

# 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.

■ Aquilino, W.S. (2005).

**Impact of family structure on parental attitudes toward the economic support of adult children over the transition to adulthood.**

*Journal of Family Issues*, 26(2), 143-176.

Parents' decision to continue to be a source of financial support as their children enter adulthood can play an important role in children's success. Without financial support from parents, young adults may be motivated to end their education and move more quickly into fulltime work and adult roles before acquiring the resources, abilities, or experience demanded by those roles. In the present study, the author examines parental attitudes towards supporting adult children, and how those attitudes change as children make the transition to adulthood. Specifically, the author looks at whether family structure influences attitudes toward the economic support of adult children, i.e., do parents in single-parent families, stepparent families and families with two biological or adoptive parents differ in their attitudes toward financial obligations to adult children? Other questions considered are whether parents' attitudes change as their oldest child moves from adolescence into early adulthood, is there variation among stepfamilies in perceived financial obligation, and do attitudes toward economic support affect the likelihood of actual financial support to young adult children? Data were taken from two waves of the National Survey of Families and Households, and

included over 1500 families at Time 1 (given when oldest child was an adolescent) and over 1300 families at Time 2 (administered when oldest child was of adult age.) Results indicated that as a whole, there was strong support at both times of measurement for the notion that parents should help pay for children's college education. Parents appear less comfortable in accepting an obligation to financially intervene once their children are adults. When asked at Time 1, single parents were less likely than parents in intact families to feel parents should help adult children economically. However, at Time 2, single parents' attitudes towards economic support of children positively increased, more so than for parents in intact families. Among stepparents, attitudes toward financial obligation became more negative as children transitioned into adulthood. In stepfamilies in which parents had a child together, perceived financial obligation was significantly higher than in stepfamilies in which parents did not have a child together. This study highlights the importance of good communication between parents and children about parental attitudes concerning future financial support. Direct discussions will inform children's expectations for future support, and could affect their decisions about college and economic self-sufficiency. *-RC*

- DaSilva Iddings, A.C. (2005). **Linguistic access and participation: English language learners in an English-dominant community of practice.** *Bilingual Research Journal*, 29(1), 165-183.

There has been a trend in bilingual education to mainstream English language learners (ELLs) in classrooms with native English speakers. The present article describes a qualitative study in which ELLs and native English speaking children were observed in a second-grade classroom with regard to the content of material being taught, methodology used in teaching and learning opportunities for both groups of children. The author was interested in examining the children's learning from the theoretical perspective of communities of practice, which refers to learning from participation in the practices of a given community. For ELLs, the opportunity to learn was found to be limited by differential participation in classroom activities, ambiguities in the purposes of instruction and vagueness in communication, resulting at times to a basic, as opposed to complex, learning experience. The purposes of instruction were to include ELLs in the classroom learning activities. However, because

the ELLs did not have the same access to the information, discussions, and general levels of conversation in which the rest of the class was engaged, they began to lack the shared knowledge and the language used to convey it that their native English-speaking classmates were developing, which resulted in a disjointedness of communities of practice within the same classroom. A parallel community of practice was formed by ELLs working together to interpret what was being instructed and become competent in that which became meaningful to them, resulting in a strong sense of solidarity and friendship. For professionals who work with ELLs, this study highlights the importance of recognizing that placing ELL students in educational circumstances where they are not fully understood as learners and individuals could shortchange these students from becoming legitimate participants in the classroom context, and ultimately from achieving their full potential. **-RC**

- Goldstein, A.E., & Reiboldt, W. (2004). **The multiple roles of low income, minority women in the family and community: A qualitative investigation.** *The Qualitative Report*, 9(2), 241-265.

The original purpose of this study was to learn about the community resources used by families living in poor, urban, ethnically diverse neighborhoods, with the intent to learn about the coping mechanisms of families. The researchers used an ecological framework and a Family Strengths Model, emphasizing the capacities of families rather than their deficits, in this two year, qualitative study. Data were collected over an 18-month period of interviews with families, service providers and community leaders, after an initial six months of establishing credibility in the neighborhood through, for example, focus groups, identifying key informants, hiring cultural guides and attending neighborhood grass roots organization meetings. The data analyzed in the present paper focus on three families (two Mexican-American, one African-American) living in the same neighborhood. Results indicated that families had a broad view of the resources they utilize to promote family well-being,

with a reliance on informal, rather than formal resources, to help overcome challenges that characterize poor neighborhoods. Family members drew strength from one another, and all three families tended to have similar concerns and parallel strengths. Several themes emerged from the interviews: one focal point was caregiving, parenting and grandparenting; education was emphasized as a way to a better life; keeping children safe in a high-risk neighborhood was a common issue. A sense of reciprocity and multiplicity of roles became apparent in the women especially. The women described the establishment of informal community attachments, through volunteering, involvement at church and counseling neighborhood kids. The study found that asking families to venture outside the family to access resources may not be as effective as reinforcing resources 'inside families', and that social service providers need to understand the values, culture and neighborhood of the families they are trying to reach. **-RC**

