Many respondents were effective in securing in-kind resources that can support quality programming for their ELOs. Respondents reported securing in-kind resources in three main areas: logistics, personnel support, and materials/supplies. Logistics included facilities, space, utilities, and transportation (e.g., school buses, bus tokens). Examples of personnel support included college interns and volunteers (e.g., AmeriCorps, America Reads). Examples of materials and supplies included educational materials, copiers, equipment, cabinet space, access to computers and technology, televisions, and phones.

**Barriers to Accessing and Utilizing ELO Financial Resources**

The most frequently endorsed funding barriers were funding that is year-to-year (57.3%, n=75), funding transportation costs (53.9%, n=70), and stringent eligibility requirements (49.2%, n=64). In addition to these barriers respondents reported that funding food costs (37.1%, n=48), narrowly defined allowable services (34.2%, n=44), reimbursement-based funding (31.5%, n=41), and funding professional development (31%, n=40) were barriers to sustaining their ELOs. Importantly, respondents reported several evaluation challenges, such as trouble securing funding for evaluation, problems finding quality evaluators, and the need for professional development and quality improvement processes that build from evaluation findings.

**Sustainability Interview Themes**

From the interviews three broad themes emerged: facilitators of sustainability, consequences of limited funding, and barriers to sustainability. More details on the emergent themes are described next.

**Facilitators of Sustainability**

The origins of the programs appeared to impact whether or not the program was able to sustain after 21st CCLC funding ended. For example, programs with a long historical presence in the community were more likely to stay intact even after 21st CCLC funding was discontinued while those that started specifically as a result of 21st CCLC ended when the 21st CCLC money discontinued. One participant noted, “Love the concept of start-up-but is it working? No. Where is the viability data?” Therefore, some programs felt that newer programs could not sustain from 21st CCLC.

State, community, and school level support also was critical to program continuation. Such support included linkages to the state Afterschool Network and other local groups supporting afterschool sustainability. Other forms of support such as formal or informal mentorship and collaboration between school districts may be particularly helpful for new programs. One participant highlighted that competition for resources may hinder collaboration,

“We are all working toward the same goal, we’re all in this together and we need to be collaborating. The competitiveness compromises our student’s education and development.”
Buy-in from school-level administrators was also identified as critical to sustainability. The strongest partnerships appeared to be the ones where programs were not just asking for help, but trying to make a win-win with community partners.

Finally, programs that sustained diversified their funding as much as possible to access as many funding sources as they could. Some programs, particularly those in rural areas, believed they could sustain longer with continued 21st CCLC funding in smaller amounts over longer periods of time. One participant stated,

“What we need is 50% from the state and we can get the other 50% from other resources. ODE needs to have partial funding in programs continuously in order for programs to sustain. It’s a snowball effect in decline. By having our relationship with ODE funding, we are able to provide a ‘leveraging effect’ and access additional donations.”

The leveraging effect aids programs in securing additional financial resources that could help them to sustain. However, some noted that fund raising-to access diverse funds-was not a big focus.

**Consequences of Limited Funding**

As a result of limited funding, some interview respondents identified ways of coping such as charging participants. However, charging participants often resulted in lower participation. Respondents in rural and impoverished communities did not feel they could charge for services at all due to the unemployment rate of families using the program. Others noted parents of younger children were more willing to pay a small fee as the program was seen as babysitting whereas getting parents to invest in paying for services for older children who were perceived as more independent was a challenge. One respondent described this challenge,

“Charging fees is necessary, but it’s easier to sell fees to parents with younger kids. Older kids don’t need the supervision aspect, so for parents they are less likely to pay for afterschool programs.”

Other respondents acknowledged that limited funding often times results in fewer program opportunities. One respondent highlighted this dilemma by stating, “If you can’t provide the Cadillac of programs, you’ve got to make it work with the Kia.” Another consequence of limited funding is that staff dedicated to making and maintaining partnerships are diminishing, which may result in fewer program partnerships. The liaison role is often critical to maintain partnerships as one respondent stated, “Really enjoyed partnership relationship, but they will likely deteriorate because of lost liaison role.” The respondents observed that others do not have time to maintain these relationships in the way that a dedicated liaison could.

Finally, lack of funding to support administration costs was identified. One respondent received multiple local grants for supplies (i.e., Time Warner donated computers), but they did not obtain any money to help administer or sustain the program. Respondents tried to reduce program costs by, for example, reducing transportation costs by incentivizing parents to pick up their children. Families received $1.50 voucher for gas for every 6 miles they have to drive to pick up their kids from the afterschool program. Additionally, to help reduce costs, some respondents discussed incorporating high school students to volunteer to be tutors for the middle school students.

**Barriers to Sustainability**

Another theme emerging from the interviews centered on barriers to program sustainability. The respondents noted that community partnerships are reducing. These linkages “needed to happen” between schools and programs, but were less likely to happen or are non-existent with 21st CCLC funds. Diversifying funds was also a challenge for many. For example, respondents from smaller
organizations found themselves in a constant struggle between limited funding and dedicating time to apply for and manage smaller grants. One respondent articulated,

“It's too hard to go after the small grants (unrealistic to believe it's worthwhile) as they are too short and too time consuming and they create a false state of sustainability.”

This is further complicated by the fact that certain resources will only cover a particular percentage of program costs. For example, the area United Way will not pay for more than 25% of a program.

Interview respondents from rural areas noted unique struggles to sustainability. Rural communities felt that there was too much emphasis from 21st CCLC on getting sustainability support from local industries and businesses, which is often not a viable option in isolated areas. One respondent put this struggle into words,

“We have a great need for our program, however, with unfunded mandates and reduced funding across the board in education, such programs are difficult to sustain without outside help. In our area, that help is just not there. Mom and Pop businesses are struggling and strapped although many are very generous in providing support to other programs.”

**Discussion**

This research provides key insights into the funding nuances associated with ELOs. Given the importance of ELOs, especially those that are implemented with fidelity and sustained over time, an understanding of the types of funding used, the challenges and barriers, and the facilitators of long term sustainability is imperative. There are several key findings.

Respondents reported that their ELOs primarily relied on one major funding stream coupled with food/nutrition resources; therefore most respondents reported that their ELOs did not diversify their funding resources. Diversifying funding streams is critical to sustaining quality programs. This study identified a number of potential funding streams for ELO providers to consider. For example, respondents in this study reported that their ELOs primarily used 21st CCLC, TANF, and CCDF funds, which are all federal block grants for which states and local agencies apply through a competitive grant process. Further, while few respondents reported that their ELOs used juvenile justice and delinquency prevention and/or WIA dollars, these, among others (e.g., Safe and Drug Free Schools) represent additional funds that could be explored to diversify ELO funding resources. Respondents also indicated that their ELOs used in-kind resources in the form of logistics (e.g., facilities), personnel support (e.g., college interns), and materials/supplies (e.g., computers, technology). Partnerships with schools, universities, and local businesses are often needed to secure such resources. In the end, the findings point to a need for more training on identifying and securing diverse funding streams as well as cultivating partnerships to ensure sustainable quality programs.

Many challenges get in the way of sustainability. Both survey and interviews found that funding barriers and other barriers to sustainability exist. The most prevalent funding barriers include year-to-year funding, funding transportation costs, and stringent eligibility requirements. Interview respondents also identified barriers to sustainability such as reducing community partnerships and challenges to diversifying funds. While diversifying funds can help sustain a program, smaller programs have difficulty dedicating the time needed to locate and apply for the funds. Additionally, diversifying funding streams requires ELOs to meet a variety of enrollment and evaluation requirements from various funding agencies creating enormous paperwork responsibilities. This challenge is often compounded when funders do not allow for administrative costs to be reimbursed.
The interviews also shed light on the facilitators for funding and sustainability. These include programs with a long, historical presence, state, community, and school support, particularly in the form of partnerships, and diversifying funds. Although diversifying funds can present challenges (such as increased need for fiscal oversight and competence), those who are able to successfully diversify funding resources report that this contributes to their sustainability. For example, a few ELO leaders have been able to blend and braid federal funding streams to support programming. Specifically, some ELOs have been successful in utilizing CCDF and 21st CCLCs simultaneously. By blending and braiding these funds, these ELOs have been able to maximize the number of children served by their programs. Further, in an effort to maximize funding streams, innovative partnerships have been developed among community agencies and local school districts. In some case, local community agencies work with school-based 21st CCLCs to provide a specific component of a comprehensive ELO program. These community agencies are often funded by a variety of local or state foundations to provide programming to target a specific need or student population. By partnering with the 21st CCLC, the community provider has access to their youth participants and the ELO was provided with an enrichment activity free of charge.

**Implications**
Study findings point to a number of important implications related to sustainability. There is a need for diversifying funding sources to enhance program sustainability. In order to diversify, ELO programs should be aware of what funding streams are available. Specifically, ELO program staff and administrators need to understand private and public dollars, how to leverage these dollars, and be aware of grant cycles. Leaders within ELOs also need training or personnel support to write grants, build and cultivate relationships with funders, and manage grant administrative requirements. In particular, professional development and training on the grants that provide the largest amounts of dollars is needed. ELO programs also need financial resources to invest in personnel who are able to manage multiple funders’ administrative requirements, as well as the integration of funds to support program administrations.

