

FROM BARRIERS TO BRIDGES:
TACKLING THE EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS
OF BOSTON'S BLACK YOUTH

by

CHRISTINE M. MCRAE

B.A., Black Studies
Wellesley College
(1986)

Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements of the Degree of
Master in City Planning

at the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

May 1989

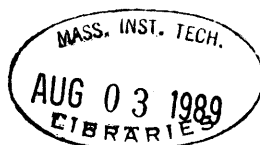
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Signature of Author _____
Department of Urban Studies and Planning
May 1989

Certified by _____
Melvin H. King
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by _____
Donald Schon
Chairperson, MCP Department Committee



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ABSTRACT

The thesis performs a program evaluation of the widely heralded youth employment initiative, Jobs For Youth-Boston, Inc. (JFY-Boston). The JFY-Boston agency provides education and training and job placement services for a predominantly Black youth clientele in the Greater Boston area. Herein, we explore how this agency goes about the business of breaking down the barriers of basic education deficiency and joblessness and how it builds bridges to employment futures for some of Boston's Black youth.

The thesis sets a context for the evaluation by examining the general issues of basic skills and jobless and the employment status of Massachusetts Black youth. A model for successful training and placement programs is constructed from published literature reviews. The data base for the program evaluation of JFY-Boston is comprised of on site surveys conducted by the author executive director, several staff members, and clients. The data base is further augmented by program documentation including annual reports, curricula, news clippings, and program advertisements.

Thesis Supervisor: Melvin H. King
Title: Adjunct Professor of Urban Studies and Planning

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INTRODUCTION

This is a program evaluation of the widely heralded youth employment initiative, Jobs For Youth-Boston, Inc. (JFY-Boston). The JFY-Boston program provides education and training services for a predominantly Black clientele in the Greater Boston area. Herein, we explore how this agency goes about the business of breaking down the barriers of basic education deficiency and joblessness and how it builds bridges to employment futures for Boston's Black youth.

Like many people across the nation, I am concerned about today's Black youth. I took on Black youth employment as a study topic because I wanted to learn about employment options for Boston's Black youth. I had heard far more about the problems facing these young people than I had about what was being done to help alleviate these problems. I was quite surprised and relieved to learn that Boston has quite a number of youth employment initiatives, such as the Boston Compact, Action For Boston Community Development (ABCD), and the Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services (JCS).

I focused my research on seeking answers to the following questions. First, what are the barriers to Black youth employment? Second, who is successful at dismantling these barriers and how do they operate? The answer to the first

question was overwhelming. The literature identifies a multitude of "barriers" to Black youth employment. I narrowed the scope of my inquiry to two barriers that my examination of the local youth employment statistics revealed: basic skills deficiency and joblessness.

METHODOLOGY

The program evaluation of JFY-Boston is based on surveys that I conducted on site with the executive director, several staff members, and current clients. I also make use of program documentation including annual reports, curricula, funding proposals, news clippings, and program advertisements.

ARGUMENT OUTLINE

Chapter 2, **Barriers to Black Youth Employment**, discusses the "barriers" that the Jobs For Youth-Boston program tries to address by its services to area youth: basic education deficiency and joblessness. As a means of setting a context to the problem, the chapter presents census data for Massachusetts to highlight the employment status of youth. Labor force participation rates, unemployment rates, employment to population ratios and jobless and dropout rates are examined.

Chapter 3, **Modelling a Successful Youth Employment Program**, presents the findings of two reviews of youth

employment programs. Then a prototype of an ideal approach for addressing the barriers of basic skill deficiency and joblessness is constructed from the lessons of the literature reviews.

Chapter 4, *Inroads to Black Youth Employment: The Jobs For Youth-Boston, Inc. Model*, presents a program evaluation of Jobs For Youth-Boston, Inc. Here the program's design, staffing, clientele, goals, funding, and job development strategies are be described.

Chapter 5, *From Barriers to Bridges*, evaluates the merits and weaknesses of the Jobs For Youth-Boston approach to youth development against the model constructed in Chapter 3. The Jobs For Youth-Boston agency's approach to breaking down the barriers of basic skill deficiency and joblessness will be further illuminated and discussed. Recommendations and conclusions are drawn from the analysis.

CHAPTER 2:

Barriers To Black Youth Employment

It is only in the last two decades that a Black youth employment crisis has emerged in the United States. Despite Black gains in occupation and educational attainment levels, due largely to enforcement of Great Society anti-discrimination legislation, there have been growing racial differentials in youth employment indicators. For inner-city Black youth, the employment to population ratio has declined, and unemployment, high school dropout, criminal activity, and teen parenthood rates have increased to crisis proportions.

The literature on youth unemployment identifies an array of variables associated with Black youth employment problems. However, for the purposes of this study, we will focus on the two barriers to Black youth employment that the Jobs For Youth program explicit tries to break down: the basic skills deficit, and joblessness. This background will help us to understand the goals and efforts of the program when we discuss the case in the later chapters of this writing.

Basic Skills

In recent years, there has been increasing concern over the educational attainment of the nation's youth. (Berlin and

Sum, 1987; Sum and Fogg, 1987) It has been recognized that not only are basic skills critically related to poverty and other perils associated with the poverty but also to workforce competitiveness. Currently, there is a crisis in the basic skill attainment of the nation's youth. Increasingly, generations of youth are coming of age without the necessary preparation and skills to fully participate in the workforce. (Berlin and Sum, 1987; Sum and Fogg, 1987)

This is particularly a problem for urban Black youth because the quality of education in inner city public schools is considered to be generally well below the standard necessary to effectively educate and train workers. (Hahn, 1985) Also, the increasing dropout rate that plagues these schools accounts for some of the unpreparedness of some Black youth for work.

In Boston, we are trying to come to terms with an alarmingly high dropout rate. Today, nearly 50% of all Boston public school students who enter high school in the 9th grade will dropout. Black students are dropping out of these schools at twice the average rate. In order to understand the severity of the implications of this problem, let us look at a few facts.

With respect to jobs, today 90% of blue-collar jobs require a worker to read or write at least 90 minutes per day. In 1986, 85% of the nation's workforce had a high school diploma. The dropout unemployment rate was over 14 percent, the per capita income of these dropouts was \$4,500, and their real earnings decreased by a whopping 47% between 1973 and 1985.¹ This evidence leads to the conclusion that the Black community's youth are in a terrible economic predicament.

There are additional factors to consider for Boston's Black youth and dropouts, they are the level of labor force competition, and the type of industrial base. The Greater Boston area has a high concentration of higher education institutions. Indeed, the region is home to some of the highest ranked colleges and universities in the country. This supply of young talent is openly enjoyed by employers, who are able to get very well prepared workers for relatively cheap wages because of the excess labor supply in this segment of the population.

This army of educated interns is a source of competition to Black youth, not because Black youth are seeking research positions at Digital but because college students, working to supplement their student loans, are more readily absorbed into

¹JFY data

the labor market in general. They are "qualified" for a broader range of jobs than are the local Black youth and for a number of reasons will tend to get these jobs over a "townie."

The fact that the "Massachusetts Miracle" was born out of the rise of high technology and the expansion of the service sector in the state is another pressure on Black youth employment. This holds several results that we should note. First, the rise of a service sector which is largely high tech necessarily reduces the proportion, if not number, of blue-collar jobs available. So, young Boston workers entering the workforce of today are entering the white collar world.

In the past, it was more likely that new workers made their school to work transition into a blue-collar occupation. The important distinction is that the entry-level white collar jobs generally demand a higher level of education and training than do entry-level blue collar jobs. So, where in the past a young worker could gain skills on the job, today's youth must come to the job interview with skills already in hand.

Another result of the growing service and high tech sectors is that the middle level of jobs is being squeezed out of the economy. Given the organization of labor in the new economy, unskilled, young Black workers are virtually destined

to a lifetime of low wage jobs with little job security, no opportunity for advancement, and no health or other benefits. These non-living wage jobs will serve to exacerbate the poverty problems in the community.

Joblessness

The problem of Black youth joblessness is not a new phenomenon. Although it was identified as a dilemma in Black youth employment as early as the 1970s (Glasgow, 1980), it is only now that this aspect of the puzzle is being critically evaluated on a wide scale. In the two decades since the problem was first noted, joblessness among Black youth has reached catastrophic proportions. (Freeman and Holzer, 1986; Rees, 1986; Wilson, 1987)

Explanations for sky-rocketing Black youth employment refer to education attainment, changing labor demands, and changing occupational structure. In the modern urban economy, beside the decline in blue collar and rise in high tech labor demands (as discussed above), while the educational attainment of Blacks is increasing overall, this growth has generally been in fields that are marginalized and are themselves stagnant. (Kasarda, 1985; Wilson, 1987) Wilson quotes John D. Kasarda saying, "[A] serious mismatch between the current educational distribution of minority residents in large

northern cities and the changing education requirement of their rapidly transforming industrial bases."² Discrimination against Blacks, the decline of the southern agricultural economy, and the growing population of socially and economically disenfranchised Blacks are also cited as roots of Black youth joblessness.³

Joblessness is directly related to economic stability. The amelioration of joblessness would undoubtedly improve the Black family's economic position greatly. The state of joblessness, social and economic isolation, perpetuates intergenerational poverty and disenfranchisement because the victims are cut off from the primary labor market. Thus, these people also lack any avenues to social and/or economic upward mobility.

