

2010

Center for Applied Research in Human Development
Department of Human Development and Family Studies
University of Connecticut

Report prepared for the State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM)

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT PRACTICES

Are Youth Outcomes Better in Youth Development Programs
That Embrace Youth Involvement Principles and Practices?

Youth Involvement Practices

Are Youth Outcomes Better in Youth Development Programs That Embrace Youth Involvement Principles and Practices?

Report prepared for the State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM)

Center for Applied Research in Human Development
Department of Human Development and Family Studies
University of Connecticut

October 1, 2010

Funding for this report was provided, in part, by the U.S. departments of Education and Justice. The opinions and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. departments of Education and Justice.

The Center for Applied Research in Human Development

The Center for Applied Research in Human Development is a joint venture between the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the Cooperative Extension System in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, at the University of Connecticut, Storrs. The Center provides assistance to state and community-based agencies in

the development, delivery, and evaluation of human service programs. The primary focus is on promoting high quality educational programming and evaluation for programs that promote child, youth, and family development. Recent advances in theory and research are applied in the planning and implementation of all Center initiatives. The Center also provides hands on opportunities for students to learn practical

research and evaluation skills in a variety of human service, prevention, and community education programs. The Center for Applied Research in Human Development is the recipient of the 2006 Outreach Recognition Award granted by the University of Connecticut, Office of the Provost, as an "Outstanding Example of a Programmatic University Resource."

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
Introduction	3
Youth Involvement.....	4
STUDY PURPOSE.....	6
Participating Youth and Youth Programs.....	7
PARTICIPATING YOUTH	8
PARTICIPATING YOUTH PROGRAMS.....	9
Findings	10
COMPARISON OF PROGRAMS BASED ON STAFF LEADERSHIP RATINGS	10
COMPARISON OF PROGRAMS BASED ON EXTERNAL RATERS' YOUTH INVOLVEMENT RANKINGS	12
Conclusions and Recommendations.....	15
References	17
Appendix A.....	21
INSTRUMENTS USED TO ASSESS YOUTH FUNCTIONING AND ASSOCIATED CONSTRUCTS	21
Appendix B	22
CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS/YOUTH EMPOWERMENT ACTIVITY AND PROGRESS	22
Appendix C	23
METHODS.....	23
End Notes.....	28

Executive Summary

Over the past two decades, youth advocates, community builders, youth, and scholars have been calling for a more meaningful incorporation of youth in civil society. They put forth cogent arguments about the value of young people's involvement in decisions that affect their lives. And, they mobilized the academic community to study the effects of youth involvement on young people, as well as on organizations and communities.

The study described in this report contributes to this body of literature by exploring the link between youth involvement practices in youth development programs and youth outcomes at the program level. That is, do young people who attend programs that are committed to and successful at implementing youth involvement practices report better adjustment than young people who attend programs with fewer youth involvement opportunities?

This study is part of a larger evaluation project conducted for the Governor's Urban Youth Violence Prevention (GUYVP) program. GUYVP is a competitive program administered by the State of Connecticut Office of Policy Management (OPM). Under the GUYVP program, OPM awards grant monies to municipalities and nonprofit agencies for the purpose of reducing urban youth violence. In fiscal years 2007-08 and 2008-09, OPM awarded grants to 19 different youth programs.

As part of the GUYVP grant award, youth development programs received technical assistance from the Youth Development Training and Resource Center (YDTRC) at The Consultation Center (TCC). YDTRC staff provided trainings on youth engagement strategies, youth leadership development, program governance, and community involvement. Additionally, they maintained regular contact with each program, offering consultation and practical advice on what youth involvement entails and how to promote it. Furthermore, they encouraged program staff to attend YDTRC professional development courses, including a 30-hour Advancing Youth Development course and a 15-hour Supervising & Managing course.

The Center for Applied Research in Human Development (CARHD; hereafter, the Center) at the University of Connecticut conducted a process evaluation of the participating youth development programs. For this purpose, the Center asked youth within each program to complete a survey with questions about psychological wellbeing, alienation, ethnic identity development, drug and alcohol consumption, and demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, grade in school, ethnicity). A total of 1,090 surveys were collected in March 2009. Of these, 1,067 surveys completed by middle-school and high-school students were analyzed in this study.

In addition to the youth surveys, youth program staff completed leadership ratings of young people in their program. Staff members were asked to rate each participating young person as (1) a demonstrated leader, (2) an emergent leader, or (3) a general participant in the program. These ratings were used to create a measure of youth involvement practices within each youth development program. The measure was based upon the percentage of youth within each program who had been rated as demonstrated leaders.

Moreover, YDTRC staff, because of their familiarity with all participating programs, were asked to serve as external raters. Using a set of criteria consistent with youth involvement principles, external raters ranked each youth development program in terms of its commitment to and success in implementing youth involvement practices. Staff leadership ratings and external rankings were used as measures of youth involvement practices: one from the perspective of youth program staff and the other from the perspective of technical assistance providers.

Comparison of youth outcomes based on staff leadership ratings indicated statistically significant differences on 3 out of 4 measures of psychosocial functioning (alienation, exploration of ethnic identity, and commitment to ethnic identity). Average scores on these measures were more positive (higher for ethnic identity and lower for alienation) in programs with higher percentages of demonstrated leaders than in programs with lower percentages of demonstrated leaders.

Comparisons of programs with many demonstrated leaders (> 25% of participants) and programs with few demonstrated leaders (< 10% participants) resulted in no statistically differences on behavioral indicators (consumption of alcohol and drugs). However, correlational analyses indicated that there was a negative relationship between the percentage of demonstrated leaders in a program and the percentage of youth who consumed marijuana or alcohol two or more times in the year prior to the survey. As expected, programs with a higher percentage of demonstrated leaders also had lower percentages of youth who reported engaging in such drug and alcohol use.

Program comparisons based on external raters' rankings corroborated these findings: on average, youth scores on the measures of psychosocial functioning were higher in the programs ranked in the top five when contrasted with programs ranked in the bottom five. As with comparisons based on staff leadership ratings, this was true for alienation and ethnic identity development, but not for the measure of general psychological wellbeing. Also, the percentage of youth who reported consumption of alcohol was lower in the programs that external raters ranked in the top than in the bottom five.

Taken together, these findings indicate that youth involvement practices within youth development programs show much promise. However, our findings should be considered exploratory in nature. We cannot provide a definitive answer to the question of whether youth outcomes are better in programs that are more committed to and successful at implementing youth involvement principles and practices without additional research. Studies using experimental designs and assessing a wider range of youth adjustment indicators would provide a more definitive answer.

Introduction

This study is part of a larger evaluation project conducted for the Governor’s Urban Youth Violence Prevention (GUYVP) program, a competitive program administered by the State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM). The program awards grants to municipalities and nonprofit agencies to serve young people, ages 12 to 18, with an aim of reducing urban youth violence.

There is broad agreement among policymakers, scholars, and researchers across the United States that youth violence merits attention.ⁱ It is widely recognized that exposure to and participation in community violence is associated with undesirable consequences to young people and to their communities. Some of the consequences to young people include higher risk for injury, death, significant mental-health problems, and involvement with the juvenile justice system. Likely consequences to communities include diminished social cohesion and social trust, deterioration of economic infrastructure, and decreased safety.

In the U.S., public policy makers and community professionals have been turning to the promotion of youth development for solutions to youth violence. The youth development approach underscores the importance of opportunities, resources, and supports for young people. The rationale for this approach is that young people are “more likely to achieve positive outcomes, such as school success and emotional wellbeing, and less likely to enact risky lifestyles that include delinquency and violence” when they are provided with developmental experiences in community settings.ⁱⁱ Research conducted over the past two decades provides empirical support for this rationale.ⁱⁱⁱ

Consistent with national trends and practices, Connecticut has embraced the youth development approach. In 2001, the Connecticut for Community Youth Development (CCYD) project was started “with a goal of stimulating state and local commitment to positive youth development.”^{iv} Over time, the CCYD project evolved into a statewide approach to the development of young people. This approach is rooted in a belief “that youth are valuable and capable resources who should be encouraged to get involved and take on youth leadership roles in community-based activities.”^v Accordingly, youth programs that received GUYVP funding were required to promote youth involvement by (1) providing youth opportunities for input into program planning and management; (2) offering youth leadership development activities; and (3) recognizing and awarding youth participation and achievement.

To assist GUYVP-funded organizations with implementing youth involvement practices, OPM contracted with the Youth Development Training and Resource Center (YDTRC). The YDTRC exists within The Consultation Center (TCC), a cooperative endeavor of the Yale University School of Medicine, the Connecticut Mental Health Center, and the Consultation Center, Inc. (formerly the Community Consultation Board, Inc.). For over 25 years, TCC has promoted the development of individuals and families by providing direct services to children, youth, and adults; conducting research and program evaluation; providing training and consultation to diverse community members and organizations; and promoting mental health and prevention strategies.