Establishing and promoting partnerships and buy-in from multiple stakeholders (e.g., community, schools) may also be useful in sustaining ELO programs. For instance, university partnerships may offer personnel support such as college interns while business partnerships might provide supplies such as computers or printers. In addition to in-kind benefits, partners may also supply technical assistance. In particular, personnel with experience administering TANF may provide technical assistance and support to local ELO providers around TANF documentation and allowable expenses under TANF would be beneficial. Those with more knowledge are often more successful with accessing the funds. In some cases a staff liaison who is able to make and develop these partnerships may be warranted. Grant makers may be particularly mindful of the challenges rural localities experience. For example, smaller amounts of money over a longer period of time may be more beneficial to sustain rural ELO programs.

These partnerships are particularly critical. Often ELOs are operating in silos, alone and not connected to schools, businesses, or community agencies. The best models are ones where multiple organizations and funders partner together in a comprehensive way to share outcomes and programming for youth. These seem to be more sustainable, as well as often make a greater impact on youth outcomes (Anderson-Butcher, 2004). In the end, the findings point to key funds that ELOs might use and a need for diversification. If ELOs do this, then there is the potential to build more sustainable ELOs that can be implemented with fidelity overtime and contribute to better academic and social-emotional outcomes, especially among youth that need it most.
Limitations
As with any study, findings should be interpreted with caution. Foremost, the findings are based on only a small number of respondents (N=131) from ELOs in one Midwestern state. The sample is not representative of the broad, diverse ELO providers in the state. Further, only one person from each organization completed the survey. These individuals may or may not know the entire fiscal picture of their ELO. Since there is no centralized database of ELO providers across the state, the ELO providers who participated in this study were limited to those who are on the state Afterschool Network or 21st CCLC grantee listserv. Likely there are ELO providers across the state who are not on the Afterschool Network or 21st CCLC grantee listserv. Because they are not on these lists, these providers’ perspectives are not included in this report. Also, ELO providers with program designs that do not fall into the broad “afterschool program” arena were not necessarily targeted within this project. Likewise, 21st CCLC grantees on the other hand may be over-represented. Most likely missing are perspectives from leaders operating other types of programming (i.e., traditional child care, faith-based, workforce preparation program, etc.).

Conclusion
Quality ELOs yield a number of positive outcomes for youth. However, sustaining such programs is often complicated by funding barriers, decreasing community partnerships, and challenges to diversifying funds. Overcoming the challenges to diversification of funding resources and establishing mutual partnerships may be critical to enhancing program sustainability. Ultimately, investments of time, funds, and energy may be fruitful to creating quality extended learning opportunities programs that sustains overtime and produces positive academic and social emotional outcomes for youth.

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References


Evidence of Self-Directed Learning on a High School Robotics Team

Nathan R. Dolenc
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, VA
nrd3fp@virginia.edu

Claire Mitchell
Albion College
Albion, MI
cmitchell@albion.edu

Robert H. Tai
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, VA
rht6h@virginia.edu
Evidence of Self-Directed Learning on a High School Robotics Team

Nathan R. Dolenc and Robert H. Tai
University of Virginia

Claire Mitchell
Albion College

**Abstract:** Self-directed learning is described as an individual taking the initiative to engage in a learning experience while assuming responsibility to follow through to its conclusion. Robotics competitions are examples of informal environments that can facilitate self-directed learning. This study examined how mentor involvement, student behavior, and physical workspace contributed to self-directed learning on one robotics competition team. How did mentors transfer responsibility to students? How did students respond to managing a team? Are the physical attributes of a workspace important? The mentor, student, and workplace factors captured in the research showed mentors wanting students to do the work, students assuming leadership roles, and the limited workspace having a positive effect on student productivity.

**Introduction**

Self-directed learning is described as an individual taking the initiative to engage in a learning experience while assuming responsibility to follow through to its conclusion. The focus of this case study was to examine evidence of self-directed learning (SDL) among students and their mentors on a high school robotics competition team. Research has found that SDL is connected with continued development of individuals into life-long learners who also appear to accept greater responsibility for their own learning (Abraham, Upadhya, & Ramnarayan, 2005). In addition, other researchers have found that self-directed learners appear to have a greater awareness of their own learning (Garrison, 1997) and appear to feel empowered to monitor their own progress within a learning activity (Ellinger, 2004). According to Knowles (1975), self-directed learners inquire and research new content knowledge that they are curious about and are willing to take on new challenges and solve difficult problems. Long (1990) also found self-directed learners to be persistent and independent. It seems
reasonable to say that some degree of SDL could exist in most learning situations, formal or informal (Guglielmino, 2008).

Robotics competitions are examples of informal learning environments that can facilitate student SDL. In recent years, robotics programs have become popular across the K-12 spectrum, e.g. FIRST™, Vex™, and Bot Ball™. Research has found a number of positive associations between participation in robotics learning activities and science process skills as well as students’ attitudes toward science (Bers, & Portsmore, 2005; Mataric, Koering, & Feil-Seifer, 2007; Welch, 2010).

However, constructing a robotics program with the goal of creating conditions for student-focused SDL to occur requires not only student participation but also adult mentors possessing a working knowledge of pedagogy and an environment conducive to learning. Mentor involvement plays an important role in robotics programs as their level of guidance and directive may impact students' self-directed behavior. Additionally, the physical environment can influence engagement and contribute to student-focused SDL (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004).

The goal of this study was to examine if, and how three factors (mentors' role, student behavior, and physical characteristics of a work environment) support the existence of student SDL on a high school robotics team. An examination of these three factors may inform researchers and practitioners in out-of-school time (OST) STEM education fields about the mechanisms associated SDFL and how to better foster SDL on the part of students.

We sought to address the following research questions:

1. What roles and behaviors do mentors take that contribute to student self-directed learning on a robotics program?
2. How, if at all, does student behavior align with characteristics of self-directed learning?
3. What facets of the physical work environment contribute to student self-directed learning?

Framework

This case study examined one high school robotics team that we refer to as “Team Faraday,” to answer our research questions. In order to make sense of the data collected, we applied a self-directed learning theory to gain greater insight into how Team Faraday’s mentor involvement, student behavior working together, and the physical working environment contributed to building their robot and achieving their goals.

Self-Directed Learning Theory

In this study, we used a self-directed learning theory lens to focus on the individual students as the learners. Through this lens, learners are expected to learn autonomously and assume responsibility for their own progress (Caffarella, 1993). SDL emphasizes that learners take up independent roles in setting their own goals and employing strategies to reach those goals (Garrison, 1997). It is achieved when the appropriate experiences, encouragement, and learning tools and resources are present. SDL does not equate to working alone as it often requires learners to work in collaboration, to self-manage social settings and resources, and to take actions that regulates their own cognitive learning strategies (Garrison, 1997; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2012; Khodabandehlou, Jahandar, Seyed, & Abadi, 2012).

The role of a teacher, or in this case stay, a mentor, in the SDL process is to act as a facilitator cultivating the learner’s ability to learn instead of assuming they have the responsibility for what and
how the learner should be taught (Grow, 1991). Mentors may contribute to student learning by being a point-of-reference, organizing meetings for students to discuss current challenges and issues, or even encouraging students to monitor and evaluate their own method of progress.

**Methods**

Qualitative case study methodology was used to conduct an in-depth exploration of a single high school robotics team during their six-week building season (Stake, 1995). We searched for matching patterns between the SDL framework and the factors of mentoring involvement, student behavior, and the physical working environment as a way of relating data to a proposition, which is often seen in case studies (Yin, 2009).

**Team Settings and Participants**

In the year of this study, Team Faraday was in its sixth year overall, but only in its third year as a community-based team after breaking away from what mentors called “the bureaucracy of a school-based team.” In the formation of their community-based team, meaning they accepted students from a variety of schools, they found basement space in an administration building of a different school to use for their workspace. Team Faraday was located on a campus of a private boarding school located in a rural mountain town in the northeast United States. The adult leaders converted a small photography lab into a workspace that housed their computers, electrical equipment and setup area, and small table machinery. The hallway leading to their workspace and two nearby even smaller music rooms were occasionally used for breakout or small group discussions.

The team consisted of twenty high school students and six mentors. Eleven of the students were boarding students from the on-site private school with the other nine students from two public schools in nearby towns. Three of the students were female. All students were Caucasian except one female student was African American. Team Faraday did not have a significant age concentration making for a more even split of students across the four high school grade levels. The six mentors on Team Faraday had background and career experience in information technology, computer science, mechanical and electrical engineering, and community service. Their background and content knowledge equipped them with a familiarity needed in facing most challenges in designing and building a robot for competition.

The year of this study, in 2012, the not-for-profit company responsible for organizing the competition challenged teams to design and build a robot to compete in a game that involved shooting foam basketballs and balancing on teeter-totter bridges. In order to score points, robots needed to be designed to shoot or place foam basketballs through one of four hoops positioned at three different heights: a low level hoop, two medium level hoops, a high level hoop. The higher the hoop the more points were awarded. Teams could also score points by designing their robot to balance on a teeter-totter bridge. If teams managed to balance with other robots in the game they were awarded bonus points.

Team Faraday had six weeks to design and build a robot before they were required to seal their robot in a giant plastic bag. Once sealed and time stamped, they could not open their robot again until their regional competition. The team met during the six week building season Monday through Saturday. Meetings lasted for five hours after school during the week and six hours on Saturday.