Joblessness is at the root of many social/economic problems including poverty and criminal activity. (Glasgow, 1980; Wilson, 1987) Joblessness, or labor force non-attachment, is a key in the cycle of deprivation that has bound up so much of the Black community's creative resources--its people. If we can break joblessness, we have a real chance

²William J. Wilson, The Truly Disadvantaged (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) p 196.

³Albert Rees, "An Essay on Joblessness," Journal of Economic Literature, Vol. 24, June 86. pp. 613-628.

at solving this whole thing. But in order to break the chains of joblessness, we must design a way to give Blacks access to primary sector, stable employment so that the community has a living wage standard.

The Massachusetts Experience

Now, let us turn our attention to the employment status of Black youth in Massachusetts. The employment indicators for Black youth in Massachusetts reveal a dismal picture of their economic status. The following offers a snapshot description of labor force participation and unemployment rates.

Employment to population ratios, and jobless rate are also presented. Finally, high school dropout rates are evaluated.

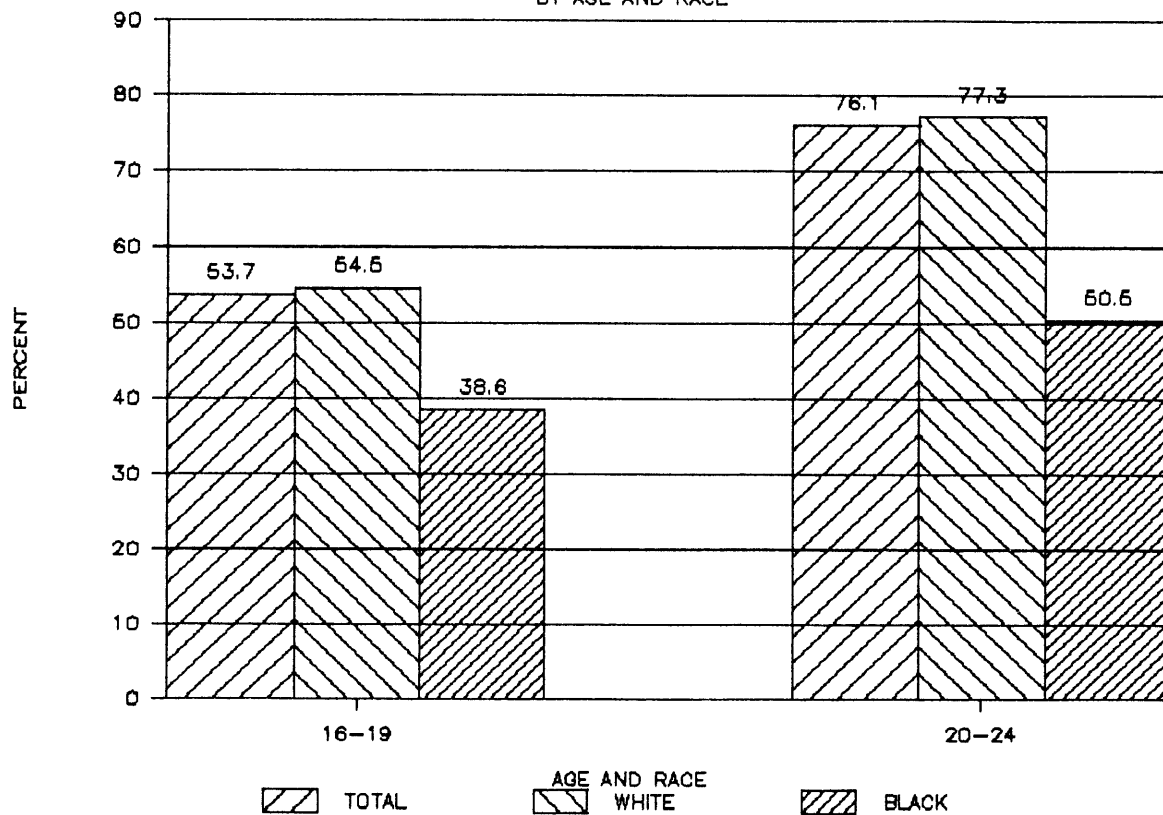
Labor Force Participation Rates

The labor force participation rate (LFPR) is a measure of the percentage of people in the population who are also in the labor force. This measure gives us an idea of how many people are looking for employment at a given point in time. The LFPRs of Massachusetts youth is represented in Table 1 and depicted in Figure 1 below.

The graph (Figure 1) shows that in 1980 the LFPR of Black youth across the state of Massachusetts, 38.6% teen and 63.0%

young adult, is much lower than that of the population on the whole, 53.7 and 76.1 respectively. Black teen LFPRs are 28% below that of the total teen population. Black young adult LFPRs are 17% below that of the total young adult population. There is a Black-White differential such that Black teen LFPRs are 30% below their white counterparts. In the young adult population, Black LFPRs are 18% below that of white young adults.

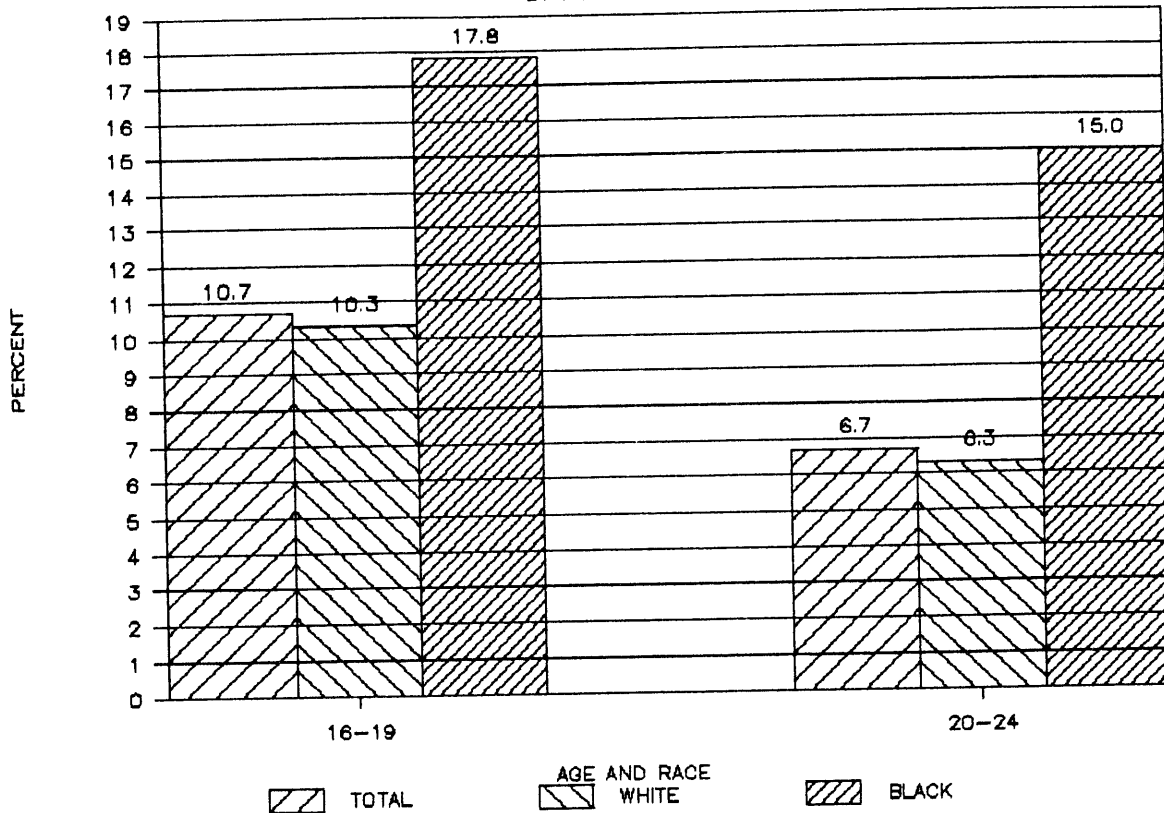
Figure 1
 YOUTH LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES
 BY AGE AND RACE



Youth Unemployment Rates

Black youth unemployment rates in Massachusetts are well below that of white youth and that of the total youth population in both cohorts. [See Table 2 and Fig. 2] Black teen unemployment is 7.1 percentage points above the total Massachusetts teen population and 7.5 point above that of white Massachusetts teens. The ratio of Black to white teen unemployment is 1.73:1. The unemployment rates of young adults represents an even greater disequilibrium across race. Young adult Blacks have an unemployment rate of 15%, this is more than twice that of white young adults (6.3%) and the total young adult population (6.7%) in Massachusetts.

