

RESEARCH You May Have Missed

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
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RESEARCH YOU MAY HAVE MISSED . . . provides brief summaries of recent research relevant to youth development practice. It is designed to help youth development professionals keep up-to-date with contemporary research.

■ Blank, M. (2005).

Building the community school movement: Vision, organization and leadership.

New Directions for Youth Development, 2005(105), 99-104.

The author explains in the first few lines of this article that community schools are a “set of deliberately formed partnerships that provide the supports and opportunities that are important to students, families and surrounding community” (p. 99). Community partners include social service agencies, youth development organizations, family support groups, government agencies and so on, who are all organized around the goal of creating the conditions necessary “for children to learn their best” (p.99). The author outlines the criteria for a community school: 1) the school has a quality instruction program, challenging curriculum and high standards and expectations of students, 2) students are motivated and engaged in learning, both during and after school, 3) the basic physical, mental and health needs of young people

and their families are addressed, 4) there is mutual respect and collaboration among parents and staff, and 5) both community and school provide a safe, supportive and respectful school climate that connects students to a broader learning community. The advantages these schools benefit from include: 1) they garner additional resources for the school and reduce demand on school staff, 2) they provide learning opportunities that develop both academic as well as non-academic competencies, and 3) they offer community members the opportunity to build social capital. The author highlights organizational and management features in community schools and discusses how a federal role could benefit the community school movement. The article is interesting and relevant for youth professionals to envision their possible role in coalitions that promote community schools. **-AS**

■ Camino, L., Mook, C., & Zeldin, S. (2005).

The adoption of innovation in youth organizations: Creating the conditions for youth-adult partnerships.

Journal of Community Psychology, 33(1), 121-135.

Importance is being placed on youth-adult partnerships within youth development. Camino et al., look at youth-adult partnerships as an innovation and describe the managerial strategies useful in adopting and implementing innovations. In the initiation stage, organizations recognize the innovation, assess whether it fits into their current needs, and decide whether or not to implement the innovation. It is imperative at this stage, that the

stakeholders of the organization establish a clear understanding of the innovation and agreement that it should be adopted. The next step is to encourage participation and commitment from a diverse group of stakeholders. Establishing shared meaning in favorable narratives helps to make the innovation more salient. Once the organization has decided to formally endorse the innovation, they move into the early implementation stage. Here the organization must bridge the gap between

the idea of an innovation and strategies to actually implement the innovation. This can be done through theories of change models. At this junction it is important to address and clarify the roles and power of group members. This is especially relevant in relation to youth-adult partnerships where youth traditionally perceive that adults do not value their opinions and ideas, and adults tend to wait until youth prove themselves before releasing power. The difference in the assets and interests of youth and adults should be recognized and taken into consideration when

determining role and power structures. Finally, integrating the roles of youth into the structure of the organization becomes vital for sustaining the innovation of youth-adult partnerships. The authors recognize the challenges of following these strategies and reflect on the strengths and weaknesses in implementing youth-adult partnerships with limited time and finances. They suggest that the challenge for the future might be in gaining policy support and support from funding agencies to encourage more youth-adult partnerships within youth development work. *-KMW*

- Checkoway, B., & Richards-Schuster, K. (2004). **Youth participation in evaluation and research as a way of lifting new voices.** *Children, Youth and Environments, 14*(2), 84-98.

This paper discusses youth participation in research and evaluation as creating a new system of knowledge development. The authors report information from a national participatory community-based project called *Lifting New Voices*, which was a five year demonstration project designed to increase the participation of youth (ages 15-21) in organizational development and creating community change. *Lifting New Voices* was carried out in six community-based organizations in low income areas. Each organization formulated a plan, hired a youth organizer and established a structure for implementing their plan. Each organization then appointed a community-based evaluator who was usually a layperson, chosen for their familiarity with the organization or community as opposed to choosing a technical expert from outside the community. Each evaluator worked with a committee of adults and youth and together established the process of evaluation within the organization. The authors describe the experiences and successes of each organization as it went through this project planning and evaluation process. Youth were both able and willing to participate in the evaluation process, and participation had a positive impact on the evaluators