- Moore, M.J., & Werch, C.E. (2005).

**Sport and physical activity participation and substance use among adolescents.**

*Journal of Adolescent Health* 36(6), 486-493.

Previous research has identified participation in sports activities as a protective factor against substance use (both cigarettes and illicit drugs) among adolescents, although sports participation has been associated with increased use of alcohol and steroids. This study surveyed 891 students from three middle schools in Florida: one inner-city, one rural, and one suburban. Saliva samples were taken before the survey to improve the accuracy of reporting. About 55 percent of respondents were white, about 32 percent were black, and 13 percent were “other.” About 57 percent of respondents were female. Average age of respondent was 13 years, 4 months. Over 39 percent reported that a family member had an alcohol or drug problem, and 6 in 10 said they had received alcohol or drug education during the past year. Almost 80 percent of students reported participating in one or more out-of-school sports activities, whether through school or outside of school; boys were more likely to report physical activity than girls. Just over half of the respondents were in a school-sponsored sport. When

asked to report substance use in the previous thirty-days, use rates for alcohol were 18 percent; about seven percent had smoked cigarettes, and five percent had used marijuana. When types of sports and substance use were examined, the authors found that alcohol use was higher among students who surfed, did cheerleading or gymnastics, skateboarded, or played tennis. Lower rates were reported among students who played basketball outside of school than among the students who did not participate in those sports. Marijuana use was significantly higher among skateboarders and football players. Rollerbladers, conversely, had low rates of marijuana use. No significant effects in either direction were found for school-sponsored baseball/softball, basketball, soccer, swimming, or track, or for out-of-school baseball/softball, biking, football, jogging, walking, soccer, or swimming. This study found that participation in athletics is not uniformly protective against substance use. Previous research may have misclassified the apparently protective effects of sports on substance use by failing to examine subgroups of athletes. **-KH**

- Smith, M.J., Kennison, M., Gamble, S., & Loudin, B. (2004).

**Intervening as a passenger in drinking/driving situations.**

*Applied Nursing Research*, 17(3), 142-149.

Little qualitative research has been used to look at drinking and driving decisions and situations among youth. This qualitative study used an essay format to ask 52 young people how they would intervene as a passenger in a drinking and driving situation. Respondents were West Virginia 4-H participants, ages 16 to 18. The youth were asked to imagine and describe a drinking and driving situation in which they might intervene, and how they would do it. The researchers identified common elements and themes in the essays. The youth described three types of situations: being challenged by a drinker who wanted to drive, riding in a car with a drinking driver, and being stranded because the youth driver, with whom

they arrived with, began drinking, so the youth had no safe way to get home. Common elements of the interventions described included: attempting to persuade the person not to drive, interfering with the driver or the car, such as throwing the car keys or disconnecting the battery, planning ahead to avoid such a situation, and threatening the driver. The authors discuss the findings in light of previous research showing that interventions tend to be more successful when the intervener is assertive, forceful, and presents clear demands. Programs involving adolescents and their parents discussing and strategizing about drinking and driving together may help engage parental influence and reduce the number of drinking and driving incidents. **-KH**

- Williams, A.F., Nelson, L.A., & Leaf, W.A. (2002). **Responses of teenagers and their parents to California's graduated licensing system.** *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, 34, 835-842.