The YDTRC was formed in 1994 in collaboration with New Haven’s City Wide Youth Coalition. It is a capacity-building intermediary organization committed to promoting positive youth development by increasing the effectiveness of youth workers and youth-serving organizations through five core activities:

1. youth development training for youth workers, program managers, youth funders, advocates, policymakers, and other community members;
2. technical assistance to help agencies and staff implement youth development programs and best practices for engaging youth as community resources;
3. communication and advocacy efforts aimed at increasing support for youth and essential programming for adolescents;
4. development and dissemination of youth development curricula, research findings, and program resources; and
5. participation in efforts to strengthen networks and work collaboratively on behalf of youth at the local, regional, state, and national levels.^{vi}

YDTRC staff provided annual trainings on youth engagement strategies, youth leadership development, program governance, and community involvement. Moreover, they maintained regular contact with each program, offering technical assistance and practical advice. Furthermore, they encouraged program staff to attend YDTRC professional development courses, including a 30-hour Advancing Youth Development course and a 15-hour Supervising & Managing course.

To evaluate services provided by GUYVP grantees, OPM contracted with the Center for Applied Research in Human Development (CARHD; hereafter “Center”) at the University of Connecticut.^{vii} The Center conducted a process evaluation of youth development programs that received GUYVP funding during the fiscal years (FY) 2007-08 and 2008-09. The details of this evaluation are available in CARHD (2009). In addition to the process evaluation, the Center was contracted to conduct a supplemental study exploring relationships between youth involvement practices in GUYVP-funded programs and youth outcomes at the program level. This report outlines the findings of the supplemental study.

Youth Involvement

The concept of youth involvement has different meanings for different people. One common meaning refers to participation in out-of-school time activities. Used in this sense, youth involvement connotes “breadth” and “intensity” of participation—that is, the number of activities (breadth) and the frequency of participation in any given activity (intensity).^{viii} For example, Rose-Krasnor and colleagues (2006) studied youth involvement defined as breadth and intensity of participation. They examined the relationship between involvement in extracurricular activities and youth development outcomes. They found that both dimensions of involvement were positively related to young people’s personal wellbeing, academic orientation, and social development.

Another example is a well-known study by Eccles and Barber (1999). These researchers studied whether participation in certain types of activities made a difference in youth development. The findings indicated that involvement in pro-social activities (such as church attendance or community service) was linked to

positive educational paths and low rates of risky behavior (such as drinking, using drugs, skipping school). In contrast, involvement in team sports was linked to positive educational paths and high rates of alcohol consumption.

An alternative meaning of the concept of youth involvement refers to “the direct involvement of youth in shaping the direction and operation of their programs organizations, communities.”^{xix} Used in this way, youth involvement entails not only breadth and intensity of participation, but also “the process of involving people in the decisions that affect their lives.”^x For example, Dorothy Stoneman (2002) of YouthBuild USA described pathways by which youth programs can foster non-partisan youth involvement in organizational and community decision-making. She challenged the widely accepted notion of adults as people who must “educate, direct, control, discipline, and entertain youth people.”^{xi} Instead, drawing from her experience of working with youth, she described an alternative role for adults, one that involves listening to young people, learning from them, and giving “them the resources to help create the world the way they envision a better society ought to be.”^{xii} Furthermore, she emphasized that adults need to help harness young people’s energy and creativity through involvement in project creation, institution governance, and issue-based advocacy.

Another example of youth involvement as involvement in decision-making is evident in a study conducted by Zeldin and colleagues (2000). These authors explored the effects of youth involvement on adults and organizations. They identified a number of positive outcomes and concluded that “mutual contributions of youth and adults [to organizational decision-making] can result in a synergy, a new power and energy that propels decision-making groups to greater innovation and productivity.”^{xiii}

In this study, we use the term in its latter sense. We define youth involvement as young people’s participation in and active contribution to organizational decision-making. Defined in this way, youth involvement has been used interchangeably with a number of other terms, including youth participation, youth voice, youth leadership, and youth engagement.^{xiv} Therefore, to inform our work on this project, we reviewed journal articles and research reports that employed any of these terms to denote young people’s participation in organizational and community decision-making. Our review of the literature indicated that there is evidence to support the link between youth involvement and positive outcomes for youth, adults, and organizations. Youth outcomes identified in research studies include the following:^{xv}

- ◆ Leadership skills
- ◆ Teamwork skills
- ◆ Communication skills
- ◆ Strategic thinking
- ◆ Self confidence
- ◆ Personal wellness
- ◆ Enhanced sociopolitical awareness
- ◆ Social capital
- ◆ Social responsibility
- ◆ Hopefulness

Outcomes of youth involvement for adults who work with young people include the following:^{xvi}

- ◆ Perception of young people as legitimate contributors to decision-making processes
- ◆ Enhanced commitment and energy to the organization
- ◆ Greater sense of effectiveness and confidence in working with and relating to youth
- ◆ Stronger sense of community connectedness

And, the outcomes of youth involvement for organizations include:^{xvii}

- ◆ Greater connectedness and responsiveness to youth in the community
- ◆ Greater value placed on inclusivity and representation
- ◆ Reaching out to the community in more diverse ways

This study contributes to existing research by further examining the link between youth involvement practices within community-based youth development programs and youth outcomes at the program level.

STUDY PURPOSE

All programs participating in this study received training and technical assistance on youth involvement principles and practices. However, not all programs were equally successful at incorporating these practices in their day-to-day programming. This study compares youth outcomes across youth development programs with varying levels of adherence to youth involvement principles. Although a few studies have compared youth outcomes across organizational activities,^{xviii} there is little information on comparisons of youth development programs based on commitment to and success at implementing youth involvement practices. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to answer the following question: are youth outcomes better in youth development programs that are more committed to and successful at incorporating youth involvement practices into their day-to-day programming?

Before answering this question, it is important to briefly outline what youth involvement meant for the participating programs: that is, what were programs striving to do? First, programs were required to include a youth involvement component in their applications for the GUYVP grant award. In the request for proposals, this component was defined in the following manner: “Youth involvement means youth have many viable opportunities for input into the planning and management of the site and programs and have had such involvement in the preparation of the applicant’s proposal. This also means youth leadership development activities with community service components. Youth participation and achievement must be recognized and rewarded regularly.”^{xix}

Second, participating youth development programs received training and technical assistance from YDTRC on how to implement youth involvement principles and practices. The YDTRC approach to youth development is based on the premise that “young people are most likely to succeed in life if they are given opportunities to become actively involved in leadership roles – whether at home, in school, in community programs, or in faith-based activities.”^{xx} Accordingly, YDTRC staff encouraged programs to make space for young people’s input in program planning, implementation, and governance; moreover, they encouraged programs to involve youth in interpretation of process evaluation results and the design and

implementation of programmatic changes; furthermore, they promoted youth-led issue-based advocacy and youth-led community service projects; lastly, they promoted the development of structures, such as the Youth Council, that would institutionalize youth participation in organizational decision-making.

Participating Youth and Youth Programs

For the fiscal year 2007-08 and 2008-09 funding period, OPM awarded 17 grants to 19 different youth development programs.^{xxi} Youth within each of these programs completed an evaluation survey developed by the Center.^{xxii} In some programs, youth leaders contributed to data collection by encouraging other youth participants to complete the surveys. The survey included carefully designed instruments that assessed general psychological well-being, sense of alienation from the broader social system, ethnic identity development, and youth program developmental quality (**Appendix A**). Additionally, the survey included a set of questions about young people's demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity), and questions about drug and alcohol consumption.

A total of 1,090 surveys were collected in March 2009. Of these, 1,067 surveys completed by middle-school and high-school youth (ages 11 through 18) were used in this study. In addition to youth surveys, the data analyzed in this study included leadership ratings of youth by staff in each youth program (*leadership ratings*) and program rankings by the YDTRC staff (*external rankings*).

More specifically, program staff rated each participating youth in terms of leadership engagement within that program. Rating categories included (1) demonstrated leader, (2) emergent leader, and (3) general participant. Staff members were not given specific criteria for these categories so that they could rate youth in terms of involvement in their particular program rather than global characteristics. Staff leadership ratings were used to create a measure of youth involvement practices for each youth development program. This measure was based upon the percentage of youth enrolled in each program who had been rated as demonstrated leaders.

In addition to program staff ratings of youth participants, two YDTRC staff, who worked with the youth development programs throughout the duration of the GUYVP grant, were asked to serve as external raters of participating programs. The two raters discussed their impressions of each youth development program, using a set of criteria consistent with the youth involvement approach (**Appendix B**) and then arrived at a mutually agreed upon ranking of each program. Programs were ranked from 1 = *Most successful* to 19 = *Least successful* in incorporating youth involvement principles and practices into day-to-day programming.

As noted previously, the overarching goal of this study was to explore relationships between youth involvement practices within youth development programs and youth outcomes at the program level. In other words, the purpose of this study was to investigate whether youth outcomes differed as a function of programs' youth involvement practices. Using youth surveys, youth leadership ratings by program staff, and external raters' program rankings, the following question was addressed: are youth outcomes better in youth development programs that are more committed to and successful at implementing youth

involvement practices? Youth outcomes of interest included well-being, alienation, ethnic identity development, and marijuana and alcohol consumption.

PARTICIPATING YOUTH

A greater percentage of young men than women completed the surveys (Figure 1, below). This is consistent with previous evaluations of Connecticut’s urban youth programs (cf., Sabatelli et al., 2007). In terms of students’ grade in school, approximately the same percentage of middle (grades 5 to 8) and high-school youth (grades 9 to 12) completed the surveys (Figure 2, below).