Figure 2
YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATES
 BY AGE AND RACE

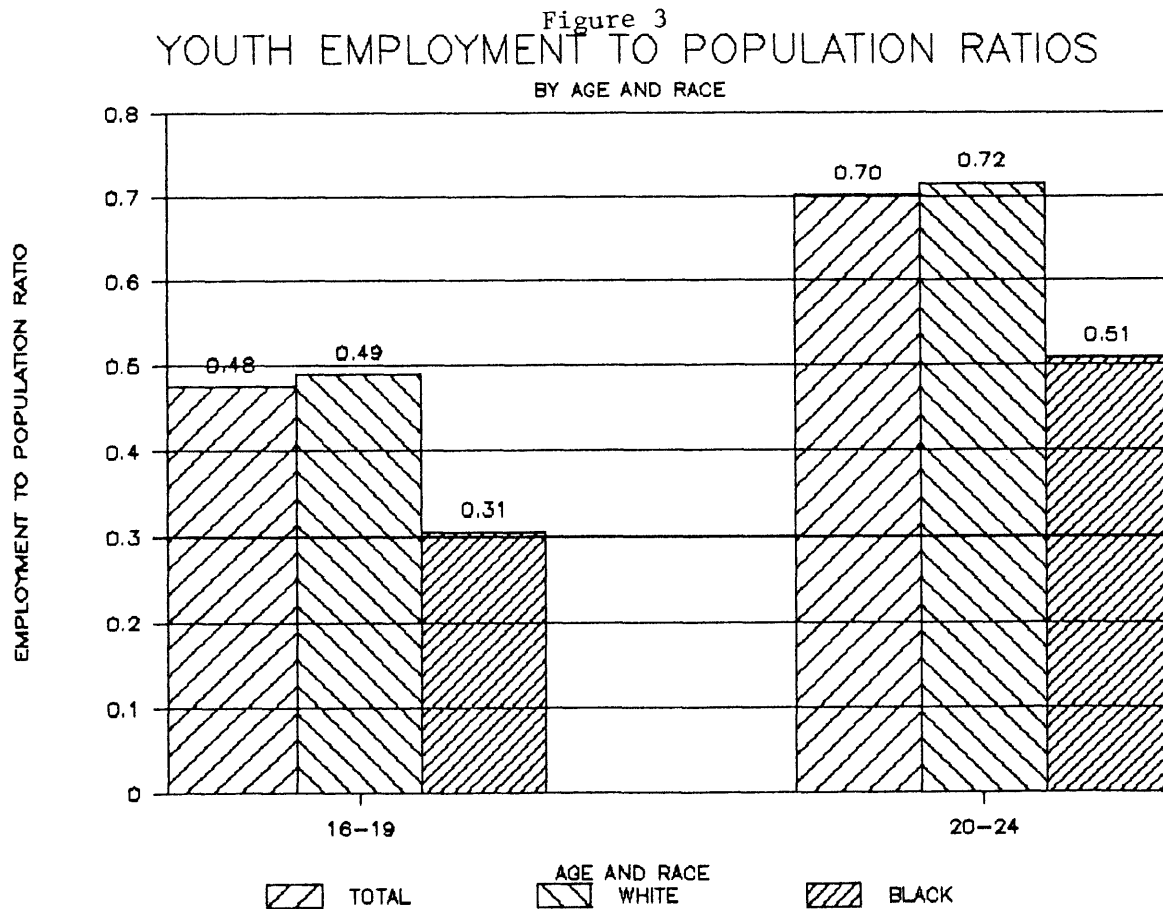


Youth Employment to Population Ratios

The employment to population ratio is a measure of how many workers in the population are employed. Since youth tend to move in and out of the labor force with great frequency the measure of unemployment is not reliable. For this reason, the employment to population ratio is considered a more reliable measure for interpreting employment status of youth because it directly counts employed youth. (Osterman, 1980)

The 1980 Massachusetts youth employment to population ratios are depicted in Figure 3. They reveal, once again, a notable difference in status of Black youth versus other

youth. In the teen cohort, the Black employment to population ratio stands at 0.31, this is 35% below the 0.48 mark of the total teen population in Massachusetts. In the young adult cohort, the Black employment to population ratio (0.51) is only 73% of that of the total young adult population (0.70). The employment to population ratio for whites in both age cohorts, teen and young adult, virtually mirrors the teen population at large, 0.49 and 0.72 respectively.

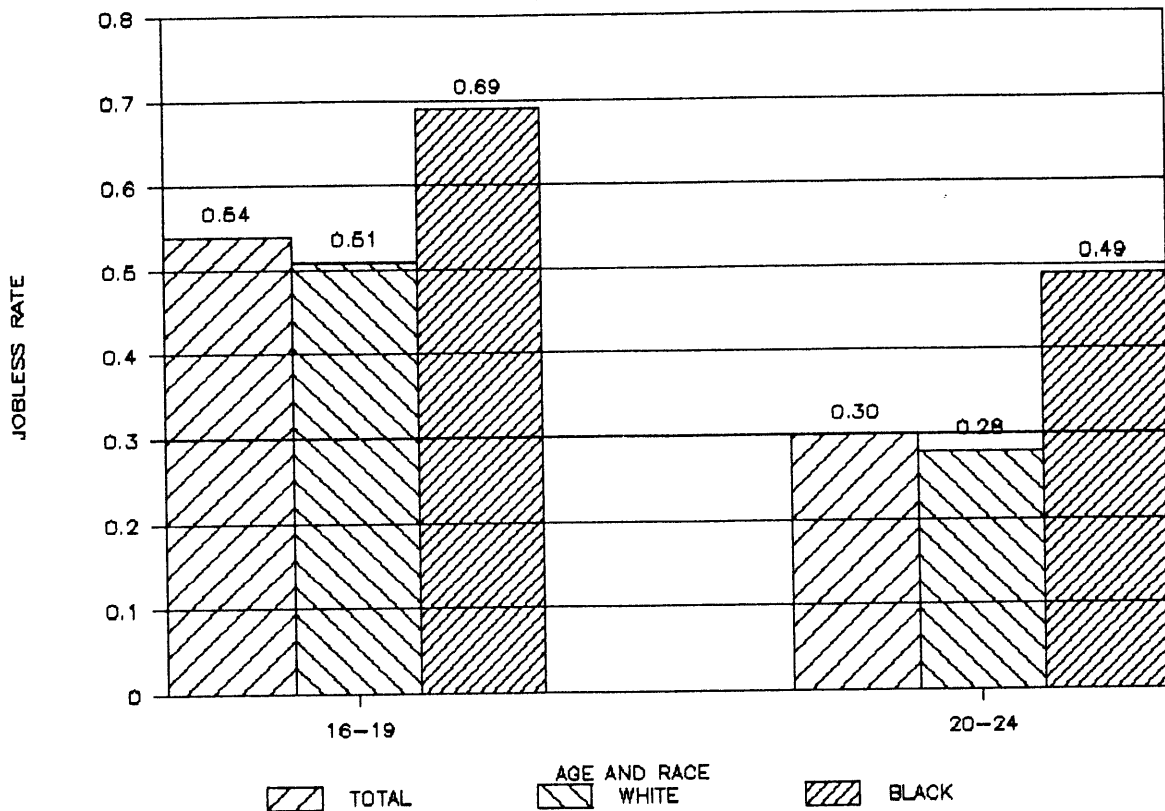


Youth Jobless Rates

The rate of joblessness is a measure that we are particularly concerned about in this study. The jobless rate is a measure of labor force "non-attachment." The data for Massachusetts youth joblessness is illustrated by Figure 4.

The ratio of Black teen joblessness to that of the total teen population is 1.3:1, thus the Black teen jobless rate (0.69) is 30% higher than that of the total teen population (0.54). The Black young adult jobless rate (0.49) is 63% higher than that of the total young adult population (0.30).

Figure 4
 1980 MASSACHUSETTS YOUTH JOBLESS RATE
 BY AGE AND RACE



Dropouts

The data in Table 5 show a clear difference between the employment status of graduates and dropouts. In every case, graduates are better off. They have a lower unemployment rate, 9.9% and 17.8% for the total teen population and Black teens respectively. Also, they have higher labor force participation rates 86.3% and 62.6% for the total teen population and Black teens respectively.

Within the Massachusetts teen population, the dropout unemployment rate, 23.7%, is more than twice that of those teens that graduated, 9.9%. The labor force participation

rates of graduates, 86.3%, is 27% higher than that of dropouts, 62.7%. Even more alarming is the fact that Black graduates have an unemployment rate, 17.8%, that is nearly double that of the Massachusetts teen population on the whole. Further, the labor force participation rates for Black graduates is 27% below that of the general teen population in Massachusetts.

Table 5: MASSACHUSETTS TEEN UNEMPLOYMENT RATES AND LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES BY EDUCATION AND RACE

	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	LFPR
TOTAL		
GRADUATES	9.9	86.3
DROPOUTS	23.7	62.7
BLACKS		
GRADUATES	17.8	62.6
DROPOUTS	58.7	52.6

SOURCE: Youth Employment Trends in Massachusetts 1980-1984. by the Massachusetts Division of Employment Securities.

Looking at the figures for Black dropouts, we see that their unemployment rate, 58.7%, is more than twice that of the general teen dropout population. In fact, the Black employment indicators are significantly worse than the general population in all categories.

Conclusion:

These employment indicators for Massachusetts youth clearly show that the economic status of Black youth is quite

abysmal, either considered in absolute terms or in relation to the general youth population. The problems of basic skills, an extension of high dropout rates, and joblessness, as reflected in the jobless, unemployment, and labor force participation rates, are key to their economic status. Any program whose goal is to remedy or somehow alleviate the Black youth employment crisis must address these issues.

For this reason, I have chosen to evaluate the Jobs For Youth-Boston, Inc. program. It's objective is to provide basic skills training and job placement services to disadvantaged urban youth. The remainder of this work is devoted to learning how this agency approaches the problems in youth unemployment and how it creates "bridges to opportunity" for disadvantaged youth given the two barriers identified above.