California has one of the most restrictive graduated driver licensing (GDL) systems in the country. This study examined how drivers under 18 and their parents have adapted to the graduated licensing system. Three different groups of young people were recruited in one or more offices in each of eight DMV regions: one group was recruited before the GDL came into law (n=814), another group that was grandfathered in because they received learner's permits prior to the law's enactment (n=363), and a third group that received licenses after the GDL was enacted (n=543). The study used a written survey of youth as well as telephone interviews with teenagers and their parents, both at the time of licensing as well as 6 and 12 months later, at the time the passenger and nighttime

driving restrictions ended. Response rates were high (97 percent filled out written surveys, and 71 to 84% of the original group were interviewed at 6 and 12 months). Data showed statistically significant differences between the groups in amount of supervised driving, frequency of driving (and whether they were allowed to drive) after midnight during the first six months, and when they first were allowed to transport other teenagers in the car. Most young people (55%) said the GDL caused no inconvenience, and 79% were strongly in favor of the new system; only 4% were opposed. This study found that the graduated driver licensing system was viewed favorably by youth and parents, and that the new restrictions caused some driving behaviors to change significantly. **-KH**

- Zeldin, S., Larson, R., & Camino, L. (2005). (Eds.). **Youth adult relationships in community programs: Diverse perspectives on good practices [Special issue].** *Journal of Community Psychology*, 33(1).

This special issue on youth – adult relationships provides a frame in which to consider theory and practice in the emerging area of intergenerational relationships in community programs. The editors highlight the following key areas from the various articles: the multiple purposes of intergenerational relationships, adult strategies for creating strong relationships, and the organizational supports necessary to support relationships and partnerships.

Robert *Halpern* addresses youth-adult relationships in inner-city contexts. He suggests that the instrumental purpose of youth-adult relationships, such as in an apprenticeship model, facilitates relationship building. This research is based on observations of the Chicago after-school initiative. *Diversi and Meacham*, also in an after-school context, describe a mentorship program for Latino/a youth designed to promote school engagement and academic success by establishing youth-adult connections through homework help. The youth reported feeling respected and having fun through the process and the college-age mentors benefited through a greater understanding of the youths' difficulties. Looking at another benefit of youth-adult relationships, *Jarret et. al.*, report on how youth gain social capital from their relationships with

adults. Youth from three different organizations reported gaining information and contacts related to school and career opportunities.

The other articles in this issue focus on strategies that adults can use, or the actual praxis of youth-adult partnerships, as well as how organizations can support this. *Denner, Meyer and Bean* suggest strategies to create empowering youth-adult partnerships in the context of an all-girls' after school program by providing guidance rather than instruction, and creating a place where girls can know and speak their minds. *Larson, Walker and Pierce* compare youth-driven and adult-driven community programs and report that both models have their unique developmental impacts. Their article highlights balancing techniques that adults in both types of programs used to keep youth on track with their work, as well as invested in the program. *Libby, Rosean and Sedonaen* write from twelve years of experience at the Youth Leadership Institute when describing strategies for effective youth-adult partnerships (Y-APs). The authors outline how Y-APs are used in two principal areas of work: training and philanthropy, and they highlight organizational pathways for leadership development. *Mark Kreuger* describes a method of reflective practice that can help youth workers understand and grow from their work. The goal of youth

work here is to create many moments of connection, discovery and empowerment. In following his own work through this method of enquiry, Kreuger suggests four themes that are recurrent in youth work praxis: presence, rhythmic interactions, meaning making and atmosphere. *Ginwright* makes an important contribution through the suggestion that one way to prepare adults to partner more effectively with youth is to view development as a collective social change process shared between both adults and youth. *Ginwright* first explores how youth-adult partnerships are shaped within African-American communities and then discusses innovative practices

that focus on how to support adults to more effectively partner with young people. Linda *Camino* draws on expertise as an evaluator of Y-AP practices to describe some of the potential pitfalls of Y-APs, and suggests some strategies to overcome these pitfalls.

The editors' comments, as well as the content of the articles, all serve to move the field of youth-adult partnerships forward. This issue is highly relevant to all those who are interested in understanding what is needed to improve youth-adult connections, collaboration, and co-development in programmatic contexts. -*AS*



## Book Reviews



- Flyvbjerg, B. (translated by Stephen Sampson). (2001). **Making social science matter: Why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again.** Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

Flyvbjerg is a Professor of Planning at Aalborg University, Denmark who argues persuasively that social and behavioral science research has ceased “to matter” in a variety of ways: it has lost credibility by taking a reductionist approach to understanding social phenomena, it has slavishly followed the methodology of the natural sciences and succeeded only in creating a version of “dumbed-down” natural science, and perhaps worst of all, it has lost the power of understanding social phenomena through a rigorous analysis of values and power. He labels social science as the loser in the “Science Wars,” implying that the winner is physics or some other basic science. And then the book really takes off.