Figure 1. Gender

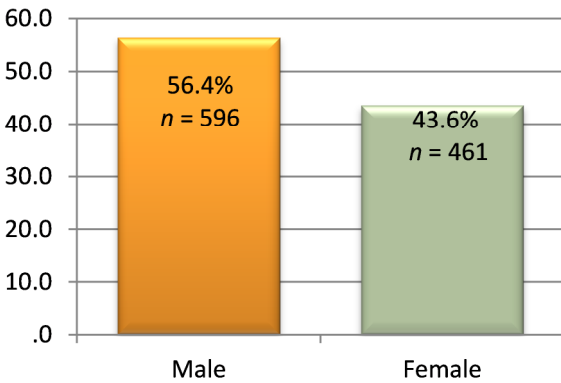


Figure 2. Grade in School

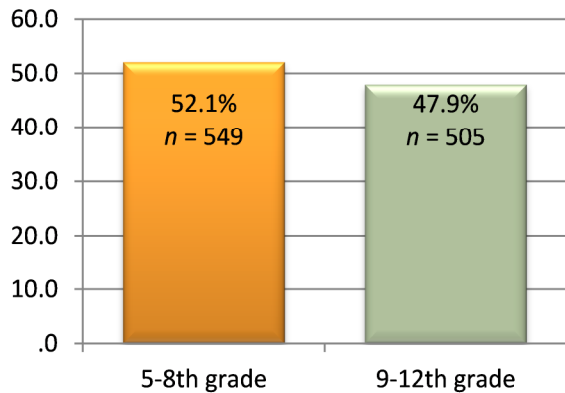


Figure 3 (below) shows a large majority of youth who completed the surveys selected Black or African American (53.3%) and Latino/a American or Hispanic (24.7%) as categories of ethnic identity. More than two thirds of survey respondents indicated that they were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (Figure 4, below).

Figure 3. Ethnicity

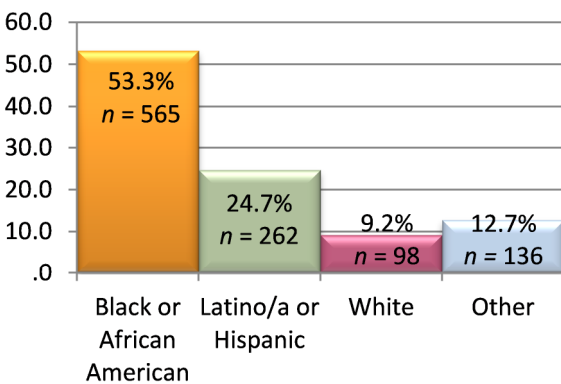
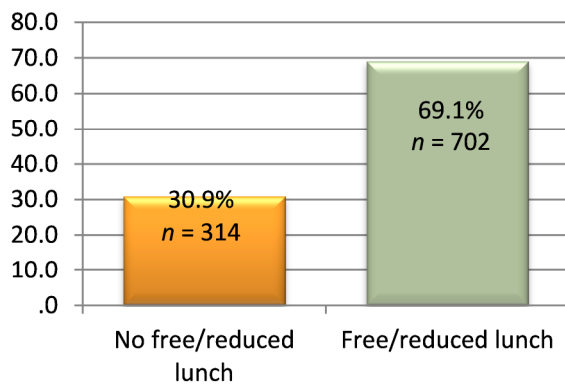


Figure 4. Free or Reduced-Price Lunch



The distribution of self-reported grade-point averages (GPA) is shown in Figure 5 (below). A majority of participants reported that they received mostly B’s and A’s; about one third reported that they received mostly C’s. Few reported D’s and F’s as their typical grades.

Young people’s educational aspirations are shown in Figure 6 (below). Most students indicated that they hoped to receive a college degree or higher. A large percentage (17%) indicated that they were not sure about their educational aspirations.^{xxiii}

Figure 5. Self-Reported GPA^{xxiv}

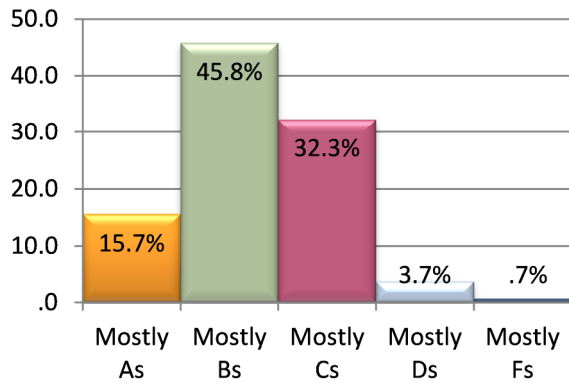
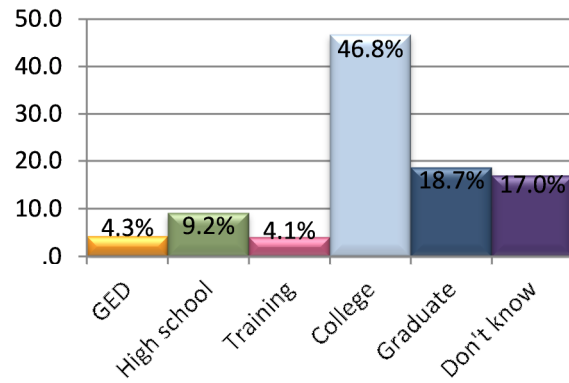


Figure 6. Educational Aspirations



PARTICIPATING YOUTH PROGRAMS

All GUYVP grantees were located in Connecticut’s low-income urban neighborhoods. Although most were housed in community-based organizations, a few were located in public schools. Some were part of national organizations such as Boys & Girls Club and Urban Leagues, and others were strictly local operations.

A majority of participating youth development programs served both middle- and high-school youth. However, four programs served only middle school students and two served only high school students. In four programs, the percentages of middle- and high-school students were approximately equal. In six programs, the percentage of high school students was substantially higher than the percentage of middle-school students (62 – 85% vs. 14 – 38%); and in three programs the percentage of middle-school students was substantially higher than the percentage of high school students (66 – 78% vs. 22 – 33%).

In ten participating youth development programs, there were approximately as many young women/girls as young men/boys. The percentage of boys was substantially higher than the percentage of girls (63 – 80% vs. 37 – 15%) in seven programs. In two programs, the percentage of girls was substantially higher than the percentage of boys (~62% vs. ~38%).

In terms of poverty, approximately 50% of youth were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch in four programs. There was a greater percentage of youth eligible for free or reduced-price lunch in thirteen programs (66 – 85% vs. 10 – 32%), and a lower percentage of respondents eligible for free or reduced-price lunch in two programs (~66% vs. ~32%).

Lastly, in terms of ethnic background, most respondents (56 – 58%) identified as African American/Black in eleven programs. In six programs most respondents (42 – 54%) identified as Latino/a American; in two programs most respondents (44 – 86%) identified as European American/White.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore relationships between youth involvement practices within youth development programs and youth outcomes at the program level. That is, are youth outcomes better in programs that are more committed to and more successful at incorporating youth involvement practices into their day-to-day programming? This question was examined in two ways (see [Appendix C](#) for methods).

First, we compared average youth outcomes across programs according to the percentage of demonstrated leaders. In doing so, we assumed that programs that were more effective at implementing youth involvement practices would have a greater percentage of demonstrated leaders. This assumption was informed by studies that show that adults' unwillingness to acknowledge young people's capacity for leadership is a major obstacle to youth involvement.^{xxv} We compared programs with high percentages of demonstrated youth leaders to programs with low percentages of demonstrated youth leaders. These results are presented in the first section below.

Second, we compared programs that received high rankings by the external raters with programs that received low rankings. Of interest was whether youth in programs ranked "high" in promoting youth involvement had higher average scores on youth outcome measures than youth attending programs rated as "low" in promoting youth involvement. These results are presented in the second section below.

COMPARISON OF PROGRAMS BASED ON STAFF LEADERSHIP RATINGS

This section presents results of program comparisons based upon staff leadership ratings—that is, the percentage of youth enrolled in a given program who had been rated as demonstrated leaders. This percentage varied considerably from program to program, with a range of 2.8% to 43.6% of youth determined to be demonstrated leaders. Based on these percentages, programs were divided into three groups: those with fewer than 10% ($n = 6$), between 10% and 25% ($n = 7$), and over 25% ($n = 6$) of youth identified as demonstrated leaders. Comparisons were made between the group of programs with fewer than 10% of youth identified as demonstrated leaders and the group of programs with more than 25% of youth as demonstrated leaders.

General Psychological Wellbeing. Figure 7 (below) shows program comparisons based upon the measure of general psychological well-being ([Appendix A](#)). There were, essentially, no differences between youth development programs with many demonstrated leaders (> 25% participants) and youth development programs with few demonstrated leaders (< 10% participants) on the measure of general psychological well-being ($M = 4.16$ vs. 4.15). In other words, regardless of youth involvement practices within youth development programs, youth reported, on average, the same relatively high level of general psychological well-being.

Alienation From Society. Figure 8 (below) shows program comparisons on the measure of alienation from the broader social system, which may be defined as a sense of self-estrangement, social isolation, and a belief that socially unacceptable means may be used to achieve one's goals ([Appendix A](#)). Average alienation scores were lower in programs with the highest percentages of demonstrated leaders (> 25% of

participants) than in the programs with the lowest percentage of demonstrated leaders (< 10% of participants), (M = 2.03 vs. 2.31). That is, youth who were attending programs with more demonstrated leaders reported less alienation than youth in programs with fewer demonstrated leaders. This difference was statistically significant.

