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Feature Articles

Youth Worker Reasoning about Dilemmas Encountered in Practice: Expert-Novice Differences [Article 120701FA001]

Walker, Kathrin C.; Larson, Reed W.

This study examines one aspect of youth worker expertise, the ability to appraise and respond to the dilemmas of practice encountered in youth programs. To understand how expert youth workers differ from novices in their reasoning about these dilemmas, a sample of expert and novice practitioners read vignettes of dilemma situations and described their appraisals of the situations and how they might respond to them. Quantitative analyses confirmed four hypothesized differences between the two groups. Experts identified more considerations in the situations and generated more possible responses. Experts' responses were also more likely to be youth-centered and address multiple considerations. Qualitative analyses suggested that these differences were attributable to the experts having more elaborate mental models that allowed them to understand varied human systems – individual youth, group dynamics, parents, funders, etc. – and to tailor their responses accordingly. The experts engaged in more forecasting of events, anticipating contingencies, and formulating decision trees that took possible contingencies into account. Although preliminary, the findings have implications for how youth workers are trained.

Tracking Evaluation Capacity with Youth Professionals [Article 120701FA002]

Silliman, Ben; Guin, Autumn

A pilot program mentoring youth professionals through "learning-by-doing" projects yielded consistent increases in evaluation knowledge and skills over three years. Self-assessed skill improvements were greatest for preparatory processes (planning, focusing, design, selecting methods) and reporting competencies that are more often emphasized in organizational evaluation requirements. Smaller increases in data collection and analysis skills were also perceived by participating youth professionals. Focus groups with each of six evaluation "learning circle" groups revealed benefits of participation in the evaluation "learning circle," as well as needs for evaluation training and tools, and challenges faced within the organizational culture.

An Emerging Model of Knowledge for Youth Development Professionals [Article 120701FA003]

Vance, Femi

A model of knowledge for youth development professionals that is comprised of five knowledge domains: 1) Foundational Knowledge of Positive Youth Development; 2) Knowledge of Youth; 3) Knowledge of Group Facilitation; 4) Knowledge of Contexts and Organizational Systems and; 5) Specialized Youth Development Knowledge is proposed in this paper. The model is intended for use in youth development programs, which have been associated with better outcomes for participants when compared to other types of youth programs. The development of the knowledge

base is framed by seminal research on teacher knowledge and informed by practice-oriented research in the out-of-school time field and literature on the quality of youth development programs.

Parental Limit Setting as a Moderator of Adolescent Paid Work and Alcohol Use

[Article 120701FA004]

Cheeseman, Kelly A.; Ohannessian, Christine

Highlighted within this paper is an examination of whether parental limit setting moderates the relationship between paid work and alcohol use during adolescence. The sample included 1,001 10th and 11th grade students from public high schools in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States surveyed in the spring of 2007. Results indicated that parental limit setting significantly moderated the relationships between paid work and frequency of alcohol use for girls and paid work and quantity of alcohol consumption for girls and boys. In general, adolescents who spent less time working and had more parental limits drank the least, whereas adolescents who spent more time working and had less parental limits drank the most. Findings from this study suggest that parental limit setting may protect working adolescents from substance use involvement.

Qualitative Outcomes of Participation in Fishing Components of NOLS Courses

[Article 120701FA005]

Soule, Katherine; Goldenberg, Marni

Numerous fishing education programs in the United States strive to impart hard skill development, as well as life values to youth. This study employs utilizing semi-structured interviewing techniques and means-end analysis to evaluate the effects of youth participation in fishing components of NOLS courses. Interviews were conducted over five years to study benefit retention across time. The fishing component led to thirteen consequences, most frequently to youth feeling a sense of fun and excitement, developing hard skills, and having a new experience/opportunity. In turn, these consequences led youth to a number of values, including transference of information learned or benefits to other areas of their lives, an increased self-respect/esteem/confidence, self-fulfillment, a sense of accomplishment, and self-awareness. These results provide educators and program managers with information to direct programming development for youth attainment and retention of specific participation outcomes.

An Exploratory Study of the Five Cs Model of Positive Youth Development Among Indiana 4-H Youth

[Article 120701FA006]

Robinson, Abby; Esters, Levon T.; Dotterer, Aryn; McKee, Renee; Tucker, Mark

The purpose of this study was to explore the levels of positive youth development (PYD) among Indiana 4-H club participants. Questionnaires were collected from a convenience sample of [State] youth (n = 453). Findings indicated that youth who participated in the 4-H program reported significantly higher total positive youth development than those who had never participated in 4-H. Youth who participated in the 4-H program also reported significantly higher scores on four of the Five Cs of PYD (Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring). The findings of this study contribute to the Developmental Systems Theory by confirming the role that 4-H has in contributing to positive youth development. Recommendations are provided to guide future research related to the Five Cs aspect of positive youth development among 4-H youth.