Flyvbjerg argues for the Aristotelian value called *phronesis*, which is deliberation about values related to their context and ethical application to a given circumstance. *Phronesis* requires an understanding of what is prudent in a particular context rather than what social science analysis has become, technically-oriented and value-independent. He says that our ability to learn anything of lasting value, and to truly understand social phenomena cannot be divorced from considerations of values, conflict, and power. He calls for social science to pull back from its obsession with advancing and attempting to prove theories and instead to focus on helping society understand, in

practical and value-driven contexts, *where we are, what is desirable, and where we want to go.* His arguments are reminiscent of Karl Mannheim, the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century German social theorist who called for a “free-floating intelligentsia” to provide the analysis to political actors for public policy decisions.

I loved this book, and I recommend it to anyone who wants to think about foundational questions in social science. However, Flyvbjerg’s analysis here has a utopian character that cannot at this point be adopted by most program designers and evaluators, because most of us are not in a position to change the dominant paradigm about what constitutes adequacy in social science research. At the same time, applied social scientists need to carefully consider Flyvbjerg’s fundamental premises and be careful to design their programs and the evaluations that flow from them to capture the richness of the individual context in which the programs take place. Perhaps most importantly, in examining the findings of recent social science literature about “what works,” we must pay particular attention to contextual clues of all kinds, and not only to the strength of the statistical inferences to which these studies have so often been reduced. – *reviewed by Nicki King, CAES Youth and Family Development Specialist, UC Davis.*

■ Perry, T., Steele, C., & Hilliard, III, A. (2003)

**Young, gifted and black: Promoting high achievement among African-American students.**

Beacon Press: Boston, MA.

This book is composed of three essays by noted African-American scholars with different perspectives on the problem of the persistent achievement gap between black and white students at almost every level of education. The three essays address the following subjects: the current dilemma caused by the historical experience of discrimination of African-Americans within the educational system in the United States; the impact of implied or explicit judgements of competence on the performance of African-American students on standardized tests; and an attempt to refocus the achievement discussion away from differences between African-American and white students as a group and towards the gap between African-American students' *performance* and their *potential*. The book addresses an important problem for youth-serving programs whose mission is to help all youth achieve their highest potential.

Theresa Perry is Associate Professor of Education and Vice-President for Community Relations at Wheelock College in Boston. Her research has focused on academic achievement of African-American students and culturally responsive education. In the first essay, she identifies the dilemma faced by African-American students throughout the history of the United States: "*Can I commit myself to work hard over time if I know that, no matter what I or other members of my reference group accomplish, these accomplishments are not likely to change how I and other members of my group are viewed by the larger society, or to alter our caste-like position in society?*" She analyzes narratives from a select group of African-Americans who committed themselves to intellectual attainment and educational achievement in the face of major constraints: poverty, legal and societal barriers, continuing questions about their competence, and uncertainty about the benefits they might attain as the result of their efforts.

Perry describes two competing theories of why African-American students do not succeed: The cultural difference theory and the social mobility theory. She concludes that cultural context is critical to understanding the school performance of African-Americans, and when education utilizes that context as a strength, it is more likely to be successful for African-American students. Her analysis finds that all schools have a cultural context, and it is the European context, that is in most public schools, albeit implicit and embedded. Do out-of-school programs consider the implicit/embedded cultural contexts

when they work with youth from other cultural backgrounds?

Perry's essay concludes that African-American students, and I would argue, students from other under-achieving cultural groups, simultaneously negotiate three different identities: their identity as a member of a caste-like group, their identity as a part of mainstream society, and their cultural identity as "other." She asserts that segregated black schools (of the pre-Civil Rights era) had both the understanding and the commitment to helping African-American students develop the skills to negotiate those different identities, while students are unlikely to develop them in present-day schools that are individualistic, stratified, and highly competitive. The challenge for educators and those in out-of-school programs that serve African-American students is to organize social and cultural groups that create an opportunity for these youth to develop identities of achievement.

Claude Steele, a social psychologist, is chair of the Department of Psychology and Lucie Stern Professor of Psychology at Stanford University. His research areas include how people cope with self-image threats and how group stereotypes can influence intellectual performance. In the second essay, Steele points out that the negative stereotypes about African American students' intellectual ability are a significant part of the negative stereotype about African-Americans in general. Steele's research demonstrates that when black students believe that a test is a predictor of intellectual ability, their test performance is likely to be depressed to a statistically significant degree. Steele and his colleague, Joshua Aaronson have conducted this experiment with numerous groups of black students, as well as with Latino, female, and white male students (in a case where the stereotype threat was imposed by telling the white males prior to taking the test that Asians tended to score better on it than whites). Steele's work suggests that the students **most** likely to be affected by stereotype threat are those who have a strong academic identity precisely because they worry more that their futures may be compromised by society's perceptions of their group.

