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SEED RESEARCH REPORT

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH YOUTH

How Young People Save Money: Findings from Interviews with SEED Participants

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Saving for Education, Entrepreneurship, and Downpayment (SEED) is a national policy, practice, and research initiative to test the efficacy of progressive, universal children's savings accounts. National SEED partners are CFED, the Center for Social Development, the New America Foundation, the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare, and the Initiative on Financial Security of the Aspen Institute. The Center for Social Development and the University of Kansas plan and implement SEED research with guidance from a Research Advisory Council. Funding for SEED comes from the Ford Foundation, Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation, Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative, Citigroup Foundation, Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, Charles Steward Mott Foundation, Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund, MetLife Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, and the Edwin Gould Foundation for Children.

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Saving for Education, Entrepreneurship, and Downpayment (SEED) is a policy, practice and research initiative to test the efficacy of universal and progressive asset-building accounts for children and youth. National SEED partners are CFED, the Center for Social Development, the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare, the New America Foundation, and the Initiative on Financial Security of the Aspen Institute.

Twelve organizations in the United States and Puerto Rico operate community based children and youth savings programs as part of SEED. The SEED initiative rests in large part on the vision, dedication, and hard work of staff at:

Beyond Housing/NHS, *St. Louis*

Boys and Girls Clubs, *Delaware*

Cherokee Nation, *Oklahoma*

Foundation Communities, *Austin, TX*

Fundacion Chana Goldstein y Samuel Levis, *San Juan, Puerto Rico*

Southern Good Faith Fund, *Arkansas*

Harlem Children's Zone, *New York*

Juma Ventures, *San Francisco*

Mile High United Way, *Denver*

OLHSA, Inc., *Pontiac, MI*

People for People, Inc., *Philadelphia*

Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, *Chicago*

The study discussed in this report involved in-depth interviews with youth participants from Juma Ventures in San Francisco, California. Juma staff contributed a great deal of time and energy to this study. Thirty-three young people participated in the study, and their willingness to share early savings experiences in SEED will be central to the success of the larger initiative.

Edward Scanlon at the University of Kansas (KU) School of Social Welfare is the lead researcher for this study. He developed the interview guide with assistance from other SEED researchers at KU and the Center for Social Development. Margaret Sherraden provided especially important feedback. Christine Robinson, a member of the SEED Research Advisory Council, also provided a particularly helpful review of the interview guide. Data from Margaret Clancy's SEED account monitoring study at the Center for Social Development was essential in drawing the sample of Juma youth to be interviewed. Andrea Buford, Kenneth Dawn, and Jennifer Wheeler Brooks were talented and diligent interviewers.

The SEED initiative is funded by the Ford Foundation, Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation, Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative, Citigroup Foundation, Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, Charles Steward Mott Foundation, Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund, MetLife Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, and the Edwin Gould Foundation for Children.

1. Introduction and Overview

Matched Savings Accounts and the SEED Initiative

Saving for Education, Entrepreneurship, and Downpayment (SEED) is a national policy, practice, and research initiative designed to test the efficacy of universal and progressive accounts for children and youth. Asset-building policies and programs that use matched savings accounts to help people of modest means build resources for long-term social and economic development have emerged in the US and in a number of other countries in recent years, following Sherraden's (1991) proposal for a system of universal accounts opened at birth with progressive funding.

To date, most asset building policies and programs in the US have been designed to help adults save money for developmental goals such as going to college, buying a home, and starting a business. There is a small but growing body of research on asset building initiatives for adults in the US (see, for example, Schreiner, Clancy & Sherraden, 2002; Sherraden, Schreiner & Beverly, 2003; and Sherraden, McBride, Johnson, Hanson, Ssewamala & Shanks, 2005). Far less is known about the efficacy of policies and programs that establish children and youth savings accounts and provide matching deposits. There are universal and progressive children's savings policies and programs emerging in other countries, including the Child Trust Fund in the United Kingdom (HM Treasury, 2003; Paxton, 2003), but SEED is the first systematic effort to create and test matched savings accounts for children and youth in the United States.