and on youth participants who developed skills, knowledge and civic competencies. Evaluators gathered information in various ways. They used standard methods of data collection such as interviewing, focus groups, etc., and they used methods created by and for people such as skits, sociodrama, photo documentation and writings. They all worked as “bridging people,” creating intergenerational connections between youth and adults. Evaluators were expected to document activities and outcomes of the project but they also viewed evaluation as a practical tool for addressing real-world issues such as racial discrimination, environmental justice, and freedom of speech. “Their work was not academic but was motivated by everyday life” (p.95). Some of the challenges this project format encountered were negative perceptions of community members of all ages on the role of evaluation, and limited organizational resources to conduct extensive evaluations, including negotiating meeting times with other organizations so that both youth and adults could collaborate. The authors discuss these challenges and emphasize the importance of finding ways to overcome these obstacles if the goal is to “democratize knowledge” for both adult and youth community members. *-AS*

- Elgar, F.J., Roberts, C., Tudor-Smith, C., & Moore, L. (2005). **Validity of self-reported height and weight and predictors of bias in adolescents.** *Journal of Adolescent Health, 37*(5), 371-375.

This study may be useful for those who are involved with projects attempting to reduce overweight among adolescents. The researchers used a preexisting 1998 sample of Welsh adolescents from the Health Behavior School-Aged Children study. The youth were sampled from 21 schools throughout Wales; a total of 418 youth participated, with an average age of 16.3. The

researchers compared self-reported weight with measured weight. They found that girls underreported their own weights by approximately 0.6 kilograms (about 1.3 pounds), while boys underreported their weights by about 0.4 kg (slightly less than 1 pound). Individuals whose BMIs were in the overweight/obese range tended to underreport by larger amounts; only 7 percent of girls and

3 percent of boys were obese by self-report, but measured weights found 11 percent of girls and 6 percent of boys to be obese. Self-reported dieting did not predict underreporting of weight. Self-reported heights were very close to accurate. Boys overreported their heights by 0.6 cm (0.2 inch), while

girls overreported height by 0.31 cm (0.1 inch). These data indicate that researchers who plan to take self-reported weights and heights should be aware that adolescent subjects, particularly females, may underreport their weights, and that those who are more overweight are more likely to underreport. **-KEH**

- Fuligni, A.J., Witkow, M., & Garcia, C. (2005).

Ethnic identity and the academic adjustment of adolescents from Mexican, Chinese, and European backgrounds.

Developmental Psychology, 41(5), 799-811.

Adolescence is a time when youth do a lot of self-examination about who they are and how they fit in their social world. For minority youth growing up in the US, ethnic self-identification also affects one's self-view. The authors were interested in examining whether the nature of ethnic identity is associated with academic attitudes and achievement. Stereotyping exists in the US for various ethnic minority groups in terms of values and behaviors related to academic success. Identification with a particular group could have implications for motivation and achievement. The sample included 589 ninth-grade students from Mexican, Chinese, and European backgrounds. The participants were asked to select all of the labels that best described them. Labels could be national (e.g., 'Mexican'), hyphenated (e.g., 'Mexican-American'), and panethnic (e.g., 'Latino'). They were assessed on the extent to which the ethnic label was central to their definition of themselves, and the level of positive feelings toward their ethnic group. School-related measures included examining beliefs about the value of education for future success, students' beliefs about their abilities for succeeding in school, and whether

they felt valued and respected by the adults at their school. Results indicated that Mexican and Chinese adolescents chose more labels than adolescents with European backgrounds. First generation adolescents were more likely to select a national label than second- and third-generation adolescents. Adolescents who said that a national or hyphenated label was their most important label reported higher levels of ethnic centrality than adolescents who chose a panethnic label or the American label. The identification with ethnic labels was modestly associated with more positive academic attitudes. For all youth, even among those with European backgrounds, those who reported a stronger and more positive sense of their ethnic identity also felt more positive about school. Strength of ethnic identity is more relevant to academic adjustment than a specific label and seems to provide an extra motivation to ethnic minority youth to attain the same level of academic success as their European American peers. For professionals who work with adolescents, acknowledging the uniqueness of different ethnic groups can be a means to support positive school attitudes. **-RC**

- Gardner, M., & Steinberg, L. (2005).