Table 1: Youth Labor Force Participation Rates

	Population	Labor Force	LFPR
<u>16-19</u>			
TOTAL	443,928	238,224	53.7
WHITE	410,342	225,311	54.9
BLACK	21,341	8231	38.6
<u>20-24</u>			
TOTAL	553,025	421,047	76.1
WHITE	513,690	396,968	77.3
BLACK	23,968	15,095	63.0

SOURCE: 1980 Massachusetts Census

Table 2: MASSACHUSETTS YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

	TOTAL	WHITE	BLACK
16-19	10.7	10.3	17.8
20-24	6.7	6.3	15.0

SOURCE: 1980 Massachusetts Census

Table 3: YOUTH EMPLOYMENT TO POPULATION RATIOS

	EMPLOYED	POPULATION	E/P RATIO
<u>16-19</u>			
TOTAL	210926	443928	0.48
WHITE	200659	410342	0.49
BLACK	6510	21341	0.31
<u>20-24</u>			
TOTAL	387379	553025	0.70
WHITE	367424	513690	0.72
BLACK	12173	23968	0.51

SOURCE: CALCULATED FROM 1980 MASSACHUSETTS CENSUS, TABLE 213

Table 4: MASSACHUSETTS YOUTH JOBLESS RATE

	E/P RATIO	JOBLESS RATE
16-19		
TOTAL	0.46	0.54
WHITE	0.49	0.51
BLACK	0.31	0.69
20-24		
TOTAL	0.70	0.30
WHITE	0.72	0.28
BLACK	0.51	0.49

SOURCE: CALCULATED FROM 1980 MASS. CENSUS DATA

CHAPTER 3:

Modelling a Successful Youth Employment Program

The Jobs For Youth-Boston program is a multi-service agency which addresses the employability and opportunity problems of urban youth. Employability problems are those barriers to employment which prevent one's finding or keeping a job.⁴ For example, basic education deficiencies, language barriers, handicaps, etc. are considered employability problems. Opportunity problems are defined as those barriers to employment which are external to the worker, such as labor market discrimination, economic recession, and occupational decline.⁵

The JFY-Boston agency provides comprehensive services on two fronts: employment and training, and job search and placement. In order to evaluate the program's success or failure we must construct a model which identifies the key elements to success for both of these types of efforts. For the purposes of this evaluation, we will construct a model for success drawing from two reviews of youth employment policies and programs: What Works in Youth Employment Policy? by

⁴William H. McCarthy, Reducing Urban Unemployment: What Works at the Local Level (Washington, D.C.: National League of Cities, 1985) p. 4.

⁵McCarthy, p4.

Andrew Hahn, and Job Strategies for Urban Youth by Work in America Institute, Inc..

Andrew Hahn's mid-1980s review of public and private youth employment initiatives led him to derive lessons from those experiences and make recommendations for youth employment policy. From Hahn's findings on the causes and nature of youth unemployment as well as what works from the demand, supply and market-clearing attempts at curbing youth unemployment, we can derive a few key elements that are part of worthwhile youth employment program models.

- 1) target out-of-school youth who are deficient in basic skills
- 2) provide intensive remedial education with job search services and career education
- 3) provide in-program work experience, especially for dropouts willing to return to school
- 4) establish performance criteria in both employment and education
- 5) cultivate linkage between schools, employers, and youth development agency

According to Hahn's findings, the best youth employment programs target out-of-school youth (either dropouts or graduates), in their late teens or early twenties (the 16-19 and 20-24 age cohorts), and who lack basic skills (ie.

functional illiteracy).⁶ His logic for emphasizing this subset of the youth population is that in-school youth's job market problems are difficult to identify. Thus, it is too easy to spend money where it is not needed without necessarily even realizing that it is happening.

Further, out-of-school youth are often more serious about work and have better knowledge of their job market needs. They have few other productive options other than program attendance, as compared to in-school youth. Finally, they tend to have greater financial responsibilities than in-school youth.⁷ Each of these rationales is based on cost-effectiveness and allocating resources to the area of greatest need.

Another characteristic of good youth employment programs identified by Hahn's research is the combination of services which include intensive remedial education with job search assistance and career education.⁸ Hahn found that programs that train disadvantaged youth in job search techniques do raise their employment levels. The effect of placement alone, however, deteriorates quickly because it has no influence on

⁶Andrew Hahn, What Works in Youth Employment Policy, (National Planning Association: Washington, D.C.) p. 14.

⁷Hahn, p. 98.

⁸Hahn, p. 15.

the workers attitudes or habits. Better and longer lasting effects resulted from combining the placement component with an education modules.⁹ Finally, he finds that the synthesis of placement/search, education, and career counseling is the optimal balance of services for a successful youth employment program.¹⁰ The program should run year-round to meet the needs of different youth without interruptions that may disconnect them from the process.

In-program work experience is also a positive program attribute. Work should be guaranteed for dropouts willing to return to school.¹¹ This gives youth a concrete work experience which can serve as a laboratory in which to test the knowledge and training that the program otherwise provides. Although it is likely to be short-term and low paying, it can be useful for building self-esteem and other positive attitudes in youth.¹²

Hahn stresses the importance of performance criteria placed on youth in both employment and educational

⁹Hahn, p. 88.

¹⁰Hahn, p. 97.

¹¹Hahn, p. 99.

¹²Hahn, p. 98.

components.¹³ He found that programs which performed close monitoring of the youth's progress and required that the youth maintain prescribed quality standards, both in the classroom and on the job, improved the early careers of disadvantaged youth. Those programs with loose administration and/or no educational component were not successful.¹⁴

Finally, the administration of a successful program is characterized by cooperation between the area schools, and employers with the agency. This creates an arena in which the strengths and weaknesses, needs and resources of the major actors can come together and be managed efficiently. A tripartite system of cooperation helps each actor achieve their objectives.

In 1979, the Work in America Institute (WAI) conducted a national policy study to identify models of successful grassroots programs which for address youth employment problems.¹⁵ With respect to successful training and placement models, it highlighted six key features of program design, funding, and staffing.¹⁶

¹³Hahn, p. 37.

¹⁴Hahn, pp. 37-38.

¹⁵Work in America Institute, Inc., Job Strategies for Urban Youth, (Scarsdale: Work In America Institute, Inc., 1979).

¹⁶WAI, pp. 42-44.

- 1) maximization of private funding
- 2) concentration on entry-level jobs in the private sector
- 3) provision of job counseling services
- 4) education supplement for basic skills
- 5) maintenance of knowledge of employers' needs
- 6) staffed by mixed group of experienced professionals and paraprofessionals

Private funding is preferred to public funding because it is more flexible by comparison. Public funding is hampered with the burden of bureaucratic paperwork and responds more to political climate than program clientele. Also, government sponsored programs, WAI argues, emphasize quantity rather than quality.¹⁷

Private funding, on the other hand, functions with fewer administrative burdens and corporate funding, in particular, tends to reflect the employer's needs. Thus, the ideological climate associated with private funding is generally more compatible with grassroots programs' needs and goals.¹⁸

Concentrating employment services on entry-level jobs in which clients can succeed is important, according to WAI.

¹⁷WAI, p. 42.

¹⁸WAI, p. 42.

When the client has been successful on a job site for 3 or more months, WAI recommends providing a new placement or a promotion for the client. This upgrading improves motivation and incentives for the client. Also, frequent placement will ultimately emphasize the experience of work rather than apprentice the client to a particular job.¹⁹ Once again, we stress the preference for private sector placement over that of the public sector because of the difference in private sector's perception of the quality of the training in these sectors.²⁰ Also, placement in the private sector is less desirable because it can lead to an over-dependence on the public sector to absorb labor.

Counseling is an important component to employment and training programs because it teaches the client about the expectations of employers and work. The WAI model requires that job counseling continue after client has been placed.²¹ In this way the agency can work with both the client and the employer to resolve any problems that may arise.

¹⁹WAI, p. 42-3.

²⁰WAI, p. 41.

²¹WAI, p. 43.

Educational supplements to the employment service build the client's employability.²² Competency based education strengthens worker skills both in task performance and in mediating a workplace environment. Through the education supplement, youth gain training, literacy skills, and life-skills.

The WAI stresses the importance of establishing and nurturing the agency-employer relationship.

"More than any other type of work program, the private job placement service must master the techniques of good job development and of catering to employers."²³

Successful job development models strive for long-term agency-employer partnerships to build up the agency's employer clientele.²⁴ The benefit of this is that it adds to the smooth operation of the program when the greater proportion of placements is with an employer that is familiar with the agency and its youth. WAI maintains that the agency should follow-up on its placements to inquire as to their progress on the job, and, in the case of a termination for any reason (positive or negative), the agency should be prepared to fill that job vacancy immediately.²⁵

²²WAI, p. 43.

²³WAI, p. 44.

²⁴WAI, p. 44.

²⁵WAI, p. 44.

Balancing the staff with professionals and paraprofessionals adds depth to the staff's vision because they will have differing backgrounds. The WAI assigns professional staff with the responsibility of tending to funding and generating business contacts. The Institute also charges the professional staff people to monitor the competence of the para-professional personnel, who "must be especially adept at dealing with the clients"²⁶.

The Prototype

The model that will be used to evaluate JFY-Boston's program is formed by integrating the above paradigms and controlling for repetition. Summarily, the model is the following "checklist:"

Success Criteria of Employment, Training and Placement Program

- 1) target out-of-school youth who are deficient in basic skills
- 2) provide intensive remedial education with job search services and career education
- 3) provide in-program work experience, especially for dropouts willing to return to school
- 4) establish performance criteria in both employment and education
- 5) cultivate linkage between schools, employers, and youth development agency
- 6) maximization of private funding

²⁶WAI, p. 44.

- 7) concentration on entry-level, private sector jobs
- 8) staffed by mixed group of experienced professionals and paraprofessionals

In the final chapter, we will analyze the JFY-Boston program, presented next, to test how well it "fits" this construct.