Figure 7. Wellbeing: Comparison by Staff Ratings of Youth Leadership

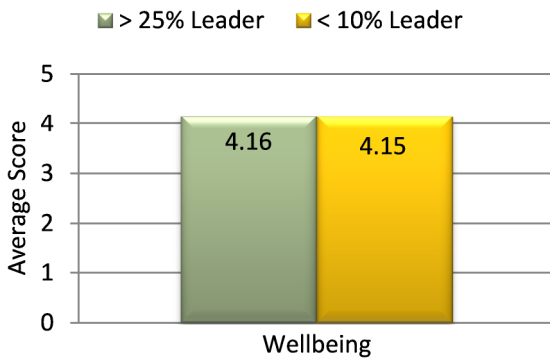
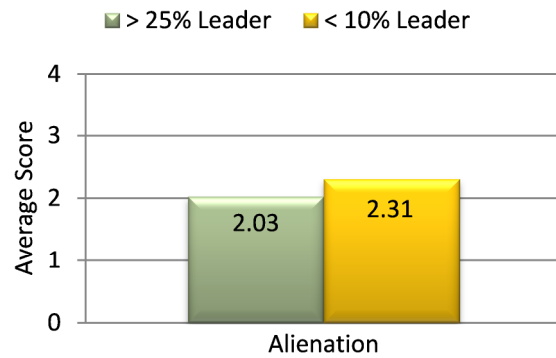


Figure 8. Alienation: Comparison by Staff Ratings of Youth Leadership



Ethnic Identity Development. Figures 9 and 10 (below) show comparisons on measures of ethnic identity development (**Appendix A**). Prior research has shown that exploration of and positive ethnic identity is related to many positive developmental outcomes for youth, including higher levels of engagement in school,^{xxvi} lower rates of substance use,^{xxvii} less positive attitudes toward violence and aggression,^{xxviii} and lower rates of aggressive behavior.^{xxix}

Figure 9. Exploration of Ethnic Identity: Comparison by Staff Ratings of Youth Leadership

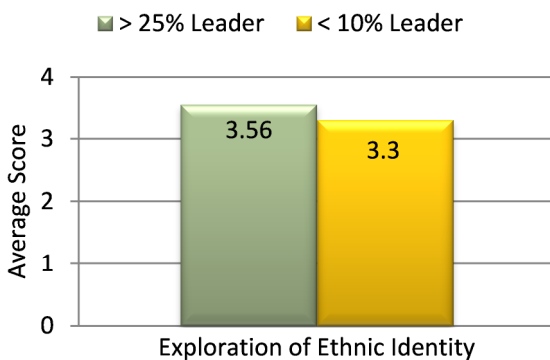
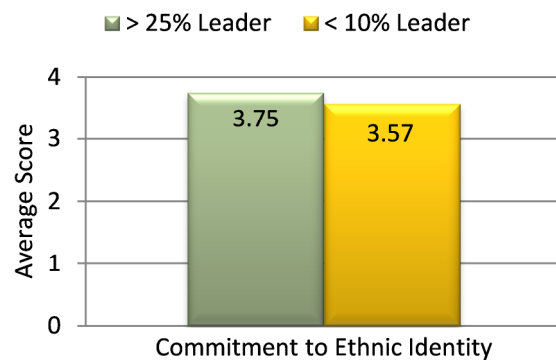


Figure 10. Commitment to Ethnic Identity: Comparison by Staff Ratings of Youth Leadership



Young people’s scores on exploration of ethnic identity, which is defined as “seeking information and experiences relevant to one’s ethnicity,” are shown on Figure 9 (above).^{xxx} On average, youth in programs with a high percentage of identified leaders (> 25% of participants) scored significantly higher on this measure than youth in programs with few identified leaders (< 10% of participants), (M = 3.56 vs. 3.30). The difference was statistically significant and it may be interpreted as indicating that youth in programs with many demonstrated leaders had higher levels of engagement in activities such as attending cultural events and learning cultural practices than youth in programs with few demonstrated leaders.

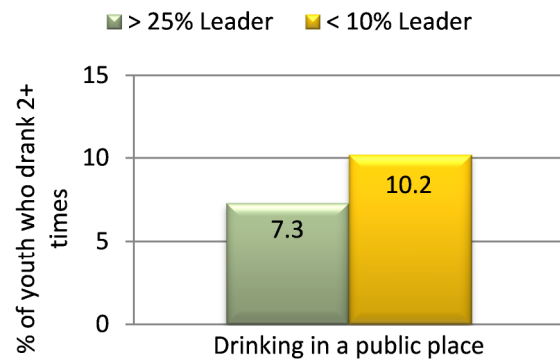
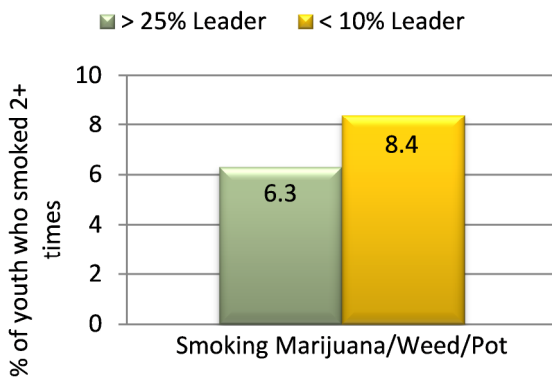
Figure 10 (above) shows comparisons on commitment to ethnic identity, which refers to a sense of belonging to and a personal investment in an ethnic group.^{xxxix} Consistent with the findings on ethnic identity exploration, youth in programs with many demonstrated leaders (> 25% of participants) reported, on average, greater levels of commitment to their ethnic group than youth in programs with few demonstrated leaders (< 10% of participants), (M = 3.75 vs. 3.57). This difference was statistically significant and it suggests that youth in programs with many demonstrated leaders experience a greater sense of commitment to their ethnic identity than youth in other programs.

Marijuana Consumption. Comparisons with respect to the percentage of youth who reported that they smoked marijuana (pot/weed) two or more times over the past year are provided on Figure 11 (below). The percentage of youth who smoked marijuana two or more times was slightly lower in programs with many identified leaders (> 25% of participants) than in programs with few demonstrated leaders (< 10% of participants), (6.3% vs. 8.4%). This difference, however, was not statistically significant.

Alcohol Consumption. Figure 12 (below) illustrates comparisons by alcohol consumption in a public place. The results show that the percentage of youth who reported that they drank in a public place two or more times (in the past year) was slightly higher in the programs with few demonstrated leaders (< 10% of participants) than in the programs with many demonstrated leaders (> 25% participants), (10.2% vs. 7.3%). This difference was not statistically significant.

Figure 11. Marijuana: Comparison by Staff Ratings

Figure 12. Alcohol: Comparison by Staff Ratings



COMPARISON OF PROGRAMS BASED ON EXTERNAL RATERS' YOUTH INVOLVEMENT RANKINGS

This section presents results from analyses based on external raters' rankings of participating youth development programs. The graphs below contrast average scores on youth outcomes between youth development programs identified as "highest" (rankings 1 – 5) and youth development programs identified as "lowest" (rankings 15 – 19) in promoting youth development.

General Psychological Wellbeing. Figure 13 (below) shows program averages on the measure of psychological wellbeing. Although highest-ranked programs did have a slightly higher average score on the measure of general psychological wellbeing (M = 4.2 vs. M = 4.1), this difference was not statistically

significant. This means that youth in all programs, regardless of the external raters’ rankings, reported generally equal and also generally high levels of psychological wellbeing (about 4.1-4.2 on a scale of 1 to 6, see [Appendix A](#)).

Alienation From Society. Figure 14 (below) shows program averages on the measure of alienation from the broader social system. The highest-ranked programs evidenced lower alienation scores, thus indicating that youth in these programs experienced, on average, less alienation than youth in the lowest-ranked programs (M = 2.09 vs. 2.29). This difference was statistically significant.

Figure 13. Wellbeing: Comparison by External Raters’ Rankings

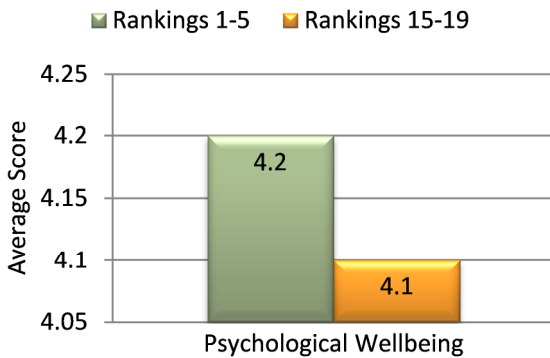
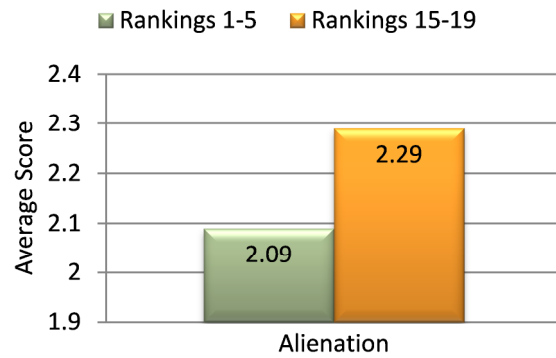


Figure 12. Alienation: Comparison by External Raters’ Rankings



Ethnic Identity Development. Figures 15 and 16 (below) show comparisons based on participants’ sense of ethnic identity. Figure 15 shows program comparisons with respect to ethnic identity exploration, which, to briefly reiterate, is considered a fundamental process in ethnic identity development. It involves “seeking information and experiences relevant to one’s ethnicity.” As Figure 15 (below) illustrates, youth attending the highest-ranked youth development scored higher, on average, on the measure of ethnic identity exploration than youth attending the lowest-ranked youth development programs (M = 3.64 vs. 3.31).