**Data Sources and Analytical Approaches**

Team Faraday was selected due to its sufficiently rich data that highlighted mentors’, students’, and the workplace environment’s contribution to student SDL on a high school robotics team
Data were collected from both first-person observations and interviews of participants during their building season. Pseudonyms were used for the names of the mentors, students, and the team who participated in this study.

In-person observations were conducted during one six-hour team working session. Observations focused on mentor involvement, mentor and student interactions, student behavior, team actions toward completing tasks, and comments made during work. Data collected from observations were used to explain our research questions through matching patterns with SDL framework. Observations focused on confirming mentors acting as facilitators rather than assuming responsibility, students assuming responsibilities for decision making, and how the physical environment contributed to student engagement, as posited by SDL theory.

Interviews with mentors and student members were also conducted, recorded, transcribed, and later confirmed by the interviewee. The lead mentor was interviewed by phone prior to in-person observations. All other mentors and students were face-to-face interviews conducted on-site. Mentors and students interviewed on-site stepped away from their current task to be interviewed. Along with the lead mentor, two other mentors were also interviewed on-site. Four students from Team Faraday were interviewed, and were selected based on their held leadership positions. Mentors and students were asked the same series of open-ended questions beginning with the interviewee being asked to explain the robotics game and what kind of robot they were building. The interview continued by inquiring about their initial interest in robotics, what their responsibilities were on the team, how their robotics team was structured and functioned, and what they, the students and mentors, were gaining by being on their robotics team. Interviews were flexible to explore further areas of interest that appeared during the interview in addition to answering the series of predetermined questions. In addition, impromptu questions were asked to mentors and students who appeared to step back from their line of work during their working sessions. These impromptu questions captured real time responses and immediate reflections and real time regarding the ongoing planning, progress, and work of the team. As with our observations, interview data collected was used to explain our research questions through our SDL frameworks lens.

Our SDL framework shaped how we coded the observational and interview data. Coding resembled the three factors discussed in this study in detail: mentor involvement, student behavior, physical characteristics. Coding for mentor involvement involved combing the data for how mentors worked with students, what challenges they had with students, what they felt students on their team were gaining by designing and building a robot, and what mentors viewed as their teaching vision or philosophy. Coding for student behavior looked for levels of student engagement, responsibility, and decision making on their team, ways in which students interacted with their mentors and peers, and reasons for their interest in being on a robotics competition team. Coding for physical characteristics involved examining descriptions of the workspace and how team members interpreted their space. The themes that emerged from the data fell under the SDL framework and gave rise to evidence that were used to support answers to our research questions.

**Findings**

The following section presents evidence of student-focused SDL from the perspective of the mentor involvement, student behavior, and physical workspace on Team Faraday.

**Mentor Involvement**

The mentors on Team Faraday described their desire to move the balance of the working relationship between themselves and the students to a format of having students do most of the decision-making
and work toward building their robot. They expressed concerns that mentors who possessed a highly directive nature toward their students would lead to a scenario where students were not learning. Encapsulating this, Andy, a mentor on Team Faraday, explains their team’s mentoring approach:

“If you take somebody and you try to teach them how to do something, about the fourth iteration they start unlearning it. This is occasionally called ‘drill and kill.’ If you teach somebody how to do something by doing it with them and then you back off and let them do it and then go through a Q/A [quality assurance] process with them, which is teaching another important skill, that you always check your work with yourself and another person, then they know it forever. You’re guiding self-teaching. You’re helping them learn it themselves...people learn better by doing.”

Mentors displayed characteristics of contributing to a SDL environment by acting as guides or facilitators while encouraging students to take the lead in working on their robot. They also promoted to students the importance of monitoring their progress by checking their own work. Beth, a mentor, states, “If you don’t know how to do it, we will show you how to do it. We want the kids to do it.”

As part of their ‘taking a step back’ approach, mentors routinely allowed students to make mistakes and experience failure. Beth describes a former student on the team learning through failure about certain materials for their robot:

“There was this one girl who was insistent that she was going to use acrylic to make this shield. And, acrylic is really brittle. She cut it thirteen times before she finally realized and said, ‘You know, I think I need to use something else,’ but those are the things the kids still remember and talk about.”

The working environment the mentors created was safe and allowed room for students to experiment, explore their own ideas, and make mistakes. They maintained this even though they understood and felt the challenges of creating such an environment as they saw their students make mistakes without stepping in. Andy expresses this effort by saying, “The hardest thing as a mentor is that you have to be able to back off and go ‘Ok, let them learn.’”

There were several positive student outcomes the mentors believed were associated with their approach to working with their students. They saw improvements in students’ self-confidence, abilities to work in groups, and creativity. Beth and Andy describe what the students are gaining on their team:

Beth: “There’s a lot of growing up they would do anyway going from a fourteen year old to an eighteen year old, but the robotics program gives them an incredible amount of self-confidence. Because it’s such a huge project for them that when they come out on the other side, having accomplished this, no matter how big of a role that they have they feel like they can accomplish anything.”

Andy: “Creativity comes out of this because a creative person will look at a problem and especially when they’ve hit that engineering brainset and it starts to tick over they’ll start figuring out an easier way to do it or a better way to do it or a more efficient way to do it and they’ll start looking for ways to apply what they know before to this and you [mentors] kind of want to just fan that fire, you want to make it grow.”
The mentors on Team Faraday took steps to ensure students were making the decisions and doing the work on the team's robot. They acted as a person-of-resource stepping in when students wanted to learn how to do something and as a guide asking leading and confirmatory questions to help students monitor their work. Mentors also saw the benefits of students taking responsibility for the work that need to be completed as they knew these skills would help the students develop and grow as individuals and as a team.

**Student Behavior**

Students quickly adapted to taking over responsibilities and opportunities. They expressed an eagerness to make the tasks at hand their own as they led discussions about particular issues, solved problems that suddenly appeared, and progressed forward with building their robot design mostly without a mentor’s aid. Students only referred back to mentors when they had completed a task and were looking for another, more experienced person to check their work. Overall, they realized mentors played a large role on their team, but checked in with them when help was needed or to review their completed work.

*Solving a Frame Mistake: A Narrative*

The following is a narrative describing how students, while working on their robot frame, discovered a problem and solved it. The narrative is an example of students displaying SDL as they self-managed themselves and took initiatives to solve the problem.

Five students gathered in the center of the room to inspect their newly arrived frame, which now sat on two metal saw horses. The sole mentor in the room stood back to watch and listen. The team had outsourced the labor of welding their metal frame to a local business, and now, they were eager to assemble their robot. The students were discussing where the pneumatic cylinder devices would be placed on the frame in order to lower their omni drivetrain down far enough to raise the entire robot slightly off the ground, disengage the standard drivetrain, and allow the robot to move in any direction. Their conversation quickly turned to mathematics as a couple of students chimed in with calculations for solving the problem. While the conversation was slowly escalating in volume, a sixth student sitting in front of a desktop computer with a computer-assisted drawing (CAD) had his head on a swivel looking back and forth between the drawing and the robot. He got up out of his chair, found a measuring tape, and forced his way to the robot to measure its width. He then delivered some bad news. The frame was an inch and a half wider than originally designed. The students now had the dual problems of finding the vertical and horizontal locations to place the pneumatic cylinders. The mentor continued to stand back and watch events unfold in front of him. Jason, a mentor, mentioned, "My objective each year is to not pick up a tool. I fail every year because someone usually ends up needing help, but I want to take a sitting-on-hands approach."

Frustrations were mounting as the students were trying to comprehend the issue and develop working solutions to fix the problem. A couple of students gave quick suggestions, but no solutions were agreed upon. Some students knew the welding mishap to be part of a larger problem and could lead to further problems down the line. Brian, the student team captain, knew of this issue:

"Space on the robot is our biggest challenge this year because, you know, we have so many different mechanisms on the robot. We have a way to get the balls into the robot, a way to shoot them, and then of course our drivetrain. Then we have all the electronics stuff, and it's always a challenge, but it's really been a challenge this year. And once we hopefully all figure it out of course the next challenge is weight because we have a maximum weight limit. So,
that’s going to be a big challenge for us to see if we make that weight limit and if we don’t….It’s happened before where we’ve exceeded the weight limit but we just have to figure out how we don’t.”

The students finally decided to suspend the cylinders on metal clamps instead of mounting them directly to the internal portion of the frame as originally planned. This would allow the omni drivetrain to be lowered properly and still not add too much additional weight to the robot. As the decision was made, the mentor stepped in for a moment to ask confirmatory and guided questions about where the drill holes were going to be placed and how they were going to attach the cylinders. The mentor nodded as one student answered his questions, and eventually stepped back to let the students continue their work.

The narrative gives evidence to support of the existence of a student-focused SDL environment. Students assumed it was their responsibility to assemble the robot once the frame returned to their workspace. Their self-direction led them to discuss in groups what needed to be assembled, address problems, make and evaluate suggestions, and agree upon a solution. Students were able to self-manage themselves and available resources in a social setting that required them to assemble parts of a robot together.

**Governing Themselves**

Students took actions to ensure their team would be student-focused by creating an internal student council to govern and manage the day-to-day work themselves. Brian explains efforts made in the past that led to their student focused team structure:

“We had a problem with a mentor trying to do everything, and freaking out at kids who wouldn’t work or wouldn’t be here every day and was basically being way too controlling. He wasn’t teaching, wasn’t mentoring. He was basically in it for himself…After that we split off from him and made a bunch of ground rules and basically wrote a team handbook and bylaws. We did that basically to protect the team and to make sure as much of the team work is done by the students. The mentors have a huge role in the team, but their role is not to be the team. It’s to mentor and guide. Make sure we are safe.”