CHAPTER 4:

Inroads to Black Youth Employment: The Jobs For Youth-Boston, Inc. Model

The following is a description of the Jobs For Youth-Boston, Inc. agency located in downtown Boston. For ease in reading and interpretation, the report has been divided into several parts: program description, funding, staffing, participants, and job development. The information herein was gathered from an assortment of sources including on site interviews, agency statistics, annual reports, curricula, funding proposals, and newspaper clippings from both the Boston Globe and the Boston Herald. From the data presented in this chapter, we will gain evidence to test this program's design against our prototype developed in the previous chapter.

THE JOBS FOR YOUTH-BOSTON, INC. PROGRAM

Jobs For Youth (JFY) is a private, non-profit corporation that claims the position of Boston's largest and most comprehensive education and employment program for out-of-

school and "at-risk" youth. Since 1977, JFY has serviced more than 8,000 Boston youth and continue to make themselves available, free of charge, to all Boston/Cambridge residents aged 16-21 years.

Organization's Objective

The original goal of JFY-Boston was to find jobs for unemployed, low-income youth, particularly dropouts aged 16-21. These youth are considered to be the hardest to employ. Over the years, the goals of the organization have expanded and the means by which the organization has gone about achieving its mission has been flexible -- responsive to the changing needs of employers and potential youth workers.

For example, at JFY-Boston's inception, the state of the local economy was such that the program had to concentrate a lot of its resources on job development. The supply of youth labor exceeded the demand for that labor because general unemployment in the region was very high. Also, labor competition for entry-level employment was quite stiff for dropouts because there is a large supply of high school and college graduates in the Boston area. In the mid-80s, however, the regional economy began to boom. Suddenly, the demand for labor exceeded the supply of qualified workers. JFY-Boston responded by refocusing its efforts.

Instead of concentrating on job development, the program began to focus more of its energy on education. "The goal of employment was broadened to include long-term employability and career development."²⁷ The 1985 annual report proclaims the goal of the Jobs For Youth program is "to enhance the long-term employability of out-of-school youth through a comprehensive program of counseling, employment, alternative education, and advocacy."²⁸

"It is about helping young people become responsible, self-sufficient members of society..so that they can work, think, read, and know what they're voting on when they go to the polls."²⁹

The program's agenda seems to have been firmly set at its inception. Changes have occurred in direct response to economic need. The Executive Director spoke of his freedom to exercise his best judgement in guiding the organization's search for and use of resources, because of the Board's cooperation with his efforts.

Origination

While operation plans and funding searches for JFY-Boston were initiated in December 1976, the program began operation on March 3, 1977. Two private foundations are credited with

²⁷Annual Report, 1987, p 11.

²⁸Annual Report, 1985, p 1.

²⁹Interview with Gary M. Kaplan, Executive Director for JFY-Boston.

the idea to put together JFY-Boston, the Lilly Endowment and the Taconic Foundation.

The officers of the initiating foundations were interested in helping to stem the tide of the growing national youth unemployment problem. They hoped to replicate the success of New York Jobs For Youth, the parent program, in Boston. Boston was chosen because its regional economy closely matched that of New York, characterized by low economic growth, high unemployment levels, and a rapidly increasing inflation rate.

Jobs For Youth-Boston -- Services

The JFY-Boston program has three components: counseling, employment, and education. Vocational counseling familiarizes youth with the expectations and responsibilities associated within a work environment. Skills in job readiness are taught in both group workshops and one-on-one counseling sessions.

Personal counseling is also provided to youth to support them in areas of social responsibility. For example, special workshops are offered on topics including health (AIDS, drugs), parenting, housing/shelter, money, and family relationships. JFY networks with outside agencies to provide access to a wider range of services than those JFY can offer. For example, the JFY/COPE (Coping with the Overall

Pregnancy/Parenting Experience) and JFY/Crittenton Pace Program partnerships, both since 1987, allows clients to have specialized counseling, case management, parenting workshops, child care placements and teen parent support groups.

Table 4-1 shows that in the last year of operation, the program has expanded by 48% from 527 to 782 clients. The largest area of growth was in the number of new JFY clients that came into the program in 1988, a 96% increase. The new PACE program is already receiving a good level of usage, as compared to its sister program COPE.

Table 4-1: Statistical Summary Counseling For 1987, 1988

	1987	1988
Active Clients		
Carried over from last year	257	189
New JFY	216	424
New COPE	11	67
New PACE	N/A	69
Reactivated	43	33
TOTAL ACTIVE CLIENTS	<u>527</u>	<u>782</u>

The employment department at JFY-Boston serves as the link between job ready youth and entry-level, private sector job opportunities. The department maintains relationships with more than 450 Boston area employers whose companies range in size from small firms to large multinational corporations.

After job placement, the department staff maintain a working/counseling relationship with the youth and the employers to assist in resolving any problems that may arise on the job. Job placement services are available to any high school graduates who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements.

Table 4-2 shows the statistical summary of employment for 1987 and 1988. The information that we can draw from it, however, is inconclusive because information for 1987 is not available in all categories. The table does show that the rate of placement by the department declined considerably from 215 to 118 placements between 1987 and 1988. These figures may or may not be worth raising concern. On the whole, it seems likely that this drop in job placement is consistent with the fact that so many new clients entered the JFY-Boston program that year (as discussed above). One might postulate that more of the students were taking advantage of the education services than employment.

Table 4-2: Statistical Summary Employment For 1987, 1988

	1987	1988
Total Placements	215	118
Indiv. Clients Placed	190	96
Entered Skill Training	N/Av	59
Employers Placing Orders	N/Av	213

The Youth Business Initiative (YBI), which was founded in 1986, trains 18-29 year old clients in entrepreneurship. Clients interested in self-employment are provided training, start-up loans (up to \$2,000), and follow-up technical assistance. In 1988, the YBI program showed a net annual gain of \$1,575,000 for businesses active more than six months. The ratio of business income to program cost was 4.8:1, and the ratio of gross annual product to program cost was 7:1. Statistics like these hint at the enormous success of this program and its participants, 45% (36) were "minorities." It is worth noting that a full 61% (119) of the business training graduates in the YBI program were non-white.

The statistical summary for YBI (Table 4-3, below) shows consistency in the program from 1987 to 1988 as the figures are nearly the same between the two years. There was a improvement in the rate of businesses started from 1987 to 1988. In 1987, 33% of those who completed the business seminar received assistance from JFY-Boston in starting their own businesses. In 1988, while the number of clients completing the business seminar remained constant at 70, the rate of businesses assisted rose to 54%. On the whole, the seminar completion rate for the YBI program is 71% and the resulting rate of assisting businesses is 39%.

Table 4-3:

Statistical Summary for Youth Business Initiatives, 1987-88

	1987	1988	Program Total
Inquiries	461	532	1489
Intakes/Enrollees	112	102	459
Started Seminar	N/Av	111	286
Completed Seminar	70	70	203
Plans submitted to LRC	N/Av	12	40
Plans approved for loans	10	8	34
Total loans made	N/Av	13	43
Total assisted businesses	23	38	80

The education department in the JFY-Boston program holds classes morning, noon, and evening so that work and family obligations need not interfere with their clients' educational pursuit. There are two tracks in the program, GED and diploma. The GED track provides clients with the training to earn high school equivalency diplomas. For those who enter the program with low levels of academic preparation, pre-GED classes are available.

Table 4-4: Statistical Summary Education For 1987, 1988

	1987	1988
Total Enrolled	278	293
Earned GED	40	39
Earned HS Diploma	N/A	7
Entered Post-sec. Ed.	23	16

JFY-Boston boasts of an Alternative School, established in the fall of 1987, which allows students to combine employment training and individualized, competency-based

academic instruction to earn credit toward a Boston Public School diploma. The classes are small, with a student to teacher ration no higher than 12:1. This program targets low-income dropouts or youth at-risk of dropping out. In recent years, students have received technical instruction in computer use at Roxbury Community College and Franklin Institute.

Upon completing the curriculum, clients are awarded a Boston Public Schools diploma from their originating high school. Also, clients who complete the education curriculum are encouraged to pursue further education, either college or vocational. The staff assists students in the search for financial aid.

Competency Requirements

The program places education and employment performance criteria on the youth. The GED curriculum requires the student to master 61 competency skills in the 5 GED subject areas (writing, mathematics, literature and art, social studies, and science). [See the attached list, Attachment 4-1] Clients are given the post test to each skill for as long as they continue to pass. When a competency test is not passed, the client works on this skill until it is mastered, which is deemed a passing mark on the post test. Then, the client moves on to the next skill test.

The competency criteria in the employment module are not clearly laid out in any of the program documents that were made available for this evaluation. Perhaps it is the fact that competency in job readiness can not be measured quite as easily as in education. Let it suffice to point out that the job readiness module of the program consists of workshops to prepare youth to understand and meet the expectations of employers.

Workshop activities include decision-making, interviewing skills, procedures for completing job applications, and problem solving on the job. Determination of "job readiness" is made by the vocational counselor at the time when s/he is satisfied that the client has mastered the lessons taught.

Education: The Most Utilized Service

The education department's services are the most utilized in the program. In that area, the GED classes are larger than the diploma classes (295 and 30 students respectively). Despite the popular misconceptions about GED's which leads to their being less desirably received by the public, the GED program at Jobs For Youth is no less dense than the diploma program. The diploma program has more breadth, but not more density.