Figure 16 (below) shows program comparisons with respect to ethnic identity commitment, which, as noted above, refers to a sense of belonging to and a personal investment in an ethnic group. As with ethnic identity exploration, youth in the highest-ranked youth development programs scored higher, on average, on the measure of ethnic identity commitment than youth attending the lowest-ranked youth development programs (M = 3.83 vs. 3.52).

In both instances, the differences between “highest” and “lowest” ranked programs were statistically significant. This suggests that youth in highest-ranked youth development programs experience higher levels of engagement in cultural activities and greater commitment to their ethnic identity than youth in lowest-ranked programs.

Figure 15. Exploration of Ethnic-Identity: Comparison by External Raters' Rankings

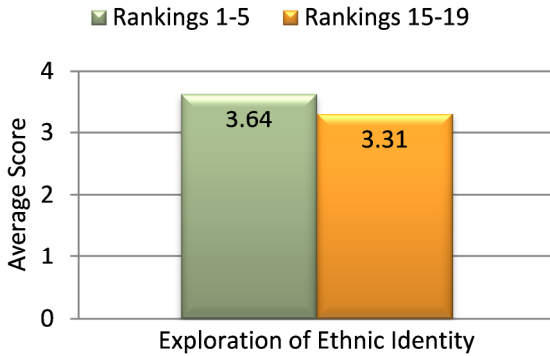
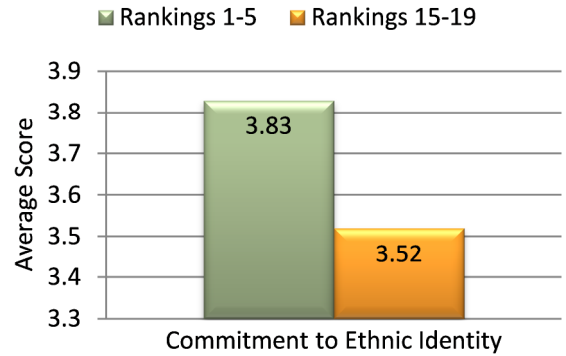


Figure 16. Commitment to Ethnic Identity: Comparison by External Raters' Rankings



Marijuana Consumption. Comparisons of youth development programs based on the percentage of youth who reported that they smoked marijuana (weed, pot) two or more times during the past year are shown in Figure 17 (below). Interestingly, the percentage of youth who reported smoking marijuana was slightly lower in the lowest-ranked than in the highest-ranked programs (5.1% vs. 7.1%). This difference was not statistically significant.

Alcohol Consumption. Figure 18 (below) shows program comparisons based on the percentage of youth who reported that they drank alcohol in a public place two or more times during the past year. In the lowest-ranked youth development programs, this percentage was slightly higher than in the highest-ranked programs (6.8% vs. 5.7%). As with marijuana consumption, this difference was not statistically significant.

Figure 17. Marijuana Consumption: Comparison by External Raters' Rankings

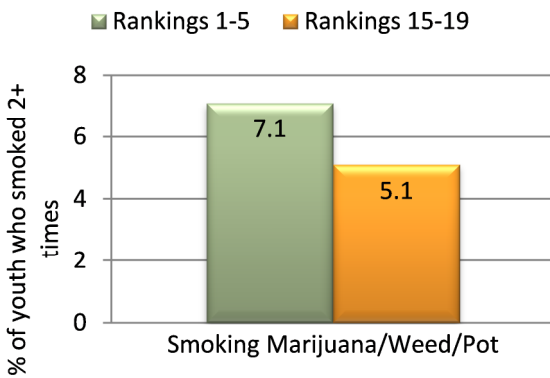
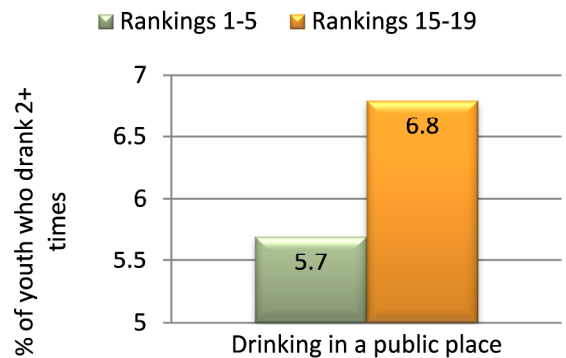


Figure 18. Alcohol Consumption: Comparison by External Raters' Rankings



Conclusions and Recommendations

This study explored relationships between youth involvement practices within youth development programs and youth outcomes at the program level. To provide context for comparisons of youth development programs, it is important to note that young people across participating programs reported relatively high levels of adjustment. For instance, the average score on the measure of general psychological wellbeing was 4.2 (SD = 1.3) on a scale from 1 to 6, with 6 indicating the highest level of wellbeing. Moreover, about 70% of youth scored 3.5 or above on this measure. This finding indicates that a large majority of youth across participating programs experienced relatively high levels of psychological wellbeing (e.g., “I feel cheerful and in good spirits,” “I wake up feeling fresh and rested;” see [Appendix A](#) for a description of this measure).

Similarly, the average score on the measure of alienation from the broader society was 2.2 (SD = 1.1) on a scale from 1 to 6, with 1 indicating the lowest level of alienation. Furthermore, an overwhelming majority of participating youth (86%) scored 3.5 or lower. This suggests that most participants experienced low levels of alienation (e.g., “I feel that there is not much purpose in life,” “It is all right to break the law as long as you don’t get caught;” see [Appendix A](#) for a description of this measure).

Consistent with indicators of psychosocial functioning, behavioral indicators suggested relatively low levels of risky behavior. That is, across participating programs about 8.0% of youth reported that they drank alcohol in a public place two or more times over the course of the previous year, and about 8.2% of youth reported that they smoked marijuana in the same period of time. In other words, reported levels of risky behavior were rather low. Together with indicators of psychosocial functioning, these findings point to relatively high levels of adjustment for youth across all participating programs.

With the overall picture of youth adjustment in mind, we move onto discussion of program comparisons. Our data provide preliminary support for youth involvement programming. Using program ratings from two different perspectives—program staff and technical assistance providers—to measure adherences to youth involvement principles and practices, we found that youth outcomes were generally more favorable in programs that were more committed to and successful at implementing youth involvement principles and best practices. That is, program comparisons based on staff leadership ratings and technical assistance providers’ rankings indicated that youth reported lower levels of alienation and higher levels of ethnic identity development in programs that scored higher on the two measures of youth involvement practices. The differences were most demonstrable and consistent between the group of programs with very high average scores on the two measures of youth involvement practices, on one hand, and the group of programs with very low average scores, on the other hand.

Differences in the behavior-related variables were less consistent. Program comparisons based on staff leadership ratings indicated that the average percentage of youth who reported consuming alcohol and marijuana was slightly lower in programs with many demonstrated leaders than in programs with few demonstrated leaders. In contrast, comparisons based on external raters’ rankings indicated that the average percentage of marijuana consumers was slightly higher in the highest-ranked programs than in the lowest-ranked programs. Perhaps more telling are the results of correlational analyses (see [Appendix C](#) for details). These results showed that the greater the percentage of demonstrated leaders in a program (as rated by program staff), the lower the percentage of marijuana consumers and the lower the percentage of alcohol consumers. Similarly, the higher the external raters’ ranking, the lower the percentage of alcohol consumers within a youth development program. In all instances these relationships were statistically significant, but also relatively low in strength. On the whole, they provide some support for the link between youth involvement practices and fewer marijuana and alcohol consumers within programs. That said, our

data cannot provide a definitive answer to the question of whether youth outcomes are better in youth development programs that are more committed to and successful at implementing youth involvement principles and practices, for two reasons. First, we assessed youth adjustment using a limited number of indicators. Second, and more importantly, the study design was cross-sectional and thus all of the measurements were taken at the same time; this does not enable causal attributions to be drawn from these data.

Our findings provide preliminary support for youth involvement practices within youth development programs, but they also point to the need for additional research. The field of youth development and the funding agencies would benefit from large-scale experimental studies in which programs are randomly assigned into two groups: an intervention group that receives technical assistance and training in promoting youth involvement practices and a control group that does not receive such training. Such studies could provide a more conclusive test of the idea that professional development assistance from outside providers can boost youth involvement practices, which in turn can influence participating youth in meaningful ways. Furthermore, it is important for future research to compare youth outcomes across a wide range of youth adjustment indicators, including the following:

- ◆ civic engagement,
- ◆ civic responsibility,
- ◆ sense of belonging,
- ◆ sense of mattering to the community,
- ◆ teamwork skills, and
- ◆ leadership skills.