Measuring Life Skills: Standardizing the Assessment of Youth Development Indicators

[Article 120701FA007]

Duerden, Mat D.; Witt, Peter A.; Fernandez, Mariela; Jolliff Bryant, Marie; Theriault, Daniel

While the development of life skills (e.g., communication, problem solving, etc.) is a commonly targeted youth program outcome, the lack of standardized conceptualizations and instrumentation make it difficult to compare impacts across programs and develop validated best practices. In order to promote a more unified approach to life skill development, literature reviews were

conducted for 10 life skill domains to identify common definitions and, if available, appropriate outcome measures. Data were then collected from an ethnically diverse sample ($N = 758$) of elementary, middle, and high school aged youth for the 10 identified instruments. Analyses were conducted to ascertain the psychometric qualities of each measure, the interrelationships among measures, and the measures' relationships with gender, ethnicity, and school level. Results are discussed in terms of their relevance to life skill theory and measurement.

Program Articles

Got Dating: Outcomes of a Teen 4-H Relationship Retreat [Article 120701PA001]

Brower, Naomi; MacArthur, Stacey; Bradford, Kay; Albrecht, Clint; Bunnell, Jolene

To support youth in developing healthy relationships, state and county staff collaborated to offer a statewide overnight teen retreat to teach health relationship skills. Evaluation of 64 youth participants from rural and urban counties found significant increases in posttest knowledge of relationship skills for both male and female youth. Youth also reported that the content was very helpful and worth repeating. Program success may be attributed to addressing the interesting and needed subject of dating relationships as well as involvement of state ambassador and collegiate 4-H members as teachers. Implications and replication suggestions are outlined.

Jump-Starting Youth Community Leadership: An Evaluation of a Leadership Development Program for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Ally Youth [Article 120701PA002]

Diaz, Elizabeth M.; Kosciw, Joseph G.

The GLSEN Jump-Start National Student Leadership Team, a leadership development program for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), and ally youth designed to promote direct action community organizing and community engagement. This article examines the benefits of the program for youth's socio-political development. Data came from a multi-year evaluation that examined changes over time (baseline, immediately post-program, and one-year follow-up) in community engagement between a program group ($n = 103$) and a comparison group of youth ($n = 47$). Results indicate that the program may support LGBT and ally youth's socio-political development and have positive implications for their development as community leaders, but these benefits may not be sustained after program completion. Implications for further research and program development for LGBT youth are explored.

Reducing Bullying Through Leadership Skills Development [Article 120701PA003]

Black, Lynette

The heart wrenching and disturbing statistics regarding bullying in the schools is a reason for concern. Looking at a popular definition of bullying: aggressive intentional behavior involving an imbalance of power or strength (Stop Bullying.gov), one can see a lack of caring and compassion for others. The 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development (Lerner, et al., 2008) indicates the 4-H Youth Development Program is successfully guiding youth onto the best trajectory for positive youth development. As a result of the Lerner PYD study, one rural school in Oregon invited an Extension 4-H Educator to teach leadership skills to children in grades 4-8. The goal of the training was to increase caring and compassion through interactive, teambuilding activities thereby reducing bullying. Evaluation results indicated a significant impact by the program on youth defining their ability to positively work with others.

Research and Evaluation Strategies

Engaging Youth in Evaluation: Using Clickers for Data Collection [Article 120701RS001]

Borden, Lynne M.; Wiggs, Christine Bracamonte; Schaller, Amy; Schlomer, Gabriel L.

Now, more than ever, evaluation is an essential component for all programs. Although the need for outcome data is clear, collecting data from youth populations is often difficult, particularly

among youth who are vulnerable and/or disenfranchised. While the use of paper-and-pencil (PAP) surveys is a commonly used method of data collection, different technological methods, such as online surveys, text messaging, and personal digital assistants (PDA's), are increasingly employed in data collection efforts. This article explores the use of audience response systems ("clickers") as an innovative data collection method that is especially suited for use with youth. In this paper we examine qualitative findings from key informant interviews regarding data collected from youth participants on a youth program quality measure using clicker technology. Findings from the study indicate that the use of clickers may increase youth engagement in and improve the efficiency of the data collection process.