The Alternate High curriculum offers courses in all of the areas required by the state and the city public school system. These include four levels of English, two levels of social studies, two levels of mathematics, and two levels of science. Clients can earn the remaining 59 credits toward their diploma in a number of electives. Current elective courses include sociology, typing, journalism, and creative writing. Even Alternate High students at JFY-Boston must pass the competency tests.

The key to the diploma program, Alternate High, is its level of acceptability by the public. "To a lot of people, the GED certificate is not as prestigious a credential as a high school diploma, [for example] employers. So the high school diploma program is a way of eliminating the question, 'Are you a high school dropout?' Since no one knows where you got [your diploma], it erases the stigma of dropping out."

JFY-Boston's Self-Evaluation

According to the Executive Director of JFY-Boston, Gary M. Kaplan, the widely held perception of JFY-Boston's success is rooted in the timeliness and accomplishments of its education component. It is a case of being in the right business at the right time -- providing the right services in

the given market conditions. Basic education is a critical link to job readiness, and this is what JFY is doing for the Boston labor market.

Surprisingly, the program has no formal means of measuring success. For example, there is no follow-up on the youth that JFY-Boston serves to see what they are doing once they graduate from the program. Such a procedure would be very expensive to staff and difficult to operationalize both theoretically, in terms of defining control and treatment groups, and logistically, in terms of tracking people.

So, in the absence of scientific measures of success, the Executive Director claims to interpret the program's progress in terms of how many clients complete the education component, how many get employed, the level of client demand for services, and the level of employer demand for workers. By these measures, the Executive Director claims to be satisfied that the program is a continuing success.

Money As A Constraint on Service Delivery

When asked about what constraints there are on service delivery, the Executive Director named funding as the only one. He said, "Anybody can design the proper program for this population but nobody can pay for it...There really is no

barrier except money....[T]here's really no problem except development."

Under his leadership, the Jobs For Youth-Boston annual revenue has consistently increased. In the 1985 fiscal year, the agency's total revenue was \$614,382. In the 1986 fiscal year, the agency's total revenue increased to \$869,875. This marked a nearly 42% increase in funds available. So clearly, Mr. Kaplan is working hard to loosen this constraint.

Networking

Jobs For Youth--Boston, Inc. networks with other area youth agencies and a range of social service agencies (eg. Crittenton Hastings House, as described above). It doesn't really interact directly with local churches, but it does have a relationship with the public schools, Roxbury Community College, Franklin Institute, the state's Department of Education, Department of Employment and Training, the city's Office of Jobs and Community Services (JCS), and Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD). Thus, the agencies that the program tends to network with are those which provide the services it does not.

To date there are no regular relationships with grassroots level community organizations. However, this situation may change this Summer '89 because the Executive

Director is part of a move to coordinate youth service delivery in the Greater Boston area for at least the summer. This cooperation is motivated by the heightening problems of youth violence in Boston neighborhoods and diminishing resources for youth development. Such coalition building in the Boston area is likely to become a fixture in youth development if this summer's work is successful.

Projection for JFY-Boston's future

The director sees the program as remaining fairly stable in the immediate future. He expects that there will be some growth but is quick to point out that expansion will be limited because funding sources are not increasing. What expansion does happen in the program will likely be in the education department. Counseling will be hard to maintain, he says, because it is becoming increasingly expensive.

Kaplan is quick to point out that the state of the local labor market will have a major influence on the program's focus. For example, if unemployment rises, the program may need to return to its earlier emphasis of job development and find jobs for its clients. Thus, the allocation of program resources would have to shift.

FUNDING

As Table 4-5 shows, JFY-Boston is supported by a mix of public and private funding. The total revenue going into the program increased by 14% between the 1986 and 1988 fiscal years. Also during that time, there were changes in the ratio of public to private funding. In the 1986 fiscal year private funding accounted for 80% (\$695,001) of the JFY annual operating budget for the 1986 fiscal year. The ratio of private industry to government funding was 4:1.

For the 1988 fiscal year, corporate and foundation funding of JFY-Boston dipped modestly to 69% (\$683,932) of the JFY-Boston revenues. While the proportion of private support for the program declined from the 1986 to 1988 fiscal year, the level of absolute support (ie., actual dollars) was fairly constant at \$695,001 and \$683,932 for the 1986 and 1988 fiscal years respectively.

Table 4-5: JFY-Boston Revenue Report For Fiscal 1986 and 1988

Fiscal Year 1986			Fiscal Year 1988
\$313,151 (36%)	Boston Area Foundations & Corporation		\$389,415 (39%)
174,874 (20%)	Government Contracts		310,995 (31%)
147,504 (17%)	National Foundations		106,806 (11%)
130,000 (15%)	United Way of Massachusetts Bay		147,015 (15%)
90,068 (10%)	Technical Assistance		29,608 (3%)
7,335 (1%)	Miscellaneous		5,099 (.5%)
6,943 (1%)	Individual Contributors		5,889 (.5%)
<hr/> <hr/>			<hr/> <hr/>
\$869,875	TOTAL REVENUE		\$994,927

This decline was offset by a sharp increase in the proportion of government contracts that provide JFY-Boston revenue from 20% (\$174,874) to 31% (\$310,995) between the 1986 and 1988 fiscal years, an 18% rise. The high rise in government funding reflects the funding of the newly implemented Alternate High program in 1988.

In the 1988 fiscal year, the ratio of private to public funding fell to 2.2:1. This ratio is something for the program to watch as it is particularly important, in this age of national fiscal constraint and in a political environment that lacks a consistent and coherent youth employment policy, for the program to be as independent of public funding as possible in order to protect its financial base. (Although this would not guarantee continued support from private sources.)

Charles Goldberg, the Director of Development at Jobs For Youth-Boston, is the full-time fund raiser for agency. Also, the Executive Director, spends about half of his time raising funds. The Director of Education, Ephraim Weisstein, contributes to this effort by pursuing education contracts. The program holds on to their sponsors by maintaining pressure, excellence, and visibility. "We hound them," says the executive director, "and we put out a good product, so they don't feel like they're getting ripped off. Also, we do a lot of public relations through the newspapers, television, and by word of mouth."

Resource allocation at JFY-Boston is function of both planned actions and cumulative judgement of what the market wants. As demand for a particular service is made, the program adjusts itself to deliver that service. The money to do this is available because that is what the funders are calling for. If the program were to go against the call of the supporters, then, of course, the money to deliver services would be limited. In the past several years, the market has demanded education services. Thus, the education department is twice the size of the rest of the agency. This is a reversal of the way things were when the program was first initiated in 1977.

STAFFING

Hiring criteria

Hiring criteria for the staff include the obvious educational requirements. Counselors have bachelor's or master's in counseling or psychology, for example. The teachers in the alternative school program must be certified (ie., possess a 4 year degree with state certification). While the other teachers need not have a teaching certificate, they must have a specialization in some area of education, for example, english, history, mathematics, etc. A senior staff person within the organization noted that "[t]here are no strict requirements for being a teacher in the pre-GED program, although clearly the staff people are all [qualified] teachers anyway."

Examples from the resumes of some of the key personnel show professional preparation. The Coordinator of the JFY Alternative School is a secondary school teacher with Massachusetts certification. She has more than 15 years of experience in the education field in positions that have included teacher, guidance counselor, and evaluator and administrator with the Boston Public Schools.

The Director of Educational Services at JFY-Boston holds a Master's degree in education, which he earned in 1973. His experience includes college instructorship, educational

consulting, and program planning. The Director of Counseling has training and experience in as a therapist, youth counselor, career counselor and program administrator. She earned her M.Ed. in the early 1970s and is also a licensed certified social worker. From all indications, this is a well-seasoned collection of professionals.

The paraprofessionals on the staff include the GED teachers and voluntary tutors in the program. Also included in this number are the agency interns from Northeastern University, of which there are three, who assist in program administration.

Other requirements include that the staff person must have some previous experience working with this population, inner-city adolescents, particularly youth 16-22 years old. The director of counseling reported that nearly everyone on the staff has a youth development background and got that experience right in Boston. That local association becomes important in direct service to this population because there is a big difference between a client's residence being on Humboldt Avenue in Roxbury and Seaverns Street in Jamaica Plain. One neighborhood is in the heart of a high poverty and crime area, while the other is populated by middle and working class families and college students--two very different home

environments. Thus, the staff's familiarity with Boston's cultural climate is invaluable.

Another characteristic of the JFY-Boston staff is that the exercise of creativity in their work seems to be important to each of them. Several personnel spoke of this. The Executive Director commented that

[T]he main thing that characterizes the staff here is that they want to work with kids and they want to be in a situation that allows them as much creativity in their practice as possible, whether its counseling or teaching. They want to be able to work intensively and individually with kids and not be trapped in some rigid curriculum or some 50 minute hour and be able to really respond to what the kid needs....[T]hese are people who are creative and want to be in a professional environment that allows them to express that creativity.

Attention is paid to social and economic characteristics of potential staff in an affirmative action sense. As evidenced by the JFY-Boston Affirmative Action Plan, which details their goals in this area. Currently the racial and ethnic diversity of the staff does not directly reflect that of the program's client population. The actual distribution by affirmative action categoric is charted below for 1987 and 1988. All the groups seem stable throughout the listed categories with a few noteworthy exceptions. Regarding representation on the Board, white membership declined slightly from 70% in 1987 to 60% in 1988. Representation of Hispanic staff declined from 17% to 10% during this time

period. JFY-Boston needs to work hard to increase Hispanic representation both on the Board and on the staff.