The outcomes measured in this study provide support for one link in the process of empowering youth to be leaders in their programs and communities. Future studies should include examinations of how program-level factors such as commitment to youth involvement principles and practices affect youth's current and future engagement in their organizations and communities. Moreover, future research should examine the impact of youth involvement principles and practices on young people's relationships with adult staff within youth development programs, as well as their relationships with adults in the community. An additional area of inquiry would be the impact of youth involvement practices on adults' perceptions of youth—more specifically, adults' ability and willingness to perceive youth as legitimate leaders in the community.

Lastly, it is important for future studies to explore youth involvement practices across age groups (i.e., middle school vs. high school youth) and across settings (i.e., youth organization vs. neighborhood). Experiences in the field suggest that youth involvement processes are different for different age groups. In an ideal scenario, high school youth are involved in their programs to such an extent that they get hired as youth workers and actively participate in running their youth development programs; middle school youth, in contrast, are encouraged to actively participate in decision-making, but they are generally not hired as youth workers nor do they typically participate in running their youth development programs. The difference in youth involvement practices across age groups suggests the need for in-depth observational studies of those practices and youth involvement processes for a given cohort of youth over time, as well as for different cohorts of youth during a given time period. Additionally, experiences in the field suggest that the effects of youth involvement practices may be particularly potent if they result in youth decision-making at the community level. This indicates a need for comparisons between those youth involvement practices that remain within youth development programs and those that extend beyond programs and onto the local community.

References

- Arbona, C., Jackson, R. H., McCoy, A., & Blakely, C. (1999). Ethnic identity as a predictor of attitudes of adolescents toward fighting. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 19*, 323 – 340.
- Bech, P. (1999). Health-related quality of life measurements in the assessment of pain clinic results. *Acta Anaesthesiologica Scandinavica, 43*, 893-896.
- Bird, H. R., Daview, M., Canino, G., Loeber, R., Rubio-Stipec, M., & Shen, S. (2005). Classification of antisocial behaviors along severity and frequency parameters. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 14*(3), 325-341.
- Catalano, R. F., Berglund, M. L., Ryan, J. A. M., Lonczak, H. S., & Hawkins, J. D. (1998). *Positive youth development in the United States*. Retrieved June 2010 from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/positiveyouthdev99/>
- Center for Applied Research in Human Development (CARHD). (2009). *2008-09 process evaluation report: Governor's Urban Youth Violence Prevention grant*. Unpublished report prepared for the State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management. Storrs, CT: Author.
- Checkoway, B. (1998). Involving young people in neighborhood development. *Children and Youth Services Review, 20*(9/10), 765-795.
- Conner, J. O., & Strobel, K. (2007). Leadership development: An examination of individual and programmatic growth. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 22*(3), 275-297.
- Eccles, J. S., & Barber, B. L. (1999). Volunteering, basketball, or marching band: What kinds of extracurricular involvement matters? *Journal of Adolescent Research, 14*(1), 10-43.
- Frank, K. I. (2006). The potential of youth participation in planning. *Journal of Planning Literature, 20*, 351-371.
- Holley, L. C., Kulis, S., Marsiglia, F. F., & Keith, V. M. (2006). Ethnicity versus ethnic identity: What predicts substance use norms and behaviors? *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions, 6*(3), 53– 79.
- Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development. (2003). *Lessons in leadership: How young people change their communities and themselves*. The author.
- Lacourse, E., Villeneuve, M., & Claes, M. (2003). Theoretical structure of adolescent alienation: A multigroup confirmatory factor analysis. *Adolescence, 38*(152), 639-650.
- Larson, R., Hansen, D. M., & Moneta, G. (2006). Differing profiles of developmental experiences across types of organized youth activities. *Developmental Psychology, 42*(5), 849-863.

- Larson, R., Walker, K., & Pearce, N. (2005). A comparison of youth-driven and adult-driven youth programs: Balancing inputs from youth and adults. *Journal of Community Psychology, 33*(1), 57-74.
- Lerner, R. M., Lerner, J. V., & Almerigi, J. B. (2005). Positive youth development, participation in community youth development programs, and community contribution of fifth-grade adolescents: Findings from the first wave of the 4-H study of positive youth development. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 25*(17), 17-71.
- Lerner, R. M., & Thompson, L. S. (2002). Promoting healthy adolescent behavior and development: Issues in the design and evaluation of effective youth programs. *Journal of Pediatric Nursing, 17*(5), 338-344.
- Lewis-Charp, H., Cao Yu, H., Soukamneuth, S., & Lacoé, J. (2003). *Extending the reach of youth development through civic activism: Outcomes of the youth leadership for development initiative*. Social Policy Research Associates.
- McLaughlin, M. W. (2000). *Community counts: How youth organizations matter for youth development*. Retrieved June 2010 from <http://www.publiceducation.org>
- McMahon, S. D., & Watts, R. J. (2002). Ethnic identity in urban African American youth: Exploring links with self-worth, aggression, and other psychosocial variables. *Journal of Community Psychology, 30*, 411-431.
- Morsillo, J., & Prilleltensky, I. (2007). Social action with youth: Interventions, evaluation, and psychopolitical validity. *Journal of Community Psychology, 35*(6), 725-740.
- Mohamed, I. A., & Wheeler, W. (2001). *Broadening the bounds of youth development: Youth as engaged citizens*. A joint publication of The Ford Foundation and The Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development.
- Office of Policy and Management, (OPM), State of Connecticut. (2008). *Juvenile justice and youth development*. Retrieved June 2010 from http://www.ct.gov/opm/cwp/view.asp?a=2974&q=383658&opmNav_GID=1797&opmNav=|46656|#Approach
- Perkins, D. D., Florin, P., Rich, R. C., Wandersman, A., & Chavis, D. M. (1990). Participation and the social and physical environment of residential blocks: Crime and community context. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 18*(1), 83-115.
- Phinney, J. S., & Ong, A. D. (2007). Conceptualization and measurement of ethnic identity: Current status and future directions. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54*(3), 271-281.
- Rose-Krasnor, L., Busseri, M. A., Willoughby, T., & Chalmers, H. (2006). Breadth and intensity of youth activity involvement as contexts for positive development. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 35*(3), 385-499.

- Rose-Krasnor, L. (2009). Future directions in youth involvement research. *Social Development, 18*(2), 497-509.
- Roth, J., Brooks-Gunn, J., Murray, L., & Foster, W. (1998). Promoting healthy adolescents: Synthesis of youth development program evaluations. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 8*(4), 423-459.
- Sabatelli, R., M., Anderson, S. A., Kosutic, I., Sanderson, J., & Rubinfeld, S. (2009). A validation study of the Youth Development Assessment Device. *Family Relations, 58*(3), 361-372.
- Sabatelli, R. M., Anderson, S. A., Sanderson, J., Kosutic, I., & Trachtenberg, J. (2007). *2005-07 Neighborhood Youth Center program evaluation*. Unpublished report prepared for the State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management. Retrieved June 2010 from http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/cjppd/cjjyd/jjydpublishations/2007_nyc_process_and_outcome_evaluation_report_2008_jan1.pdf
- Search Institute. (2005). *The power of youth and adult partnerships and change pathways for youth work*. Retrieved June 2010 from <http://www.search-institute.org/content/power-youth-and-adult-partnerships>
- Shin, R., Daly, B., & Vera, E. (2007). The relationships of peer norms, ethnic identity, and peer support to school engagement. *Professional School Counseling, 10*(4), 379 – 388.
- Stoneman, D. (2002). The role of youth programming in the development of civic engagement. *Applied Developmental Science, 6*(4), 221-226.
- Tolman, J., & Pittman, K. with B. Cervone, K. Cushman, L. Rowley, S. Kinkade, J. Phillips, & S. Duque. (2001). *Youth acts, community impacts: Stories of youth engagement with real results*, Community & Youth Development Series, Volume 7. Takoma Park, MD: The Forum for Youth Investment, International Youth Foundation.
- Youth Development Training and Resource Center, (YDTRC). (n.d.). *Our approach to youth development*. Retrieved June 2010 from <http://www.theconsultationcenter.org/ydtrc/approach.html>
- Wheeler, W., & Edlebeck, C. (2006). Leading, learning, and unleashing potential: Youth leadership and civic engagement. *New Directions for Youth Development, 109*, 89-97.
- Wheeler, W., & Roach, C. (2005). *Community-based youth leadership: A pathway to civic engagement*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Zeldin, S. (2004). Preventing youth violence through the promotion of community engagement and membership. *Journal of Community Psychology, 32*(5), 623-641.

Zeldin, S., Kusgen McDaniel, A., Topitzzes, D., & Calvert, M. (2000). *Youth in decision-making: A study on the impacts of youth on adults and organizations*. Retrieved from <http://www.theinnovationcenter.org>

Zeldin, S., Petrokubi, J., & MacNeil, C. (2007). *Youth-adult partnerships in community decision making: What does it take to engage adults in the practice?* Chevy Chase, MD: National 4-H Council and Surdna Foundation.

Appendix A

INSTRUMENTS USED TO ASSESS YOUTH FUNCTIONING AND ASSOCIATED CONSTRUCTS

The Psychological General Well-Being Scale (WHO). Youth's sense of psychological well-being was measured with a 5-item Psychological General Well-Being Scale (Bech, 1999), which has been adopted by the World Health Organization as the standard scale for measuring well-being. Respondents are asked to reflect on how they were feeling in the two-week period prior to completing the questionnaire and to select one of the six response choices ranging from 1 = *at no time* to 6 = *all of the time*. Examples of items include "I feel cheerful and in good spirits" and "I wake up feeling fresh and rested." Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .89, thus indicating good internal consistency reliability of instrument scores. The average score on this 6-point scale was 4.2 (SD = 1.3).