The creation of the student council placed management, direction, and the decision making power of the team into the students’ hands. Although students viewed the role of their mentors was to supervise and provide guidance, they felt any decision that directly impacted the strategy, design, and construction of the robot ought to be in the hands of the students.

Since the students were managing the team, they took it upon themselves to educate team members on aspects of the robot. This included passing down knowledge from veteran, more experienced students to rookie, less experienced students, creating a kind of institutional knowledge. Older students taught younger students about parts of the robot, programming language, and methods of constructing a robot in order to bring them up to speed so they could also contribute to the team. Seth, the team treasurer, describes what occurred to prepare younger students for the build season:

“One of the neat things is that at the competition judges come around and they can ask anyone on the team questions. So you just can’t have a few people who know what they are doing. So, before the competition started, before we even got our challenge a bunch of the old team members sat down all the people new to the team with last year’s robot and showed them all the key parts and how it worked…We got the challenge in January but in early December we were already working to get everyone on the same page.”
Team Faraday knew having every team member educated on features of the robot would benefit the entire team and allow younger students to enhance their own skills. Students were aware of the constant rotation of students coming onto the team early in high school and leaving later on, but took it upon themselves to ensure knowledge was being passed down to the next generation of students. In this sense, the more advanced students themselves took roles left by the mentorship vacuum.

Student behavior also showed them taking active roles to adapt prior knowledge to their new robot design and learn skills new to the team. A pair of veteran students with previous experience of working on the wiring and electrical components of their robots designed their electrical board to adapt to their already crowded internal portion of the robot. Also, Jake, a rookie on the team, took it upon himself to learn a CAD program previously not used be the team saying that: “I’m taking an independent study at school learning Solidworks because our design mentor left the team.”

The students on Team Faraday showed ample signs of SDL by self-managing themselves, teaching and passing knowledge down to new members, taking initiatives to complete tasks, and learning new skills that would help themselves and the team. Students’ relationships with mentors resembled seeking counsel when unaware of how to perform certain tasks or needing reaffirmation of completed work.

**Physical Workspace**

The analysis of the physical space showed it to contribute to the productivity of Team Faraday. Although cramped, the workspace generated a productive working environment as teammates had only one choice while in the room: to work. Andy interprets the confined space as an advantage, "It’s not so much the coziness but the openness of the room. There are no walls to hide behind.” In this sense, the physical proximity led to greater engagement.

The lack of space forced mentors and students to utilize every inch of the approximately 250 square foot converted photography lab. The left side and middle of the room were used for building and assembling the robot. The waist high counter running along the left wall had a bench grinder, a lathe, a wooden three drawer toolbox, and a 6 inch vise grip. This section had signs of heavy use as hand tools, drill bits, nuts and bolts, metal shavings, a set of wheels, small metal frame pieces, and safety goggles were intertwined with the machinery equipment in no apparent order. The right side of the room housed the electrical and programming equipment. The robot’s electrical board and camera equipment used for aligning and shooting in game play sat on a chest high counter in the right back corner of the room. Another waist high counter ran the length of the right wall where sat a laptop computer for programming and two more desktop computers used for running CAD software. Two whiteboards were mounted above the three computers, and were filled with notes and drawings of strategies, robot designs, and programming code.

The high level of productivity in close quarters also meant team members had to be aware of safety issues. Beth states,

> “It’s a relatively small room. It can hold about fifteen people, but there’s a chop saw, vise grip, and a drill and someone is always trying to sneak by. There’s a lot of stuff going on, and they are teenagers. They need to be aware for safety reasons.”

However, students embraced the close quarters nicknaming it “The Bat Cave,” and made the most of their limited space by squeezing all of their robotics resources into the room. The students thought the small size of the room played an important role. Jake says, "It is an advantage. I mean, we are
close and we sort of know more or less what everyone else is doing. “The small confines of the workspace helped students form a more cohesive team in which they relied on each other, thus developing more SDL skills.

Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis of the observational and interview data of Team Faraday matched definitions of SDL. Mentors placed the onus of designing and building the robot on the students. In addition, they acted as facilitators asking guiding questions in order for students to make progress and evaluate their own work. Students took advantage of these responsibilities by taking ownership over designing and building their robot. They also took steps to self-govern themselves that had broad impacts on limiting mentor involvement and proliferating student engagement. In regards to the small physical space, students working in close proximity raised the team’s productivity level. The findings in this study revealed signs of students being self-directed learners by showing initiative and deeming it their responsibility to acquire knowledge in order to progress through building their robot (Abraham, Upadhya, & Ramnarayan, 2005).

There appeared to be a fourth factor contributing to student SDL. This fourth factor is the robotics challenge itself. The organization’s stated mission was to motivate students by engaging them in a hands-on science and engineering robotics activity that involved building a robot during a six week period and then competing in front of thousands of people over the course of three days (Welch, 2010). Students on Team Faraday were interested and motivated by the challenges the organization had planned for the competing teams.

**Figure 1**
Factors Contributing to Self-Directed Learning

![Factors Contributing to Self-Directed Learning](image)

Adult supervision, student interest in science and engineering, available space and resources, and the robotics activity were the components needed to make this OST program possible. However, student SDL on Team Faraday might have been in jeopardy if one of these factors, in the form they took in the year of this study, was absence. Adult mentor supervision could have taken a more authoritarian
approach by assigning specific tasks to student while turning away more self-directed students. These mentors did not create these types of barriers but instead allowed students to gain first-hand experience with technical challenges and encouraged them to participate and monitor their own work. Additionally, while it may be presumed that students selected to participate on Team Faraday for a variety of reasons, it was evident from their active engagement in acquiring knowledge to program, design, and assemble their robot that team members were invested in this activity. Team Faraday appeared to have the appropriate ratio of space and resources to number of students participating. A much larger team may have needed more space in order to keep students engaged. However, evidence showed their small space had a positive effect on students’ productivity. Finally, the robotics activity was engaging for students. We may have seen lower levels of student engagement had the robotics challenge been poorly designed. This was not the case as evidence showed students engaged designing and building and foam basketball shooting robot in preparation for the competition.

This study examined an individual case where four factors contributed to the development of a student-focused SDL environment. These four factors may be used as points of comparison with other OST robotics teams. However, we discourage the use of these factors as a means of "labeling" programs as less conducive to SDL than another program, since, variations of these factors may exist on other teams and still create an SDL environment. Rather, these factors offer platforms upon which variations in practice may be studied, compared, and contrasted. Further examination of mentoring styles, student interests and behavior, available resources, and engagement in the year-to-year robotics challenge on other robotics teams is needed if researchers and practitioners are to better understand the development of SDL in these OST robotics programs.

References


Horses and At-Risk Youth: An Equine Facilitated Learning Program Focusing on Authentic Leadership Skill Development

Brittany L. Adams-Pope
College of Business
University of Louisville
Louisville, KY
brittany.adamspope@louisville.edu

Nicole L.P. Stedman
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL
nstedman@ufl.edu
Horses and At-Risk Youth: 
An Equine Facilitated Learning Program Focusing on Authentic Leadership Skill Development

Brittany L. Adams-Pope
University of Louisville

Nicole L. P. Stedman
University of Florida

Abstract: Interesting and innovative youth development programs are important to further youth education. Programs focused on developing leadership skills in youth, specifically at-risk youth, are important when thinking of the future of our communities. The primary purpose of the study was to determine the impact of an equine facilitated, authentic leadership program on at-risk youth. Youth participated in a three-day equine facilitated learning program based on authentic leadership with focus groups conducted three days before and three days after the program. In this article, we describe the development and methodology of the program and specific implications for practice.

Introduction

John F. Kennedy (1917-1963) once said, “We must do all that we can to give our children the best in education and social upbringing—for while they are the youth of today, they shall be the leaders of tomorrow.” (The Giving Child Organization, 2014). In the past decade the number of public figures, celebrities, and corporations who were involved in corruption has shown that adults in leadership positions are not always the best role models for youth (George, 2003; Whitehead, 2009). Bell and Jenkins (1993, p.47) stated the following about youth populations, “the occurrence of violence, antisocial, and destructive behaviors has been far more prevalent [in at-risk youth mentors], which has resulted in the exposed youth learning and acclimating such values, behaviors, and norms. Negative behaviors demonstrated by adults have fostered youth to engage in the same behaviors.” When youth transition to adulthood, they perpetuate the same behaviors to the next generation (Hurd, Zimmerman, & Reischl, 2011; Zimmerman, Steinman, & Rowe, 1998). Unfortunately for youth in at-risk populations, positive influences may be few and far between.
As expectations have changed, the role of mentoring and socializing youth has moved from primarily a parent’s duty to more of a shared role between parents, day-care workers, teachers, community members, and other youth workers. Many studies have shown (Grossman, & Tierney, 1998; Rhodes, 2002) proper socialization requires exposure to positive and constructive behaviors, yet research has continued to demonstrate a decrease in the availability and exposure of positive adult role models and support in the lives of adolescents (Whitehead, 2009). If natural positive role models do not exist in the community or in home-life, then adolescents need to be directed elsewhere to find positive adult relationships to guide their maturation (Beck, 2005). A key indicator of this lack of positive role models is school discipline. Statistics regarding violence and discipline in schools have increased dramatically from 23% in 1990 to 74% in 2010 (Aud, & Hannes, 2011). Even with intervention programs, negative behaviors among at-risk youth have continued to increase (Aud, & Hannes, 2011; Dryfoos, 1990). Scholars and practitioners have determined that the lack of positive parental or adult influence and support plays a large part in the increase of youth delinquency (Flannery, Singer, Williams, & Castro, 1998; Galambos, & Maggs, 1991; Hurd, et al., 2011; Mahoney, & Stattin, 2000; McHale, Crouter, & Tucker, 2001; Pettit, Bates, Dodge, & Meece, 1999).