Peer influence on risk taking, risk preference, and risky decision making in adolescence and adulthood: An experimental study.

Developmental Psychology, 41(4), 625-635.

Much of the research that has compared adolescents to adults with regard to risky decision making has been conducted in laboratory settings in which hypothetical dilemmas are presented and adolescents are asked to make and explain their decisions. Missing from these are the emotional and social contexts in which risk actually occurs. In the real world, adolescents generally make risky decisions while in some emotional situation (either positive or negative), and usually while in a peer group. It is well documented that adolescents are more likely than adults to engage

in risky behavior; less studied is whether adolescents engage in more risky behavior than do adults because they are more susceptible to the influence of peers. In the present study the authors examined the differential effects of the presence of peers on risk taking, risk preference, and risky decision making among adolescents. The sample consisted of 106 adolescents (54 girls and 52 boys), ages 13 to 16, 105 youths (52 women and 52 men), ages 18-22, and 95 adults (48 women and 47 men), ages 24 and older. Participants were put into groups with two familiar peers. The individuals making up the groups of

three were asked to complete measures while the other two looked on and communicated with each other about the task. Each individual also completed measures while alone. Risk taking was assessed with a video game (“Chicken”) which requires participants to make actual decisions in a risky situation rather than simply requiring participants to report what they would do in a risky situation. Risk perception (the extent one believes a particular activity has the potential for adverse consequences) and risk preference (a cost-benefit consideration) was also measured. Results indicated that during the risk taking game, younger adolescents were more likely to take greater risks and select a more risky course of action than older participants. Significant peer effects were

found for all age groups on all three measures. Males gave greater weight to the benefits rather than the costs of the activity than did females. There were some differences between White and non-White adolescents on the three measures, including non-White adolescents showing greater risk taking and risk preference than did White adolescents, and White adolescents with more risky decision making than non-White adolescents. The results of this study indicate that the presence of peers influences making risky decisions and that the ability to resist peer pressure develops throughout late adolescence and into adulthood. Interventions aimed at reducing risky behavior among adolescents and young adults should focus attention on increasing individuals’ resistance to peer influence. **-RC**

- Hyde, A., Howlett, E., Brady, D., & Drennan, J. (2005).

The focus group method: Insights from focus group interviews on sexual health with adolescents.

Social Science and Medicine, 61, 2588-2599.

The researchers used focus groups with Irish adolescents to question young people about their perspectives on sexuality and sex education in order to glean information for developing educational programs. Focus groups, done in ten schools, were divided by age (14-16 and 17-19 done separately) and by gender; groups were composed of 12 or fewer students. A total of 226 young people participated. This article examines six methodological issues specific to focus groups: the ethnographic potential of group interviews; the potential of focus groups to capture vulnerabilities; the ability to challenge dominant group views; formation and composition of focus groups; pitfalls of information exchange in focus groups; and post-interview quantitative checks on data validity. One problem with using focus groups, perhaps particularly with adolescents and particularly around sensitive topics, is the frequency of invalid remarks, whether sarcastic or in order to

impress their peers. In some cases, the young men in these focus groups admitted that their sexual “knowledge” actually was derived from statements by their peers. The focus group structure, particularly among adolescents who may be looking to impress one another, has the potential to encourage remarks intended for effect rather than for validity. However, vulnerabilities may also be revealed in the structure of a focus group that might not come out in an interview. Peripheral viewpoints may be silenced under group dynamics, although it is also possible that brave individuals with oppositional views may express them. Perceptions and viewpoints may become modified during the experience of the focus group. In this study the researchers gave respondents a brief questionnaire at the end, asking among other things how true they perceived the responses by co-participants to be (mostly true, true to some extent, not true at all). Female respondents were more likely than males to perceive the responses as true. **-KEH**

- Jarrett, R.L., Sullivan, P.J., & Watkins, N.D. (2005).