Adolescent Alienation Measure. This 15-item instrument was used to assess youth's sense of alienation from the broader social system (Lacourse et al., 2003). Respondents are asked to reflect on how they were feeling in the past year and to select one of the six response choices ranging from 1 = *totally disagree* to 6 = *totally agree*. Examples of items include "I feel that there is not much purpose in life," "The problems of life are sometimes too big for me," "I do not know anyone that I can confide in," and "It is all right to break the law as long as you don't get caught." A subset of seven items was used in this study. Cronbach's alpha for these items was .84. The average score was 2.23 (SD = 1.09).

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure. This 6-item instrument measures two aspects of ethnic identity: (1) Exploration and (2) Commitment (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Questionnaire items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Examples of items include "I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group," and "I have often talked to other people in order to learn more about my ethnic group." Cronbach's alphas for Exploration and Commitment subscales were .84 in both instances. The average score on the Exploration subscale was 3.4 (SD = 1.1); on the Commitment subscale it was 3.6 (SD = 1.0).

Appendix B

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS/YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

ACTIVITY AND PROGRESS

- ◆ Advisory Group in place for youth input to program plans
- ◆ Participation on advisory group is representative of center youth
- ◆ Use of Advisory Group to review data and evaluation survey results
- ◆ Employment of older youth leaders at center
- ◆ Older youth share skills with younger youth at program or in neighborhood
- ◆ Youth voice is a high priority in program design and implementation
- ◆ Youth have numerous opportunities for taking on new roles and exercising leadership
- ◆ Youth are viewed and utilized as valuable partners
- ◆ Youth leaders have considerable influence on program decisions
- ◆ Youth are represented in the governance of the organization
- ◆ Youth are encouraged and use a wide range of leadership skills
- ◆ Youth are the first to be consulted when a special event is planned
- ◆ Youth are able to voice dissenting ideas and be listened to seriously
- ◆ Youth are engaged regularly in community service
- ◆ Youth are often engaged in assessing community needs and sharing solutions
- ◆ Youth learn about the way decisions are made in their own community, and get to know (about) their key decision-makers and community leaders
- ◆ Youth have opportunities to reach out to involve neighborhood residents and local businesses, nearby schools, and local resources to help their center
- ◆ Youth learn about contacting and using media to dispel negative images about teens and share good news about their local neighborhoods or center
- ◆ Youth are involved in organizing activities in their neighborhood or community that benefit larger numbers of people, and address key issues
- ◆ Youth participate actively in youth leadership development training workshops and retreats
- ◆ Youth have opportunities to co-facilitate or lead a workshop session for youth and adult advisors
- ◆ Youth leaders have chances to meet and share their concerns with key city leaders
- ◆ Youth leaders initiate community involvement activities to address local issues
- ◆ Youth leaders apply for outside funding (e.g., mini grants, scholarships)
- ◆ Youth leaders seek adult input and outside technical assistance to assist the center
- ◆ Youth review program and activity budgets with adult advisors
- ◆ Youth have input into the screening and hiring of frontline youth workers
- ◆ Youth leaders are recognized for their leadership (one or as a group)
- ◆ Former youth leaders come back to visit and to assist center with specific plans
- ◆ Youth leaders become fulltime staff members with a longstanding commitment to the center and the neighborhood or their own local community
- ◆ Youth leaders become vocal advocates and are identified as “community leaders”
- ◆ Youth leaders are able to organize activities that secure outside funds or resources

Appendix C

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to explore relationships between youth involvement practices with youth development programs and youth outcomes at the program level. That is, are youth outcomes better, on average, in youth development programs that are more committed to and successful at incorporating youth involvement practices into their day-to-day programming?

To answer this question, we used two measures of youth involvement practices: (1) program rankings by external raters and (2) youth leadership ratings by program staff (i.e., percentage youth identified as demonstrated leaders). The first measure reflects the perspective of technical assistance providers, whereas the second represents the perspective of program staff. A correlational analysis indicated that the relationship between these measures was moderate in size (Spearman's $\rho = -.44$), statistically significant ($p < .001$), and in an expected direction: the higher the external raters' ranking, the greater the percentage of youth identified by staff as demonstrated leaders.

To further probe this relationship, we manually inspected and compared external raters' rankings and youth leadership ratings. The findings indicated there was a high degree of correspondence at the extremes (i.e., very high or very low rankings; very large or very small percentage of demonstrated leaders) and a lower degree of correspondence in the middle. More specifically, programs ranked in the top five by external raters also reported that they had a high percentage of demonstrated leaders; conversely, programs ranked in the bottom five by external raters reported that they had few demonstrated leaders. Exceptions to this were two programs: one was ranked in the top five by the external raters but had few demonstrated leaders, and the other was ranked in the bottom five by the external raters but had many demonstrated leaders. Interestingly, both programs were new to the OPM-funded technical assistance provided by the YDTRC.

Given that different perspectives (i.e., external raters and program staff) shed a different light on program practices, we used them separately for youth outcome comparisons. We first used the percentage of youth within each program that staff members identified as being "demonstrated leaders." This number varied considerably from program to program, with a range of 2.8% to 43.6%. Based on these percentages, programs were divided into three groups: (1) those with fewer than 10% identified leaders ($n = 6$), (2) those with 10% - 25% identified leaders ($n = 7$), and (3) those with over 25% identified leaders ($n = 6$).

We then conducted a multivariate analysis of variance, using the three categories outlined above, to determine if programs in each group differed significantly on their average scores on the measures of psychosocial functioning. Using Wilk's lambda, we found that the combined measures of psychosocial functioning were significantly affected by program grouping based on youth leadership ratings (as described above): $F(8, 2062) = 5.56, p < .001$.

Univariate tests of between-subjects effects were used to determine if average scores on youth outcome measures were different for programs in each of the three categories. These tests showed statistically

significant differences among groups on 3 out of 4 variables: ethnic identity exploration [$F(2, 1034) = 7.74, p < .001$], ethnic identity commitment [$F(2, 1034) = 3.47, p = .032$], and alienation [$F(2, 1034) = 9.88, p < .001$]. There were no statistically significant differences among groups on the measure of psychological well-being [$F(2, 1034) = 1.06, p = .347$]. To pinpoint the source of differences, we used planned comparisons (with a Bonferroni correction). Findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Means on Psychosocial Outcome Variables by Percentage of Youth Identified as Leaders

	All Programs Mean(SD)	% Demonstrated Leader		
		> 25%	10-25%	< 10%
General Well-Being	4.18(1.26)	4.16(1.23)	4.29(1.21)	4.15(1.33)
Alienation	2.23(1.09)	2.03(1.00) ^a	2.38(1.17) ^b	2.31(1.10) ^{a,b}
Ethnic Identity: Exploration	3.38(1.07)	3.56(1.07) ^a	3.27(1.05) ^b	3.30(1.08) ^{a,b}
Ethnic Identity: Commitment	3.64(1.03)	3.75(1.02) ^a	3.59(1.00)	3.57(1.04) ^a

Note. Superscripts indicate statistically significant differences at $p < .05$.

To compare programs on behavior outcome variables (consumption of marijuana and alcohol), we used a chi-square (χ^2) test and dummy variables for marijuana and alcohol consumption (0 = *consumed two or more times*, 1 = *consumed less than two times*). The differences were not statistically significant either for the proportion of youth who reported that they smoked marijuana two or more times during the previous year [$\chi^2(2) = 3.71, p = .16$] or for the proportion of youth who reported that they drank alcohol in a public place 2 or more times during the previous year [$\chi^2(2) = 5.42, p = .07$]. This finding does not indicate that there was no relationship between each set of variables, but simply that we did not find evidence of such relationship using youth leadership ratings as a program-grouping criterion. As numbers presented in Table 2 show, the average percentage of youth who reported smoking marijuana was lower in programs with many demonstrated leaders than in programs with few demonstrated leaders (6.3% vs. 8.4%). Similarly, the average percentage of youth who reported drinking in a public place was lower in programs with many demonstrated leaders than in programs with few demonstrated leaders (7.3% vs. 10.2%). That said, however, average percentages in the middle group of programs (10 – 25% demonstrated leaders) make the interpretation of this relationship difficult—in case of marijuana, this number is unexpectedly high (10.6%), whereas in case of alcohol, this number is unexpectedly low (5.3%).

To further probe the relationship between the youth involvement and marijuana and alcohol consumption, we used the chi-square (χ^2) test to compare the two extreme groups: one with more than 25% of participants as demonstrated leaders and one with fewer than 10% of participants as demonstrated leaders. In both instances the results indicated an absence of statistically significant differences [$\chi^2(1) = 2.06, p = .151$ for alcohol and $\chi^2(1) = 1.33, p = .249$ for marijuana].

We then computed correlation coefficients among three variables: (1) the percentage of demonstrated leaders in a youth program, (2) the percentage of youth who reported consuming marijuana two or more times, and (3) the percentage of youth who reported drinking alcohol in a public place two or more times. The results of correlational analyses indicated a strong positive relationship between alcohol and marijuana consumption ($r = .69, p < .001$), and low but statistically significant relationships between the percentage of demonstrated leaders and marijuana consumers ($r = -.19, p < .001$) and between the percentage of demonstrated leaders and alcohol consumers ($r = .19, p < .001$). These findings suggest that (a) percentages of alcohol and marijuana consumers within youth programs go hand in hand and (b) the greater the percentage of demonstrated leaders in a youth program, the lower the percentage of youth who (reportedly) consume alcohol and marijuana.