Based on this research, the sample chosen for this study was middle-school aged boys living at Rodeheaver Boys Ranch. In the following paragraphs, the specifics of this research study will be explained.

**Rodeheaver Boys Ranch**

Rodeheaver Boys Ranch (RBR) was created by Homer Rodeheaver in 1950 to provide a “wholesome home environment with religious, educational, and vocational training for needy boys,” (RBR, 2013). Many of the boys come to RBR because of parental/guardian death, desertion, divorce, parental disability, or dysfunctional home situations. Boys range in age from 6 to 18 years old. In 2010, it cost approximately $20,000 to support one boy for one year at Rodeheaver Boys Ranch (RBR, 2010). Boys admitted to the Ranch have not been adjudicated delinquent and are required to be mentally and emotionally sound (RBR, 2013). Boys are placed at the Ranch by parents, guardians, and/or youth counselors from all over the nation. The Ranch is a not for profit 501(c) 3 charity that does not receive any federal, state, or county funding.

The participants at Rodeheaver Boys Ranch are taught authentic leadership skills using the Bill George Model (George & Sims, 2007), which is described below.

**Authentic Leadership**

Authentic leadership, specifically Bill George’s Model (George, & Sims, 2007), was chosen because of its ease of understanding. The five dimensions of authentic leadership include: pursuing purpose with passion, practicing solid values, leading with heart, establishing enduring relationships, and demonstrating self-discipline (George, 2003). An authentic leader is a genuine person who is true to themselves and to what they believe. Authentic leaders are their own people, go their own way, and do not always let others guide what they do. Yet, these types of leaders are more concerned about serving others than they are about their own success or recognition. Authentic leaders are constantly looking for ways to grow personally and develop genuine connections with others and encourage trust. Finally, they are able to motivate people to high levels of performance by empowering them to lead (George, & Sims, 2007). This study hoped to be an effective framework for the creation of a leadership workshop for at-risk youth. The George Model (2007) provided the theoretical framework for this study and leads to a description of the equine facilitated learning model, which was the model used to educate youth on authentic leadership.
**Equine Facilitated Learning**
Ewing, MacDonald, Taylor, and Bowers (2007, p.60) described equine facilitated learning (EFL) as “an experiential methodology that uses a “hands-on” approach.” Smith-Osborne and Selby (2010, p. 292) reported, based on recent theoretical and empirical literature, that the following psychosocial effects have been found in children and adolescents who participated in equine-assisted activities (EAA): “socialization and companionship, self-esteem enhancement, improvement in personal space/boundary issues and other attachment-related problems, reduction in emotional blunting and incongruence, and improvement in meta-cognition and reflectivity,” (Karol, 2007; Roberts, Bradberry, & Williams, 2004; Rothe, Vega, Torres, Soler, & Pazos, 2005; Saunders-Ferguson, Barnett, Cullen, & TenBroeck, 2008; Schultz, Remick-Barlow, & Robbins, 2007). Smith-Osborne and Selby (2010, p. 292) also stated, from earlier literature, “EAA could have psychosocial benefits in the following areas, not specified by population: self-confidence, self-esteem, self-concept, interest in learning/motivation to participate in hippotherapy, improvement in attention span/concentration/listening skills, spatial awareness, and verbal skills (MacKinnon, Noh, & Laliberte, 1995a; MacKinnon, Noh, Lariviere, MachPhail, Allen, & Laliberte, 1995b; Saunders-Ferguson, et al., 2008).

For the purposes of this study, researchers worked with the middle school population (ages 12-15 years old) at Rodeheaver Boys Ranch. With this population, the researcher was able to create a program, using the horses already present at RBR, to teach authentic leadership based on Bill George's Model (2007). Using George's model (2007), the researcher hoped to find a new way to educate at-risk youth about authentic leadership, using equine facilitated learning. From this study, the researcher hoped to provide information in this new, innovative area that is lacking quality research.

**Evaluation Methodology**

**Purpose and Questions**
The purpose of the program was to increase the authentic leadership knowledge in participants. Specifically, the study addressed five objectives:

1. Determine the impact of the equine-facilitated authentic leadership development program on participants’ perceptions of **relationships**,  
2. Determine the impact of the equine-facilitated authentic leadership development program on participants’ perceptions of **self-discipline**,  
3. Determine the impact of the equine-facilitated authentic leadership development program on participants’ perceptions of **purpose**,  
4. Determine the impact of the equine-facilitated authentic leadership development program on participants’ perceptions of **values**, and  
5. Determine the impact of the equine-facilitated authentic leadership development program on participants’ perceptions of **heart**.

**Population**
The theoretical population of this study was at-risk youth regardless of age, race, gender, or living situation. However, it is recognized that each at-risk youth has a unique situation that may impact and differ from the data discovered in this study. A purposive sample was chosen based on the size of the age groups and the at-risk qualifiers of the population. Boys ranged in age from 12 to 15 years old and were in grades 6-8 at a Florida middle school. There were multiple ethnicities represented with the majority being White.
**Evaluation Instruments**

This mixed-method case study design used participant observation, focus groups, and three quantitative questionnaires to address the objectives of the study. Focus groups were structured with researcher-developed question protocol, which were deemed acceptable by a panel of experts (see appendix). A researcher-developed questionnaire was used to determine the “Level of Comfort” participants felt around horses, which was deemed acceptable by a panel of experts (see appendix). A researcher-developed demographics survey was used to collect demographic information from participants. The final instrument was the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire developed by Avolio, Gardner, and Walumbwa (2007). The researcher developed educational activities (with horses) to teach authentic leadership knowledge and skills, described previously.

A formal review of this study by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) preceded any data collection. The IRB-02, at the University of Florida, reviews non-medical researcher proposals for ethical soundness. The IRB approved the research proposal and assigned an IRB protocol number 2012-U-0745.

**The Program**

The equine facilitated learning program consisted of five sessions implemented over five days, with a total of fourteen hours of participation (including lunch and breaks). The program took place at the Rodeheaver Boys Ranch Horse Unit. All participants lived at Rodeheaver Boys Ranch, but none of the participants had a direct role at the Horse Unit. The Horse Unit consisted of a barn, multiple pastures, a large round pen, and multiple horses (7-10). The round pen is where six of the activities took place and another two activities taking place in the barn. The facilitator implemented six of the eight activities, and the horse unit director facilitated two of the activities.

Assistants to the program included: the horse unit director, the assistant to the director, five older boys who were assigned to the horse unit, and a professional with a doctoral level degree in leadership education. The assistants to the program helped the facilitator with logistics and overall management of the program. At one point, the horse unit director facilitated activities, ‘squeaky clean’ and ‘measuring,’ to keep the program running quickly and smoothly. When any incidents arose, such as injury or an altercation between participants, the assistant to the director would take the boys aside and make sure they were taken care of without interrupting the program. The horse unit boys were in charge of getting the horses to and from the round pen and assisting the researcher as an “extra set of eyes” for safety. Finally, the leadership professional assisted in the administration of the questionnaires and to ensure the facilitator was assisted, when needed, with reflection questions. The leadership professional was only present on the first day of the program. All other assistants were present all three days of the program.

Each of the sessions covered a different aspect of George’s Authentic Leadership Model (2003): relationships, self-discipline, purpose, values, and heart. The activities were determined by the researcher and were collected from multiple Equine Facilitated Learning guides (EAGALA, 2012; Mandrell, & Mandrell, 2008). The established activities were selected for their fit to the desired outcome. The manuals used were titled: Fundamentals of EAGALA Model Practice Untraining Manual, Seventh Edition (EAGALA, 2012) and Champions Curriculum-EAP Group Curriculum for At-Risk Adolescents, Third Edition (Mandrell, & Mandrell, 2008).

Before participants were introduced to the horses, the horse unit director completed a safety demonstration with each participant. During this safety demonstration, participants were informed about how to safely work with horses, what the dangers were, where the danger zones for horses
were, and how to interact properly with the horses while keeping safety in mind. The sessions were videotaped to allow the researcher to review each session for program evaluation purposes. Each session is covered in depth in the following sections.

It is important to note that activities involving horses should not be done by practitioners without previous horse experience and/or training. It is also important to have multiple assistants in the ring and on hand in the case of an emergency and to act as supplementary “eyes” for the safety of participants and horses.

Activities

Each activity was created using the EAGALA manual (EAGALA, 2012) or the Champions curriculum (Mandrell, & Mandrell, 2008). See Appendix for a timeline of activities and complete activity descriptions.

"Catch and Halter"
This activity was chosen to display relationships based on the interactions with the horses and the partners. The facilitator believed that once the boys were tasked with catching and haltering a horse, the act of creating a relationship, with the horse and their partner, would develop. Some horses would be easy to catch while others would be difficult. Each event would give the facilitator opportunities to solicit reflection based on relationships and the events.