Table 4-6: Representation on JFY's Board, Staff and Client Roster 1987/1988

	<u>Board</u> #	<u>Staff</u> #	<u>Clients</u> (%)
Male	14/12	13/10	60/64
Female	3/3	17/21	40/36
Black	5/6	10/13	70/73
White	12/9	15/14	15/10
Hispanic	0	5/3	14/14
Asian	0	0	0
Handicapped	0	1/1	0
Over 60 yrs.	2/2	0	0

The JFY-Boston affirmative action goals set in 1988 are shown in Table 4-7 below. The program's affirmative action statement claims that these are the figures of representation that it aims to achieve by 1991, assuming there is at least a 25% staff turnover.

Table 4-7: JFY-Boston's Affirmative Action Goals (1988-1991)*

White	50%	Male	45%
Black	38%	Female	55%
Hispanic	8%		
Other	4%		

*These figures are intended to reflect administrative, service delivery and support staff positions within the agency.

Staff tenure

Staff turnover is not a perceived problem at Jobs For Youth-Boston. There is turnover, but it does not come at a fast pace. The typical length of stay is 2-3 years. A key factor in staff turnover is the pay rate within the program. The salaries at JFY are not competitive with those of the public school system or the state's Department of Social Services, for example. So, it is natural that staff "move on." According to Kaplan, it is unlikely that agencies such as JFY-B will be securing the level of financing necessary to reach salary competitiveness with the public sector because much of the funding has been exhausted.

Senior staff noted that the small size of the organization is a factor in the staff turnover rate. Once a person has been with JFY for two years, they have pretty much outgrown their position. There are very few positions into which one might advance.

Also, staff report feeling uneasy about being promoted above their co-workers. The nature of relationships in such a small organization makes peering very important to how well things run. Many staff are not comfortable with the idea of being their friend's boss and they prefer to leave the agency

to seek further professional challenge and happily welcome new talent to the fold.

Blackwell's 1987 study of JFY revealed that one of the program's problems was a lack of staff.³⁰ There is no problem with staffing shortage right now, according to the current Executive Director. He does admit that it sometimes takes two to three months to find the "right person" to fill a vacant position.

However, he attributes this to structural constraints. For example, since the employment rate is so high right now, there are not a lot of people looking for jobs in this field. The Executive Director is very comfortable about this. Employees are carefully selected because there are so few positions within the organization's staff. So, a "correct fit" is very important in order to maintain balance and flow within the organization.

Decision making within the organization is decentralized from the top, the Board, right down to direct service staff. Just as the Board gives the Executive Director freedom to pursue his vision within the organizations goals and objectives, so does the Executive Director offer that same

³⁰Blackwell, James E. Youth Employment and Unemployment. The Trotter Institute, Boston: 1985.

confidence to his staff. The agenda for the program is set. When staff have new ideas, they may or may not present them to a superior (depending on the scope of the new idea) before trying it out. When innovations are successful, they are quickly integrated into the operating routine of the program. When innovations fail, the experimenter is encouraged to try something else. This is an aspect of professional freedom that is so greatly valued at JFY.

Staff Networking

Networking at the staff level is prevalent, yet informal. Staff report that they often communicate with their professional counterparts at other youth development agencies but not as a part of any formal or coordinating mechanism. Networking is driven by the personal commitment and competence of the service deliverers. The fact that one cares motivates them to call around and ask about what other programs are doing or even who can help resolve a particular problem they are experiencing. Professional courtesy and commitment are key, although they are not institutionalized.

PARTICIPANTS

Target Population

JFY targets the hardest to employ youth for its services. The program tries to reach those who have isolated themselves

from the mainstream of labor market activity. Their clients are drop outs and unemployed youth looking for what is termed "second chance education." That is, having dropped out of high school, these youth seek alternative educational opportunities.

Recruiting

Clients may enter the program through several routes. Some are referred by the public school system to JFY's Alternative School. Others are self-referrals who have learned of the program by word-of-mouth, JFY public service announcements, or flyers. Still others are court referrals. Perhaps the most important outreach activity JFY performs is that it mails information to every Boston Public School dropout describing their program and services.

Participant Demographics

JFY-Boston's clients are predominantly Black, male, dropouts. Their students tend to have no court involvement and Dorchester yields the highest percentage of participants (39%), with Boston, Roxbury, and Mattapan next. These neighborhoods represent some of the poorest in the city. In 1988, the program's participants had the following representation:

Table 4-8: Participant Demographics

<u>(1) Race/Ethnicity</u>		<u>(2) Sex</u>	
Black	71%	Male	60%
Hispanic	13%	Female	40%
White	9%		
Other	7%		

<u>(3) Age</u>		<u>(4) Court Involvement</u>	
16 yrs	18%	Present	10%
17	26%	Past	5%
18	27%	None	85%
19	11%		
20	11%		
21	7%		

<u>(5) Educational Attainment</u>		<u>(6) Neighborhood Residence</u>	
Last Grade Completed		Dorchester	39%
		Boston	18%
		Roxbury	15%
		Mattapan	11%
7	3%		
8	18%		
9	32%		
10	24%		
11	22%		
12	1%		

The program does not keep any formal statistics on their client's family background. A senior staff member commented, however, that the students come from a variety of home environments ranging from foster family situations to that of extended families. Residing in single-parent households did not seem to be a dominant characteristic of the population, according to her report. Regarding previous work history, it was reported that almost all, except for the youngest clients, have some form of work experience. This experience, however, is generally characterized as short-term employment with long spells of unemployment.

Participant Success/Failure

Staff agree that the key to participant success at JFY is the individualized attention that client's receive. The staff could not point to any differentials in success rates based on race, sex, previous education or other variables. The client's desire and will were stressed as another major factor in making the JFY experience a positive one.

Those participants who are most likely to succeed are the self-referrals. These are the clients who tend to have the clearest idea of what they want from the experience and are also the most committed to pursuing their objectives. They use the resources that JFY offers very well.

Clients who are not self-referrals are less successful at JFY. These clients often do not want to participate in the program but do so because of some imposed pressure from family or other authority. Many of these students drop out of the program, however, they often return at a later date and achieve successful completion.

The open entry/exit policy of the program allows these youth the option to move at their own pace through the program. If that means they drop out for some time or take self-initiated leaves, that is fine. The staff offers guidance for students making these decisions, but the clients themselves are the ones who decide in the end.

Addressing On The Job Discrimination

There have been some incidents where the students have raised concern about racism on the job in which JFY places them. It is difficult for the staff to know what is really going on. This uncertainty is exacerbated by the fact that JFY's relationship with the employers it uses is very weak. Not only are they not familiar with JFY but neither is JFY familiar with them. There is no mechanism whereby bonding between the placement program and the employer occurs and is nurtured. There was once such a mechanism when the JFY emphasis was on placement. During that time, the program gave

seminars and workshops to employers to teach them how to motivate and manage "problem" workers.

A senior staff person noted,

"We used to have very strong relationships with the employers to which we would send our kids for an interview....They knew who our kids were, we knew who they were, we knew what kind of expectations they had and they knew ours. But that doesn't happen as much nowadays."³¹

So, it is difficult for the staff to intercede when the youth report discrimination and/or other negative things about the work experience because the relationship between the program and the client does not directly accommodate such action. The lack of a clearly identifiable contact who would be responsive to the staff's inquiry is a disadvantage for all involved.

Addressing Discrimination As Part of the JFY Curriculum

During employment workshops and in individual counseling, the agency engages the clients in discussions about discrimination.

"We talk very frankly about racism type issues and how a lot of employers out there who, because you are from Boston, because you live in a neighborhood in Dorchester or Roxbury, because you dropped out of school., etc., will have a certain negative expectation of you."³²

³¹Interview, Janis Peters, Director of Counseling

³²Peters Interview

JFY-Boston's method for addressing this problem is to train their clients such that they do not fulfill negative stereotypical notions in the workplace.

"[W]e try to work with them so they do not fulfill that expectation. For example, you're supposed to be at work at 9:00, be there. You're supposed to dress a certain way, dress that way....We have rules here that we try to enforce [in order to affirm behavior that is expected in the workplace.] We work on how you act when you go on a job interview, what the expectations of the employer are and what their expectations should be, and some of the issues that you are going to encounter."³³

Employment Futures for JFY Clients

In talking to JFY youth, you can learn of the wide ranging hopes and expectations they have of themselves and their education and career futures. Twenty-one year old Mark plans to study Fashion Design at Newbury Junior College. Before leaving JFY Gwen stated that she planned to attend Northeastern University evening classes in the College of Business. Her goal is to work in financial advising. Jacquelyn, who after working 21 months in the same secretarial job placement also worked towards an Associate in Science Degree in Legal Secretarial.

Robert has been working in an intern position, training as a data-entry clerk. His career goal is to become an accountant. Chi Wang has already completed his first year at

³³Peters Interview

the Franklin Institute and is studying Electrical Engineering. He hopes to become a professional in this area. While this is just a sampling of some JFY youth aspirations, this conveys a sense of confidence and hope on the part of the graduates.

JOB DEVELOPMENT

In 1988, the employment department at JFY handled 118 job placements for 96 of its clients and 59 clients entered skill training. Employers placing orders numbered 213, and 1120 jobs were made available to JFY youth. As of April 1989, JFY had already made 19 placements for 11 individual clients. Twelve have entered skill training, 29 have completed the first level of job readiness training and 18 have completed the second phase. There have been 10 clients sent on job interviews.