Developing social capital through participation in organized youth programs: Qualitative insights from three programs.

Journal of Community Psychology, 33(1), 41-55.

Social capital has been defined as “social relationships that entail the transfer of resources and provide positive benefits” (p.43). Jarrett et al., examine youth programs developing social capital by bringing youth and adults together through intentional and supportive interactions. The authors looked at three programs, *Clarkston FFA*, *Art-First*, and *Youth Action* to study

the process of social capital development in youth. They found that relationships between youth and adults in the programs developed in three stages. Initially there was a disconnect between the youth and adults. The youth found the adults to be dismissive and unwilling to share power, which led the youth to feel nervous, uncomfortable and dependent on the adults. As the youth interacted more

with the adults within the contexts of these programs, they developed more familiarity and established positive connections through common goals. Finally, as the youth began to connect with the adults they began to feel more at ease and their perceptions of the adults changed. These youth and adult connections were possible through intentional steps within the program. Adults encouraged connections with the

youth by establishing fairly egalitarian partnerships, by opening up personal aspects of their lives so that the youth were able to see them as “real people” and by showing a sincere interest in the youth. Types of social capital that the youth developed through their relationships with the non-family adults in these programs included increased access to information, assistance, exposure to adult worlds and support. **-KMW**

- Rusby, J.C., Forrester, K.K., Biglan, A., & Metzler, C.W. (2005). **Relationships between peer harassment and adolescent problem behaviors.** *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 25(4), 453-477.

This study looked at peer harassment or bullying among 223 fifth, sixth, and seventh grade students in middle schools in two rural communities in Oregon. The sample consisted of a random sample of students, as well as an oversample of students who were at risk for substance use and antisocial behavior, as identified by teachers' ratings of which students were most at-risk for poor academic performance, substance use, truancy and other factors. Students were surveyed quarterly for four years on a variety of topics, including the frequency of verbal or physical harassment by peers, which was subsequently categorized as no experience of harassment, some, or frequent harassment. Questionnaires also asked about substance use, and association with peers who get into trouble a lot, fight a lot, steal, or use tobacco. Respondents' parents were also surveyed quarterly on children's problem behaviors, friends, and family demographics. Hierarchical regression models were

created to examine the relation between peer harassment and problem behaviors. The vast majority of middle and high schoolers reported some type of harassment during the time period, with verbal harassment being reported more frequently than physical harassment; nevertheless, 71 percent of middle school boys reported physical harassment. Students who reported frequent harassment (in many cases daily or more often) were more likely to be in the previously identified at-risk subgroup of students. Mean levels of aggression, antisocial behavior, association with deviant peers, and problem behaviors were higher for middle school students reporting frequent verbal or physical harassment. Frequent harassment reported in middle school predicted several negative behaviors, including aggression, being reported in high school. The results of this study demonstrate how common bullying is in middle school, and show the importance of positive peer connections to young people's behavioral outcomes and well-being. **-KEH**

- Scales, P.C., & Roehlkepartain, E.C. (2004). **Community service and service-learning in U.S. public schools, 2004: Findings from a national survey.** *National Youth Leadership Council*: St. Paul, MN.

This survey of 1,799 elementary, middle and high school principals documents the scope of community service and service-learning, and updates a 1999 study by the U.S. Department of Education (Skinner & Chapman, 1999). The authors report that 66% of schools involve students in community service projects, while 28% engage students in service-learning. The study mapped the types of service-learning within schools, and found that the most common way it is integrated is through individual academic courses and grade-wide projects, and that these projects tend to be one-time projects or short term in duration. The most common subject area to incorporate service-learning was social studies. A concern of the authors is that schools are not engaging students as leaders throughout the service-learning

process, which is a core principle of effective practice. The study also surveyed the perceptions of the value and impact of service-learning and found that 85% of principals indicated that helping students become more active community members is an important reason for encouraging service-learning. The study highlights socioeconomic differences in service-learning implementation that show that although low-income schools may be less likely to have service-learning, they have more supports in place when they do. The study reveals that principals in high-poverty schools may especially value service-learning as an achievement strategy and view it as having an academic purpose and impact. Policies and supports for service-learning such as employing a part- or full-time coordinator, reduced course loads for teachers leading service-learning projects, or extra planning time for