"Extended Appendages"
This activity was chosen to display relationships based on the interactions with the horses and the groups. The facilitator believed that during the activity, participants would be required to form relationships with their group or risk not completing the task. The facilitator knew the horses may be difficult to catch because of the fact that four boys were linked and coming towards them. This may be scary to the horse. This fear response could result in the horse walking or running away from the group, this action would require the boys to practice teamwork and relationship building to solve the problem and complete the task. Also, having to rely on one another for direction helped to build a relationship between the boys.

"Life’s Little Obstacles"
This activity was chosen to display self-discipline based on the interactions with the horses, temptations, rules, and group members. The facilitator believed that during the activity, the boys would see the horses choosing feed or another temptation over listening to instruction. The facilitator would then use the horses’ distraction as a base for reflection questions to solicit the links between the horses’ temptations and the boys’ temptations at home or school, etc.

"Circularelations"
This activity was chosen to display purpose based on the interactions with the horses, conflicting instructions, rules, the other group, and group members. The facilitator believed that when the boys received conflicting instruction, it would immediately create conflict between the groups. Instead of immediately dissipating the conflict, the facilitator would allow the boys to disagree a bit to solicit a request for help. Once the boys asked for help, the facilitator would use that time to ask about each group’s ‘purpose’ and lead the reflection from there.

"Creactivity"
This activity was chosen to display value building based on the interactions with the horses, friendly competition, the other group, and group members. The facilitator believed that during the activity,
providing a competition would encourage the boys to determine if they valued winning or succeeding at a task more. Creating this internal conflict between creating a task so difficult no one could do it or winning the game would provide for good reflection on the thought process. This reflection would allow the boys to draw the link between having differing values amongst the same goals.

"Squeaky Clean"
This activity was chosen to display value building based on the interactions with the horses, partner interaction, and determining the meaning of “squeaky clean.” The facilitator believed that having the pairs agree on the determination of “squeaky clean” would solicit a discussion about why the boys may not agree. This discussion would lead to a reflection about how people’s ideas or values of things may be different but neither is necessarily wrong.

"Fear Factor"
This activity was chosen to display heart based on the interactions with the horses, the element of fear for the horse, and group interaction. The participants had become attached to the horses so the facilitator believed that soliciting a fear response from the horse would solicit empathy in the boys. The facilitator believed that once the horse was scared, the boys would ask that the assistants stop scaring the horse by taking the bag away. Once this request was made, the facilitator would link the fear in the horse and the want for it to stop, to the boys’ daily interactions; showing the boys that empathy and heart happen all around them.

"Measuring"
This activity was chosen to display heart based on the interactions with the horses, the ordering activity based on size, and group interaction. The facilitator believed that having the boys specifically order the horses by size would solicit discussion about what makes one horse bigger or smaller than the others. During this discussion the facilitator would use the actual measurements to show that size can be deceiving. Once the actual sizes were given, the facilitator would solicit reflection about how this can happen in day to day life, showing the boys that it is hard to determine one thing as being bigger, smaller, better, or worse, than another thing without proper investigation.

**Evaluation Results**

Overall, the focus groups showed an increase in knowledge of most of the elements of the George Model (2007). The depths of thought increased from preprogram focus groups to post program focus groups but it is not definitive that the participants understood purpose, values, or heart, completely.

Programmatically, the focus groups ran fairly well. For the age group, 12-15 years old, the conversation was as expected. The decision to do focus groups, instead of individual interviews, was to encourage a conversation, not just a question and answer session. There were two groups of seven to nine boys each and this may have been too many boys in one session. The boys would sometimes answer based off each other saying, “yeah, that’s what I think too,” and at other times they would discourage answers from the quieter boys in the group saying, “that’s stupid” or “that’s not even real.” When working with this age group in the future, it is suggested to make the focus groups smaller, four to five youth maximum.

When going through the transcriptions, there was not as rich of detail as anticipated. The answers were very short, one word or a short sentence, not very much elaboration on each topic. The age group of the participants may have contributed to the lack of detail during the focus groups. The field notes were imperative as there was a lot the transcriptions did not catch due to background noise.
and crosstalk. It was also important that the researcher was present during all sessions to have memory to reflect on about how the boys were communicating, verbally and nonverbally.

The similarities and differences in themes from the focus groups helped explain why there was a change in the preprogram ALQ and the post program ALQ data. The participants showed knowledge on a basic level, preprogram, regarding the four components of the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire [ALQ] (Avolio, et al., 2007): transparency, ethical/moral, balanced processing, and self-awareness. This introductory knowledge may have accounted for the minimal change in the mean scores from the ALQ data.

**Conclusions**

A holistic review of the results from both segments of this study demonstrated the program was successful in regards to the objectives of educating youth about authentic leadership. The following conclusions were drawn with the understanding that due to the selection process of participants, a purposive sample of middle-school age boys from Rodeheaver Boys Ranch, the generalizability of the conclusions and recommendations should be carefully considered.

The participants showed knowledge on a basic level, preprogram, regarding the four components of the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) (Avolio, et al., 2007): transparency, ethical/moral, balanced processing, and self-awareness. This introductory knowledge may have accounted for the small amount of change from pre to post program. Also, Barnett (2013), an expert in youth development, found a lack of initial learning gains during at-risk programming when evaluating post program. She (2013) found, during her many program implementations with the Children, Youth, and Families At-Risk Program (CYFAR), at-risk youth need time to process the information they receive during programming, so evaluating immediately after a program may lead to skewed or no results. With this in mind, the researcher consulted with the horse unit director to determine if the participants showed an increase in leadership overall. The horse unit director reported positive changes in the boys and stated they still talk about the program and how much fun they had, five months post program.

The fact that the program focused on the five dimensions of the George (2007) model and the ALQ focused on four different dimensions must be taken into account when reviewing the quantitative data. Developing a program that focuses on the four dimensions of the ALQ would make the results from the ALQ questionnaire more relatable. In regard to the ALQ, previous research (Avolio, et al., 2007; Gardner, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2005b; Gardner, & Schermerhorn, 2004) has focused on adults. The questions in the ALQ are geared more towards adults; this leads the researcher to believe that some of the questions may have been too advanced or abstract for the participants in this study. Future studies could use a modified ALQ created for youth. Vice versa, creating a questionnaire/instrument to test the five dimensions of the George (2007) model would make evaluating the program more effective.

**Recommendations for Practice**

Based on the results of this study, there are several recommendations for programs that seek to teach authentic leadership skills using equine facilitated learning methods. While this study was focused on the at-risk population, specifically Rodeheaver Boys Ranch, these recommendations may be applied to other programs of similar function and structure.
It is recommended to perform a pre and post program questionnaire based on the dimensions being taught during the program to determine the impact the program may or may not have on the participants. Collecting data regarding the ALQ and Level of Comfort was very important in determining the efficacy of the program. It is also recommended to work with smaller groups at a time. Sixteen, middle-school age boys was too many for this program; the participants not actively engaged with the activity were left to their own devices. It is suggested to maintain small groups, preferably a maximum of four to five at one time. It may be beneficial for older age groups to observe others during activity, but that is inconclusive due to the population of this study. Having multiple program assistants to help with the logistics of multiple horses is recommended. The facilitator should be processing the events consistently so having someone to exchange horses and retrieve props is advised. One area of interest was that the boys filling out the questionnaires (preprogram) were more worried about getting to interact with the horses than filling out the questionnaires. The distractions may have caused skewed results for the quantitative data. In hindsight, it is suggested to have a specified, focused time for the questionnaires to be filled out, away from distraction, if questionnaires are utilized.

In regards to the activities, it is suggested to adapt the exercises based on attentiveness of the participants. If the facilitator seems to lose the participant focus, it may be time to move on to the next activity. After lunch on the second day, the participants were very inattentive. The lack of focus and attention is a reason it is suggested to have smaller groups so there are not observers, only active participants. Programmatically, it is suggested to work in shorter time periods with younger age groups. Eight hours of programming was too long and the quality of the program was negatively impacted. For the 'purpose' dimension, the results from the focus groups showed a decrease in self-perception. With this in mind, it is advised to revisit the efficacy of the particular activity associated with that session. It is also recommended to get feedback from the participants, within reason. Learning participant expectations may help the facilitator create a more effective program. Equine facilitated programs can be implemented in various lengths. If a program is brief and does not consist of in-depth theories, it could be implemented in one afternoon. If the program, such as this, covers a more in-depth theory, it can be implemented over the course of days or even weeks. When developing this particular program, the researcher created outlines for 3-day programs to 7-week programs and much iteration in between. Depending on the time frame and the depth of theory involved, future programmers can adapt the program length as needed.