Occupational Mix of JFY Job Placements

JFY places its clients in entry-level, service positions in the private sector. Job titles include: receptionist, file clerk, counterperson, cashier, data entry, food prep assistant, messenger, and security guard. These jobs are characteristic of those that youth generally assume. JFY does not use public employment opportunities (although it does place clients with public agencies like the IRS, etc.). The

point is that they try to use jobs that reflect real-life work experience.

In the youth development field, it is commonly held that public sector job creation employment opportunities did little to prepare youth for real life work experience because the programs were so poorly administrated. Private sector work experiences are believed to provide a better margin for future client employment success.³⁴

The objective of the employment program is to connect the clients with the labor market and provide support services to help make that connection a positive experience. Vocational counselors have not concerned themselves so much with the notion of "good job" versus "bad job" as they have with helping their clients to adjust to the workplace--its culture and demands.

Employment Criteria

JFY will only place a client in a job after successful completion of the job readiness curriculum. JFY will only accept jobs from employers when the wage offered is \$4.50 or better (the average is \$4.50 to \$5.00), the job is not dangerous, and the workplace is accessible by public

³⁴WAI, p. 41.

transportation. Employers expect a pre-screened worker who is motivated and "ready to do the job."

Job Bank Maintenance

JFY-Boston's employment department has not had to work at finding job placements for its clients. There is a heavy demand in the Greater Boston area for entry-level workers. Employers actively seek out JFY and inquire about using their placement services to fill job vacancies. [Refer to Table 4-2 and accompanying above for volume of services in this area.]

Staying On the Job

Once a client has been placed, JFY staff work with the client to help him\her in any adjustment problems that might come with the school-to-work transition. They also use friendly persuasion to gain as much leeway from employers as possible so that their clients can have a chance to make that adjustment. JFY expects that employers will be willing to give its clients a little extra margin to learn on the job.

No client remains in any single placement for more than six months. Generally, a successful placement lasts for about three months. Then, the client is placed in another job. In the case of negative job terminations, the agency tries to fill the vacancy immediately.

"We try to massage the employers to get as much slack out of them as we can....We try to increase

the margin for err so that if something does go wrong we have some space to work with... when an employer finally says 'Hey, I can't pub up with this!' we say, 'How about we send you another kid?'"³⁵

³⁵Kaplan interview

CHAPTER 5:

Bridges to Opportunity: Does JFY-Boston Have What It Takes To Make The Connection?

In this final chapter, we will evaluate the Jobs For Youth-Boston, Inc. agency to see how well it matches the prototype we constructed in Chapter 3, and in what ways the agency addresses the barriers outlined in Chapter 2: basic skills deficiency, and joblessness. Recommendations and conclusions will be drawn from this examination. To facilitate the analysis, we will go through the items on the prototype "checklist" one at a time.

Target Population

JFY-Boston meets the target population criteria of the model exactly. As the case bears out, the program targets out-of-school and "at-risk" youth, from low-income families, living in the Boston/Cambridge area, and who lack basic skills. In fact, the actual demographics of the 1988 clients could be generally characterized as predominantly Black, male, high school dropouts from poor neighborhoods. Most of them had no more than a high school education and they tended to have no court involvement.

Comprehensive Services

The JFY-Boston program meets the criteria for service type delivery. The program has several components that comprise education, employment, and counseling. The employment module includes training in job search, placement, and readiness. The counseling component includes personal and vocational guidance.

Job Placement

As mentioned above, the JFY-Boston program provides job placement for any "job ready" client. Placement services include informal follow-up counseling with the client to assist with any problems related to working -- adjustment, etc. The placements last no more than six months, three months on the average. Then the client is placed in another job or promoted.

Performance Criteria

The clients are expected to meet certain minimal standards in both employment and education. Before a client is "job ready" s/he must demonstrate to the vocational counselor that s/he has mastered such basic employment skills as interviewing for a job, inquiring about a job, and filling out a job application. With regard to client education, the curricula at JFY-Boston are individually-paced and competency

based academics. Students must demonstrate 61 basic skills in 5 subject areas by passing written exams.

Network of Schools, Employers, and Youth Development Agency

The JFY-Boston program did not demonstrate a strong coalition with area actors. Clearly the agency interacts with the schools and with employers, however this is not accomplished with tri-partite harmony. The relationships are isolated from one another. The agency must work with the schools in order to run its Alternative School, take advantage of elective courses on college campuses, and handle client referrals. The area employers, however, have no direct part in this pact.

In fact, JFY-Boston's relationship with business has been, by staff admittance, lacking in recent years. In the past, the program worked harder to nurture its relationship with employers because jobs were scarce and every new order had a marked impact on the program's progress. In this time of high labor demand, since the agency need not make a case for its clients in the way it once had, the staff seem to concentrate more on counseling and education, leaving job development and employer-agency relationships to fate. Then, when there are problems reported by the client or the employer, the agency is caught in an awkward position because the staff have no existing bond with the employer.

Privatization of Funding

The ratios of private to public funding for the 1986 and 1988 fiscal years were 4:1 and 2.2:1 respectively. These figures demonstrate that the program is not dependent on public funds. Thus the programs finances are more flexible and can withstand a little more turbulence in a rocky macro-economy than it otherwise would be able to if it relied heavily on public monies.

Entry-Level, Private Sector Employment

JFY-Boston's job bank is composed entirely of entry-level, private sector employment opportunities. The job range includes cashier, messenger, receptionist, data entry, security guard, file clerk, etc. None of the jobs requires specialized occupational skills.

Staffing Professionalism and Experience

The case presented the credentials of several key staff and we found that these were "seasoned professionals." Also, interviewing the staff and review of their previous employment experience showed that there was a familiarity with the service delivery area and the agency's clients.

Bridges to Opportunity: A Review of the Evidence

On the whole, this study concludes that, in spite of two noted weaknesses in program design, the JFY-Boston does meet the criteria for successful approaches to basic skill deficiency and joblessness in the youth labor market.

JFY-Boston Weaknesses

There are two weak areas in the program execution of JFY-Boston that merit discussion here: weak agency-employer-schools relationship and lack of client follow-up. The lack of a clearly defined and employed relationship between JFY-Boston, the schools and the local business community may prove to be an impediment to agency success in the long-run. For now, the agency needs to make better attempts to cultivate relationships around job development. Also, the agency could benefit from increasing its emphasis on the employer-agency association during placement. This would smooth the agency's efforts in sustaining client placements because it would foster a working relationship between all involved.

A tri-partite meeting of the schools, employers, and the agency would be new for JFY-Boston. It seems that coordination of needs and resources in would benefit everyone. I encourage the agency's administration to consider this

option, especially in the light of the coalition among youth development agencies it is currently forming.

Another weakness the JFY-Boston program design is that it does not make serious attempts to chart its own progress. The executive director explained that this was both too expensive and irrelevant. He did not feel comfortable with the way policy makers and analysts use numbers to try to close funding for social programs and did not want to give away any ammunition. It is duly noted that the cost of implementing an instrument capable of tracking JFY-Boston's clients would not be negligible by any measure. Still, the usefulness of a client data base for the program should not be underestimated so that it is written off as impractical or undesirable.

It is certainly true that many policists use program statistics like those we are referring to here in order to support arguments that challenge the program's legitimacy. However, such a data base could just as easily be used to support the legitimacy of the program. It is quite prudent for data collectors to concern themselves with how the information they gather can be used, for better and for worse. And one of the points these professionals must stay aware of is that the same set of numbers can be used to tell any number of stories, each conflicting with the other.

This is true of nearly any set of numbers and it is the nature of statistics. A good statistician can make any set of numbers tell a story that s/he has invented in her/his head a priori. So, while the executive director's concern is well taken, it seems to be a little over protective. A data base that charts the post-program activities for the program's graduates would provide valuable information for guiding the programs future design by pointing out what is actually the result of the program's efforts.

The model employed to evaluate JFY-Boston here did not emphasize quantity but those elements that produce quality. The existence of a client follow-up data base need not intimidate administration into believing that it is an instrument to drive the program's numbers up. It can be designed to illuminate quality, it's up to the programmer.

From Barriers to Bridges Through JFY-Boston

Basic Education/Job Readiness

With respect to its education services to Boston youth, the JFY-Boston program is definitely in the right business at the right time. It is not necessarily true that all Black youth need basic skills training, but it does seem critical in Boston that these services be available, due to the exorbitant

dropout rate, the pressures of the given industrial structure, and the labor market competition that is characteristic of the region. Jobs For Youth-Boston is helping some Black youth get the credentials that they desperately need if they are indeed to become productive members of the workforce.

Particularly interesting is the new Alternative High School, founded by the current executive director. This option shows innovation and sensitivity. The program responded to the recognition that the GED was stigmatizing and designed a bridge over that barrier for its clients. The Alternative High School provides everything that any other high school would provide for its students, as evidenced by its curriculum, with the added benefit of smaller class sizes and intensive teacher/student interaction. All of these can make a difference to a disadvantaged Black student, the difference between failure and success.

Joblessness

The importance of labor market attachment cannot be overstated. This scholar believes that the lack of labor force attachment and economic isolation that "underclass" scholars speak about is the key to turning the problem of intergenerational, entrenched poverty around. Thus, the job placement and job counselling provided by Jobs For Youth-Boston, especially when added to education and training, can

bridge the gap between labor force participation and non-participation. If the Black community in the Greater Boston area is to stem the tide of economic obsolescence then getting its youth "to the market" is critical to its economic development.

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