Steele describes other research he has conducted to improve the understanding of circumstances that would reduce the penalty caused by stereotype threat, and suggests that ensuring the students that the test was The

racially fair reduces the extra apprehension that black students have in comparison with whites by increasing their trust that the test would not treat them stereotypically. He also reports on studies that work to reduce stereotype threat by attempting to change the nature of how black students themselves think of intelligence and provide support systems that support academic accomplishment, provide opportunities for feedback, and support the students' abilities. Steele's essay is thought-provoking for those in youth-serving organizations that intend to provide academic support for underserved students.

The final essay is by Asa Hilliard, III, who is the Fuller E. Callaway Professor of Urban Education at Georgia State University, with joint appointments in the Department of Educational Policy Studies and the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education. His research has emphasized Ancient African History, teaching strategies, public policy, cultural styles, and child growth and development. Hilliard's essay focuses not on the "gap" between African-American performance and that of whites, but on the "underachievement gap": the gap between African-American students' performance and

their potential. He uses cases of teaching environments that are dedicated to the success of African-American students: Project SEED in San Francisco, the classroom management practices of Oakland School District teacher Carrie Secret, and the turnaround of Harmony-Leland Elementary School in Georgia. He points out the almost idiosyncratic nature of the success of these programs, which run counter to the prevailing policies and practices about how to reform schools. This essay is almost completely drawn from examples of school-based programs, and except for its descriptions of the pedagogical practices of successful schools and teachers, is of less overall usefulness for those involved in the design and delivery of out-of-school programs.

*Young, Gifted and Black* fails as a unified and cohesive book, because there is no introduction or conclusion that synthesizes the essays. It does, however, provide two powerful essays, by Perry and Steele, that contribute meaningful insights into the problem of supporting academic achievement and intellectual investment among African-American youth.

– *This review was written by Nicki King, CAES Youth and Family Development Specialist, UC Davis.*

■ Sousa, D.A. (2003).

**How the gifted brain learns.**

Corwin Press: Thousand Oaks, CA.

This book provides a good, non-technical introduction to brain-based learning, plus a very readable discussion of the issues related to educating gifted learners. Dr. Sousa, who has an extensive background as a classroom teacher, school district administrator, university lecturer and textbook editor, has directed this publication primarily at the classroom teacher.

The first two chapters focus on the structure of the brain and learning, beginning from a basic discussion of current understanding, to a more detailed description of the gifted brain and some of the theories describing a gifted learner. The third chapter provides a brief discussion of some general approaches to challenging the gifted brain, while touching on Bloom's taxonomy of human thought, complexity versus difficulty, creativity, and the characteristics of visual-spatial learners. Sousa then devotes several chapters to different talents, including language, mathematics and music, and includes information about how the brain appears to function while

engaged in tasks related to these talents. The final sections of the book are an interesting overview of underachieving gifted students and the challenges facing the "twice exceptional brain," that is, gifted students with learning disabilities.

*How the Gifted Brain Learns*, presents the challenges and opportunities of meeting the needs of gifted students in the context of the many issues facing public education today. As a result, most of the strategies Sousa describes are useful in a mixed-ability classroom with limited resources, and thus would be appropriate in after-school settings, where there is usually a wide range of ages and abilities and where there may be more flexibility in supporting the interests and needs of individual children.

This book is part of a series that includes "How the Brain Learns" and "How the Special Needs Brain Learns." — *reviewed by John Pusey, Youth Development Advisor, Los Angeles County.*

**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).



## Suggested Reading

Koyama, J.P. (2004)

**Appropriating policy: Constructing positions for English language learners.**  
*Bilingual Research Journal*, 28(3), 401-423

Kaslon, L., Lodl, K., & Greve, V. (2005).

**Online leader training for 4-H volunteers: A case study of action research.**  
*Journal of Extension*, 43(2), Article Number 2FEA4. Retrieved April 28, 2005,  
from <http://www.joe.org/joe/2005april/a4.shtml>.

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Reprints of articles reviewed may be obtained by contacting the 4-H Center for Youth Development at (530) 754-8433.



## RESEARCH You May Have Missed

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