This study can be categorized as a life-skill development program or a prevention program for at-risk youth. Providing youth with leadership skills is important in life-skill development and may also help prevent these pre-adjudicated youth from offending in the future. In regard to risk and protective factors, this program is a protective factor, in that it provides youth, skills necessary to succeed in the future and overcome their many risk factors. In the future, youth workers, program developers, educators, and many other professional may use equine facilitated learning programs for life-skill development, prevention, intervention, and/or diversion programs. While logistically it is difficult, an equine facilitated learning program can be used in rural and urban settings. Gang intervention and prevention programs could benefit from this type of program because it takes the participants out of their comfort zone and provides the large, physical attributes of the horse as facilitators. Instead of being able to “push” the facilitator around, more aggressive participants have to act in response to the horses. Other populations that could benefit from these types of programs include: adults, corporations, youth organizations, academia, and many others. The adaptability of equine facilitated learning programs lends itself to work in many situations, with proper training.
References


Feelings and Emotions in Youth’s Purpose

Valeria Amorim Arantes
University of Sao Paulo
Sao Paulo, Brazil
varantes@usp.br

Viviane Potenze Guimarães Pinheiro
University of Sao Paulo
Sao Paulo, Brazil
vipinheiro@usp.br

Ulisses Ferreira Araujo
University of Sao Paulo
Sao Paulo, Brazil
ularau@usp.br
Feelings and Emotions in Youth’s Purpose

Valeria Amorim Arantes, Viviane Potenze Guimarões Pinheiro and Ulisses Ferreira Araujo
University of Sao Paulo, Brazil

Abstract: This article summarizes research that aimed to identify and analyze the Organizing Models of Thought - with its affective and cognitive dimensions - underlying the purpose of young Brazilians, and identifies possible relationships between values, feelings, emotions and purpose of 200 Brazilian High School students. Upon analyzing all the protocols, seven different ways of organizing thoughts were found when answering an open-ended questionnaire about purpose in life. It was observed that emotions and feelings play an important role in the construction of purpose for young people, exerting influence in organizing their thoughts and subsidizing their decisions, plans and justification for the actions.

Introduction

This article summarizes a study that aimed to identify and analyze the Organizing Models of Thought - including the affective and cognitive dimensions of thought – by examining possible relationships among the values, feelings, emotions and purpose of 200 Brazilian high school students. The question that drove this research was, “what role do feelings and emotions play in the development of youth purpose?”

This research complements another study, “Youth purpose and life goals of students engaged in community and social activities,” which, similar to this study, was developed using a national sample and used the concept of purpose as developed by William Damon and his research group at the Stanford Center on Adolescence as a framework. Anchored in the principles of positive psychology, we understand that fostering the development of youth purpose can be a reliable tool that promotes resilience, motivation, optimism and self-esteem in adolescents and young adults.

According to Damon, Menon and Bronk (2003), purpose is a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of intended consequence beyond the self. From this definition and based on the analysis of other authors (Bundick, 2009; Moran, 2009), we highlight three constituents of purpose:
a) purpose always includes goals and objectives to be achieved over the long term that are characterized by a certain stability; a purpose can even change over time but should be stable enough to drive the subject to plan for present and future actions to achieve his/her goals;

b) purpose has an “external” orientation that transcends one’s individuality; and

c) purpose should not be seen as a goal in itself but rather as a psychological strength that gives the subject a sense of direction, a goal to be achieved.

In short, purpose appears as a deeper reason that presents itself as a backdrop to the more immediate goals and motives and therefore purpose justifies the actions, concerns and choices of the individual (Damon, 2008).

A challenge faced by psychologists today is how to study the dynamics of psychological functions, while avoiding a simplified analysis of the complexity of the human mind. Attempting to make advancements in this area, we have adopted the organizing models of thought theory, which is anchored in Jean Piaget’s theory and was developed by professors from the University of Barcelone and Geneve (Moreno, Sastre, Bovet, & Leal, 1998).

The authors of the organizing models of thought theory promote a functional psychological system that synthesizes the results from diverse cognitive and affective activities, as revealed by subjects when evaluating specific situations. Among these activities, the following are outlined:

- **Abstraction and selection of situational elements** – When analyzing any phenomena, a subject selects part of the whole, taking some elements as significant and rejecting others that are considered to be not relevant. We highlight that a person can introduce abstraction process elements that are not present in the empirical phenomena that are observed, for example, through fantasy. In this mental process, feelings and emotions as well as previous personal experiences play an important role.

- **Meaning given to elements considered to be relevant** – Each subject gives meaning to each element abstracted from the phenomena. Thus, although the elements that are abstracted may be the same, they can have different meanings for different subjects who are analyzing the same situation.

- **Relationships and/or implications established between the meaning given and the selected elements** – Through inferences and implications established between all the elements abstracted and the meaning given, each subject psychologically organizes the situation and creates an organized model of thought.

In this way, the organizing models of thought are what each individual holds to be reality, out of which he/she elaborates patterns of conduct and explanations. They are based not only on the logic of human thought but also incorporate the desires, feelings, affects, social representations and values of the subject.

We understand, in our research, that this theory can be a powerful approach when investigating the psychological processes underlying the development of youth purpose. In this paper, we address our research question using the organizing models of thought theory as a procedural method.
Research and Method

As previously discussed, our starting point is that purpose is an important psychological process that integrates feelings and values and plays a decisive role in a human being’s sense of morality.

To study this assumption, we conducted a study with 200 young Brazilian students, 15- to 19-years-old, from public high schools. In Brazil, public schools are attended mostly by people from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This non-probabilistic sample was representative of the five Brazilian geopolitical regions (South, Southeast, Midwest, North and Northeast) following the youth proportion in the overall population of each region according to the Brazilian Census defined by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE).

In each region, the subjects lived in one of two types of municipalities, either a metropolis, characterized by a population of over 1,000,000 inhabitants, or a regional capital, characterized by a population of approximately 250,000 inhabitants. Although gender was not a variable in the study, a balance between male and female was maintained in the sample.

Under the supervision of a researcher, subjects were invited to a computer lab to voluntarily answer an online open-ended questionnaire that was administered on the SurveyMonkey® platform. Based on the Youth Purpose Interview developed by William Damon, et al., (2003) at the Stanford Center on Adolescence, the instrument was composed of 13 questions regarding purpose and life goals, mediated by the role of feelings and emotions in the issues mentioned.

The instrument used in this research was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview development</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Goal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1) Tell me about yourself and your life, highlighting how you feel about your life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage 1: Self</td>
<td>2) What are the three most important things that you care about? Please list them in order of importance (X, Y and Z), from the most important to the least important.</td>
<td>Object</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) How do you feel about each one of these? Explain in detail.</td>
<td>Feelings</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4) How did each of these things become important to you?</td>
<td>Justification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5) What are the obstacles you have faced regarding these important things?</td>
<td>Obstacles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2: Changes / stability</td>
<td>6) What would you want to be different in the world, and how could you work towards making some of these changes?</td>
<td>Ideal world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7) How do you feel about that?</td>
<td>Feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3: Future projections</td>
<td>8) Picture yourself 5 years from now and tell me what you will be doing and what will be important to you?</td>
<td>Near future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9) How will you feel 5 years from now?</td>
<td>Feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10) Now, picture yourself at 40 years old. What will you be doing? Who will be in your life? What will be important to you?</td>
<td>Distant future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11) How will you feel when you are 40 years old?</td>
<td>Feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4: Purpose</td>
<td>12) What does purpose (the concept) mean to you?</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13) If you have a purpose, how do you feel about it?</td>
<td>Feelings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using this open-ended questionnaire, we gathered data that reflected the role that feelings and emotions play in judgments and representations of actions in purpose contexts, believing that thoughts, feelings and actions are part of a *continuum* in the function of the human psyche.

The analysis used in this research, based on the theoretical premises of the organizing models of thought theory, led us to apply the following method in a complex and long-term process:

a) read all the answers given in the questionnaire;
b) identify the central elements of each response extracted from the interview;
c) identify the meaning the subject gives to these elements (including the feelings they mention);
d) identify the implications the subjects give to the responses; and

e) identify the different organizing models the subjects use in the situation studied.

It is important to exemplify in this process that although the subjects may abstract the same elements from a situation (i.e., work and family in the youth purpose interview of this research), the elements may have different meanings and implications for different subjects. In other words, the subjects use different organizing models to explain “reality”.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight that although each person is singular, there is no infinite model that analyzes every situation. However, as there are social and cultural patterns that influence the way human beings think about specific situations, we can find regularities in the organizing models of thought that the subjects used.

**Results**

We identified seven different ways people organized their thoughts when responding to the open-ended questions. We present a summary of these seven organizing models of thought, highlighting that there are some sub-models in which the meaning given to the central elements differ but are still composed of the same thought organization. In this article, we elected to focus on the models, while indicating the differences presented in some of the protocols.

**Organizing Model 1 – Fragile purposes**
*Central organizing elements: labor and family*

**Feelings related to Purpose: Well-being**
The central organizing elements, labor and family, were weakly related to well-being. The future was projected as an ordinary course of life. Participants did not involve their present actions in their purposes. Some participants mentioned, as central elements, “a negative experience in life” and “God“. These elements contributed to a fragile vision of the future, suggesting the same meanings and implications as labor and family elements.

**Organizing Model 2 – Consumption and financial stability**
*Central organizing element: labor*

**Feelings related to purpose: Well-being, fulfillment, happiness and exhaustion**
Labor refers to the possibility of consumption and financial stability in the future and is related to feelings of well-being, fulfillment and happiness. Exhaustion is related to years of hard work. This study was developed in such a way as to be relevant to the labor market.
**Organizing Model 3 – Interpersonal relationships**

Central organizing element: interpersonal relationships

Feelings related to purpose: Well-being, fulfillment, happiness and love

Interpersonal relationships are viewed in relation to three other elements: family, friends and labor. Future projections are related to good relationships and stability on the job. Love, happiness, fulfillment and satisfaction appear to be strongly related to the central elements, while happiness appears to be a projected value in the future.