service-learning activities are present in a distinct minority of schools. The most common reason given by principals not to incorporate service-learning at their schools was that service-learning is not required by any of the standards frameworks that schools follow. A significant finding of this study is that a lack of basic data on service-learning projects, recorded by only one in four schools that have service-learning, makes it difficult to support

service-learning as a vital educational priority. The authors identify critical challenges to service-learning: strengthening service-learning's infrastructures, supports for and effective implementation of the program, and expanding service-learning beyond the current level of three in ten schools – a level that has not changed significantly in the past five years. -AVS

- Veenstra, R., Lindenberg, S., Oldehinkel, A.J., De Winter, A.F., Verhulst, F.C., & Ormel, J. (2005). **Bullying and victimization in elementary schools: A comparison of bullies, victims, bully/victims, and uninvolved preadolescents.** *Developmental Psychology*, 41(4), 672-682.

Bullying is defined as a repeated aggression in which one or more persons intend to harm or disturb another person physically, verbally, or psychologically. Bullying is very common all over the world. The estimated rates of bullying and victimization in elementary and secondary schools range from 15% to 25% in Australia, Austria, England, Finland, Germany, Norway, and the United States. Bullying might allow children to achieve immediate gains but presents a serious threat to a healthy development because although they might make friends easily, bullies do not learn socially acceptable ways to negotiate with others. The healthy development of victims is also compromised. Victims are most likely kids who do not fit in, and are at an increased risk for depression and lower self-esteem in adulthood. About half of the bullies report to be victims as well. Considered aggressive victims as opposed to passive victims, bully/victims demonstrate high levels of both aggression and depression, generally function more poorly than bullies or victims, and are among the most disliked members of a classroom. The present study includes a large sample of

1,065 Dutch preadolescents, enabling simultaneous comparison of the characteristics of those who make up four groups: bullies, victims, bully/victims, and uninvolved preadolescents. Information in the present study was gathered by peer reports and through different informants (self-reports, parents, teachers) for the measurement of the independent variables. Findings suggest that bullies, victims and bully/victims have a more disadvantaged individual background than the uninvolved group. Bullies and bully/victims had higher levels of aggressiveness, whereas victims and bully/victims had higher levels of isolation. Being disliked was related to being involved with bullying. Boys tended to be overrepresented as bullies or bully/victims; girls were overrepresented among victims. Parenting characteristics had no impact on bullying and victimization. The authors intend to conduct a second wave of data collection to investigate the stability of bullying and victimization. Results from the present study provide a description of characteristics that could indicate maladaptive behavior. -RC

- Youniss, J., & Hart, D. (2005). **Intersection of social institutions with civic development.** *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 2005(109), 73-81.

The authors present a review of recent findings from youth civic empowerment programs to illustrate that social institutions can serve as a resource for young people from low-wealth settings to bring out “otherwise untapped civic capacities” (p.73). The authors present and discuss themes that recur such as cognitive competencies, organizations as resources, collective action and morality, and youth activism (e.g., protest, service and organized political activity). The authors use these findings for discussing certain theoretical concepts: 1) civic development studies focus on developmental theory that is more concerned with the public rather than competence in the private sphere, 2) examples of civic practice highlight

intergenerational collaboration rather than greater developmental autonomy of youth, 3) identity is understood as social, organizational and public rather than as an individual achievement, and 4) studies on civic development suggest that civic participation in adolescence is one of the best predictors of adult civic participation, making adolescence a critical period for civic participation. In conclusion the authors reiterate their theoretical position that civic knowledge and engagement are constructed within the context of social institutions and social relationships. In this way they affirm the significant role youth development organizations and programs play in providing civic opportunities for youth. -AS

Book Reviews . . . on topics relevant to youth development will be periodically published. We encourage submissions for future editions. Reviews may be sent to Ramona Carlos (rmcarlos@ucdavis.edu).



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