Table 2. Average Percentages on Behavior Outcome Variables by Percentage Youth Identified as Leaders

	All Programs	% Demonstrated Leader		
		> 25%	10-25%	< 10%
% Smoked Marijuana 2+ Times	8.2%	6.3%	10.6%	8.4%
% Drank Alcohol in Public 2+ times	8.0%	7.3%	5.3%	10.2%

The overall pattern of results for program comparisons based on the percentage of demonstrated leaders showed generally higher scores on psychosocial variables in programs with over 25% of youth identified as leaders when compared to those with less than 10%. Differences between programs with 10% to 25% of demonstrated leaders and those with over 25% were mixed. An exception to this trend was psychological wellbeing, for which there were no statistically significant differences among programs. The analyses also uncovered a relationship, in the expected direction, between the percentage of demonstrated leaders and behavior indicators (that is, use of alcohol and marijuana).

We next compared youth outcomes based on external raters' rankings as an indicator of programs' commitment to and success at implementing youth involvement practices. To compare mean differences across programs, we divided them into four groups based on their standing in the rankings (1 – 5; 6 – 10; 11 – 14; 15 – 19). We then conducted a multivariate analysis of variance to determine if there were statistically significant differences on psychosocial outcome variables. Using Wilk's lambda, we found that average scores differed significantly across the ranking groups [$F(12, 2725.4) = 3.79, p < .001$].

Univariate tests of between-subjects effects were used to determine if average scores on outcome variables differed among the ranking groups. The results were similar to those we found using the three categories of youth leadership, with statistically significant differences among groups for ethnic identity exploration [$F(3, 1033) = 9.06, p < .001$], ethnic identity commitment, [$F(3, 1033) = 5.59, p < .001$], alienation [$F(3, 1033) = 3.01, p = .029$], and no statistically significant differences on the measure of general psychological wellbeing [$F(3, 1033) = 1.08, p = .359$].

We then compared program mean scores on youth perception and self-reported functioning variables using these groupings. Means for psychosocial variables are presented below in Table 3.

We used a chi-square (χ^2) test to compare programs on behavior outcome variables (consumption of alcohol and marijuana), using dummy variables as indicators of whether or not youth consumed each of the substances. Differences among programs regarding the percentage of students who reported drinking alcohol in a public place two or more times were statistically significant [$\chi^2(3) = 10.70, p = .013$]. Similarly, program differences for the percentage of young people who reported that they smoked marijuana two or more times during the previous year were statistically significant [$\chi^2(3) = 11.93, p = .008$]. These findings indicate dependence between external raters’ rankings and each of the two behavior variables. However, as an examination of average percentages for each group of programs indicates (Table 4), this relationship is difficult to interpret. In the instance of marijuana consumption, the average percentage of “consumers” was greater in the highest-ranked programs than in the lowest-ranked programs (7.1% vs. 5.1%), and greater still in the two middle groups (9.0% and 13.3%). With respect to alcohol consumption, the average percentage of “consumers” was greater in the lowest-ranked than in the highest-ranked programs (6.8% vs. 5.7%), and still greater in the two middle groups (7.8% and 13.3%).

Table 3. Means (Standard Deviations) on Psychosocial Outcome Variables by Leadership Ranking Category

	All Programs Mean(SD)	Leadership Ranking Category			
		1 – 5	6 – 10	11 – 14	15 – 19
General Well-Being	4.19(1.26)	4.20(1.13)	4.30(1.29)	4.18(1.20)	4.10(1.40)
Alienation	2.23(1.09)	2.09(1.05) ^c	2.19(1.07)	2.36(1.18) ^c	2.29(1.08)
Ethnic Identity: Exploration	3.38(1.07)	3.63(0.96) ^{a,b,c}	3.35(1.10) ^a	3.18(1.02) ^b	3.31(1.15) ^c
Ethnic Identity: Commitment	3.64(1.03)	3.83(0.91) ^{a,b}	3.64(1.07)	3.54(1.02) ^a	3.52(1.10) ^b

Note. Superscripts indicate statistically significant differences at $p < .05$.

To gain additional information about this relationship, we conducted a chi-square (χ^2) test to compare differences between the two extreme groups (the highest-ranked and the lowest-ranked). In both instances, the results indicated no statistically significant differences [$\chi^2(1) = .31, p = .579$ for alcohol and $\chi^2(1) = 1.03, p = .311$ for marijuana].

The results of correlational analyses suggested that, on the whole, there was a positive relationship between external raters’ ranking and alcohol consumption (Spearman's rho = .149, $p < .001$) and essentially no relationship between external raters’ ranking and marijuana consumption (Spearman’s rho = -.03, $p = .391$). These results may be interpreted to indicate that the higher the external raters’ rankings, the lower the percentage of youth who (reportedly) consume alcohol. However, it is important to note that the strength of this relationship is low.

Table 4. Average Percentages on Behavior Outcome Variables by Leadership Ranking Category

	All Programs	Leadership Ranking Category			
		1 – 5	6 – 10	11 – 15	16 – 19
% Smoked Marijuana 2+ Times	8.2%	7.1%	9.0%	13.3%	5.1%
% Drank Alcohol in Public 2+ times	8.0%	5.7%	7.8%	13.3%	6.8%

The overall pattern of results for program comparisons based on external raters’ rankings corroborates the findings of comparisons based on the percentage of demonstrated leaders. That is, mean differences were clearest and most consistent between programs ranked the highest (rankings 1 – 5) and those ranked the lowest (rankings 15 – 19), with more positive program-level averages for higher ranked programs for ethnic identity exploration, ethnic identity commitment, and alienation. Differences in the behavior-related outcome variables were less consistent and sometimes contrary to expectations (e.g., percent of youth who had smoked marijuana two or more times in the past year, where the lowest average percentage was among centers in the lowest ranking category).

End Notes

- ⁱ Zeldin, 2004.
- ⁱⁱ Zeldin, 2004, p. 627.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 1998; Lerner & Thompson, 2002; Lerner, Lerner, Almerigi, et al., 2004; McLaughlin, 2000; Rose-Krasnor, 2009; Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, & Foster, 1998.
- ^{iv} OPM website, retrieved from http://www.ct.gov/opm/cwp/view.asp?a=2974&q=383658&opmNav_GID=1797&opmNav=|46656|#Approach
- ^v OPM website, retrieved from http://www.ct.gov/opm/cwp/view.asp?a=2974&q=383658&opmNav_GID=1797&opmNav=|46656|#Approach
- ^{vi} YDTRC website, retrieved from <http://www.theconsultationcenter.org/ydtrc/index.htm>
- ^{vii} CARHD website, retrieved from www.appliedresearch.uconn.edu
- ^{viii} Rose-Krasnor et al., 2006; Rose-Krasnor, 2009.
- ^{ix} Zeldin, Petrokubi, & MacNeil, 2007, p. 1.
- ^x Checkoway, 1998, p. 767.
- ^{xi} Stoneman, 2002, p. 223.
- ^{xii} Stoneman, 2002, p. 223.
- ^{xiii} Zeldin, Kusgen McDaniel, Topitzes, & Calvert, 2000, p. 7.
- ^{xiv} c.f., Conner & Strobel, 2007. It is important to note that some authors draw distinctions among these terms (e.g., Search Institute, 2005).
- ^{xv} Larson, Walker & Pearce, 2005;
- ^{xvi} Zeldin, Kusgen McDaniel, Topitzes, & Calvert, 2000; Morsillo & Prilleltensky, 2007; Frank, 2006.
- ^{xvii} Zeldin, Kusgen McDaniel, Topitzes, & Calvert, 2000.
- ^{xviii} Larson, Hansen, & Moneta, 2006; Eccles et al., 1999.
- ^{xix} OPM website, retrieved from <http://www.ct.gov/opm/cwp/view.asp?a=2974&q=385816>
- ^{xx} YDTRC website, retrieved from <http://www.theconsultationcenter.org/ydtrc/approach.html>
- ^{xxi} Although there were 17 GUYVP grantees in fiscal years 2007-08 and 2008-09, 19 different youth programs received GUYVP funding. This seeming inconsistency is explained by the fact that one grantee, the City of New Britain, offers three different programs: one in Pulaski, one in Roosevelt, and one in Slade middle school.
- ^{xxii} CARHD, 2009.
- ^{xxiii} A large majority (70.6%) of those who reported that they were not sure about their educational aspirations were middle-school youth.
- ^{xxiv} Figure 5 does not include youth who did not report a grade point average. Hence, percentages shown on Figure 5 do not add up to 100%.
- ^{xxv} Frank, 2006; Stoneman, 2002.
- ^{xxvi} Shin, Daly, & Vera, 2007.
- ^{xxvii} Holley, Kulis, Marsiglia, & Keith, 2006.
- ^{xxviii} Arbona, Jackson, McCoy, & Blakely, 1999.
- ^{xxix} McMahan, & Watts, 2002.
- ^{xxx} Phinney & Ong, 2007.
- ^{xxxi} Phinney & Ong, 2007.