**Organizing Model 4 – Idealization of family and work**

Central organizing elements: Labor and family

Feelings related to purpose: Well-being, fulfillment and happiness

Labor and family, in an idealized form, are related to well-being, fulfillment and happiness. While these elements were strongly indicated as important by the subjects, they (the elements) did not engage the actions and involvement of the subjects nor were they elements that were projected for the future. Some participants emphasized God as a central element, suggesting this belief was a way to have a job in the church.

**Organizing Model 5 – Labor and family**

Central organizing elements: Labor and family

Feelings related to Purpose: Well-being, fulfillment, happiness, pride, gratitude and satisfaction

Work is a real goal for the subjects as it is required to support a family (responsibility). Labor and family were strongly related to well-being, fulfillment, happiness, pride, gratitude and satisfaction.

**Organizing Model 6 – Labor**

Central organizing element: Labor as a personal fulfillment

Feelings related to purpose: Well-being, fulfillment, happiness and a sense of completeness

The subjects perceived labor as something that requires the personal effort of the subjects, and in turn, it provides them with pleasure, satisfaction, well-being and a sense of completeness. They also view labor as a way to contribute to society and way to gain social recognition and personal achievement.

**Organizing Model 7 – Beyond self**

Central organizing element: Help others through work and family responsibility

Feelings related to purpose: happiness and fulfillment

There were a wide range of meanings given that provided both coherence and complexity to the responses. Labor was perceived as a way to achieve personal fulfillment and a way to obtain social recognition. Respondents, expressed gratitude for the education they had received when referencing family, and they expressed their desire to have a family and assume responsibility in the context of family. Respondents recognized the importance of their actions and involvement with respect to purpose. Feelings of fulfillment and happiness were related to the central elements, not only as experienced by the subject but also by the recipients of the actions. Some participants perceived labor in church as a way to contribute and express their altruism.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the organizing models of thought applied by the 200 young subjects when answering the purpose questionnaire.
In Model 1, fragile projections about the future were evidenced, and no integration between feelings of well-being (when it appeared) and the abstract elements extracted from the responses (labor, family, God and religion) were apparent.

Therefore, if in Model 1 there was no integration of values and feelings, in Model 2 there was an integration of the feelings of well-being, fulfillment and happiness with respect to the element of labor. This element was meant to be viewed by the participants as a consumption possibility and was a value that was important for receiving emotional satisfaction. Labor was also integrated with the feeling of tiredness/exhaustion when related to the years of effort and dedication that this value requires. This integration actually weakened the value placed on labor, as it added a negative aspect to it, suggesting that labor, as a value, was not of critical importance to these subjects.

Model 3 indicated that the central elements were those factors that are directly related to interpersonal relationships, such as happiness, which is integrated with feelings of well-being, fulfillment and love. The subjects who applied Model 3 argued that labor, family and friendships would provide happiness in the future. The integration between interpersonal relationships and happiness ensured the centrality of these values in the psychic organization of subjects by regulating the lack of importance given to other values and by being governed by feelings, especially of love, which although complex, aims at highlighting relationships and demonstrating the differences according to the links established (family, friendship, dating).

While models 4, 5 and 6 revealed that labor and family were central elements. They also indicate that there were perceptible differences between these models and their respective sub-models.
In Model 4, the elements labor and family were more structured and were regulated by feelings of well-being, fulfillment and happiness. Although there was such a regulation, it was clear that there was no integration of labor and family values as separate entities into an idealized form. In Model 4, some participants were quite emphatic in their references to God, as they expressed positive feelings about religion that were reflected in their organized reasoning. They further integrated this value into labor, leading the subjects to consider working for the church.

Contrary to Model 4, Model 5 showed a strong integration between labor and family, both of which were positively valued by young people. We understand that integration based on the observation that labor provides subjects an opportunity to bear responsibilities towards their family (help with expenses, financial support, etc.). This integration received a strong affective impetus, not only from feelings of well-being, fulfillment and happiness but also from feelings of pride, satisfaction and gratitude.

Despite focusing on only one value, labor, Model 6 is still highly complex. In Model 6, labor is presented as a personal achievement and means to attain social recognition, thereby yielding the positive emotional energy by promoting feelings of accomplishment, well-being and happiness.

Finally, in Model 7, with respect to the abstraction of the elements, the youths in this study identified a strong desire to reach others as their purpose. The complexity of this model is through the integration and regulation of values and feelings, as this model combined many of the values highlighted in the previous models, which promoted this complex integration. Labor and family values were integrated through the responsibility that the subject felt towards their family. Labor also integrated a desire to extend or go beyond labor. Accordingly, it is interesting to observe the regulation and integration of feelings in this sub-model, as they were understood by participants to refer to their own achievements with respect to work and family as well to the positive feelings experienced by the recipients of the actions.

The analysis of the integration and regulation of feelings and values conducted herein reflects the complexity that makes up the human psyche and the differences regarding the ways in which people process values and feelings with respect to purpose.

Despite using almost the same elements and feelings in all of the models, the dynamic of thought exhibited a greater integration than that of labor, family, and positive emotions, which was different in each model due to the complexity of the meanings given to each integration.

It is important to again mention that although God appeared to some participants as a central element, as an element, the contribution of God to purpose, as formulated by each participant, was perceived differently. In Model 1, some participants perceived God as an entity that would decide what was best for them. In Model 2, God was projected by some adolescents to represent an idealized form of labor in the church. In Model 3, some participants saw God as an entity who inspired them and gave meaning to their life in. In this model, the adolescents saw a direct relationship between church and labor in that church provided them a way to help others beyond that of simple volunteer work. The projection of positive feelings in each model was decisive with respect to its integration of values, thus resulting in different perspectives about the same element.

Concluding Remarks

From the results obtained through our investigation, we observed that emotions and feelings play an important role in the construction of purpose for young people. Accordingly, emotions and feelings
influence how subjects organize their thoughts, make their decisions and plan and justify their actions.

Positive feelings deserve attention because they reinforce purpose and reflect how young subjects perceive their future selves. When these feelings were strongly integrated with their values, they guaranteed strength of purpose and likely helped subjects formulate more stable and generalized intentions.

Furthermore, the integration of values and feelings was fundamental to reasoning, thus leading participants to develop and formulate their purpose. When that integration did not occur, elements remained isolated and were not identified or were configured as being of central importance to the subjects (as in Model 1). This integration was also important in regulating the non-appearance of others reasoning forms, indicating that the integration of values and feeling plays a central role in organizing human thought, thereby contributing to youth engagement in establishing purpose.

It is important to note that 28% of the participants demonstrated fragile purposes. In others models, however, they demonstrated some amount of articulation between values and feelings, as there was evidence of a short list of meanings attributed to elements and feelings (excluding Models 6 and 7). These findings suggest the importance of working with young people in schools and at home and of facilitating their ability to reflect on their values and feelings.

The observed relationships between the construction of purpose and the configuration of emotions and feelings, as they pertain to reasoning, demonstrate the influence that the affective dimension plays in thought organization. This finding corroborates studies that emphasize the importance of affective aspects in psychological functioning and purpose, and it iterates the need to understand that purpose is constituted not only by cognitive and structural aspects that guide reasoning and development but also by other aspects, such as emotions and feelings.

References


Resource Review:
*Why So Few? Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics*

Patricia A. Dawson
Oregon State University
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*Why So Few? Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics*

Patricia A. Dawson  
Oregon State University

**Abstract:** “*Why So Few? Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics*” (Hill, C., Corbett, C., Rose, A., 2010) reports on an extensive study of women’s underrepresentation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics professions. Funded by the National Science Foundation, the project was conducted by American Association of University Women. The resource includes findings from eight research studies which examined social and environmental factors which contribute to women’s underrepresentation in STEM fields as well as helpful tables, charts and bibliography resources. The 110 page resource will be particularly helpful for scholars working in program design to advance STEM opportunities for women.

**Review**

The U.S. continues to face a significant challenge as study after study notes our young people are not prepared with the necessary science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) workforce skills to compete in the 21st Century. While the number of women in STEM fields is growing, men continue to outnumber women, especially in upper level positions. (AAUW, 2010).

“*Why So Few? Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics*” (Hill, C., Corbett, C., Rose, A., 2010) reports on an extensive study of women’s underrepresentation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics professions. Funded by the National Science Foundation, the project was conducted by American Association of University Women.

The study tackles the question of why few women are becoming scientists and engineers and presents a picture of what is known as well as unknown about women in scientific professional fields. The study also focuses on ways communities, schools and families can create a positive environment and eliminate negative stereo types regarding women’s advancement in STEM fields. Highlights from
eight recent research findings provide evidence that social and environmental factors contribute to women’s under representation in STEM fields are also shared by the authors.

The report is broke into nine major segments followed by extensive recommendations. Chapter topics include:

- Women and Girls in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
- Beliefs and Intelligence
- Stereotypes
- Self-Assessment
- Spatial Skills
- The College Student Experience
- University and College Faculty
- Implicit Bias
- Workplace Bias

Concluding recommendations, supporting figures and charts throughout the document as well as the extensive bibliography will prove particularly helpful for youth scholars as we consider curriculum and program designs to advance STEM opportunities.

This 110 page document is available at no charge as a download from the American Association of University Women [www.aauw.org/research](http://www.aauw.org/research)

**References**