One of the more ambitious goals of the SEED initiative is to inform the development of a universal, progressive children's savings account policy in the United States. There are currently twelve community based organizations operating children and youth savings account programs across the country and in Puerto Rico as part of SEED. The first full year of SEED programming was 2004, and the longest-lasting components of the initiative are currently scheduled to end in 2012. Eleven of the twelve community-based organizations are opening 50 to 75 accounts for children or youth, and offering financial education and support services to accountholders and/or their parents. A large, pre-school program is the twelfth SEED site, and the location of a quasi-experiment involving longitudinal research with more than 700 parents of Head Start children.

Three national organizations and two universities are working together to organize, implement, and study SEED with financial support from private foundations. These national partners are CFED, the Center for Social Development at Washington University, the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare, the New America Foundation, and the Initiative on Financial Security of the Aspen Institute.

Researchers from the Center for Social Development at Washington University and the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare are undertaking multi-method research on the SEED initiative. This report focuses on a qualitative study of youth participants who are involved in the SEED program at Juma Ventures in San Francisco. In-depth interviews with youth participants are designed to help provide a richer understanding of the background and savings experiences of young people in an asset-building program, facilitators and obstacles to saving, and perceived effects of program participation.

Research Site

SEED programs are working with children and youth of various ages. Three of the twelve SEED programs are targeting high-school aged youth participants in their asset-building efforts. One of those is Juma Ventures, a social enterprise organization that provides employment training and job coaching for low-income youth in San Francisco, California (What we, 2006). Juma enrolled participants relatively early in the SEED initiative, making it possible to learn early lessons about how young people save money. Other reasons that Juma was selected as the venue for in-depth interviews with youth included their (1) history of smooth program operations including good record keeping, accessible participants, and solid staff-participant relationships (2) participant willingness to engage in lengthy interviews and (3) a SEED population which included a sufficient number of both high and low saving teens to make stratified purposive sampling plausible.

Sample Selection

We conducted interviews for this study in two stages, first piloting the interview guide and data collection process with six participants and then returning to Juma to complete 27 additional interviews. The sample for the pilot study was selected purposively to include relatively high and relatively low savers, based on median savings for SEED participants at Juma. Six months after the start of the program, median savings was $30.15. Those participants who had saved 150 percent of the median were placed in a "high-saver" category, and those saving less than 80 percent of the median were considered "low-savers." Three high saving and three low saving youth were randomly selected to participate in the pilot study. After securing informed consent, five of the six were interviewed. One selected interviewee cancelled his appointment with the researchers, and was replaced by a participant with similar demographic and saving characteristics.

When we returned to Juma to complete interviews, we again stratified the sample and chose respondents with low, median and high levels of saving. Median savings in February 2005 was $48.15, and participants were stratified into three groups which included those making less than 80 percent of the median, those saving 81 to 150 percent of the median, and those saving more than 150 percent of the median. During the interview process when selected youth missed their interviews, substitute respondents with similar characteristics were interviewed instead. The final sample consisted of 13 high savers, 7 median savers, and 10 low savers.

Interviewers and Training Protocol

The interviewing team was led by Dr. Edward Scanlon from the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare. The team also included Andrea Buford, Kenneth Dawn, and Jennifer Wheeler Brooks, who all hold graduate degrees in social work. Ms. Buford and

Mr. Dawn have many years of experience working with children in social service settings and are currently employed at Swope Health Center, a community health center in urban Kansas City, Missouri. Jennifer Wheeler Brooks is a doctoral student at the University of Kansas and a graduate research assistant working on various SEED studies at KU. She has a social work practice background in child welfare. The in-depth interview team was selected for their interest in qualitative research methods, skills in interviewing, and experience with children and youth.

The interview team was trained at the University of Kansas Edwards Campus in January 2005. In training, we reviewed basic interviewing skills associated with the use of interview guides and open-ended questions, and provided an orientation to the purpose and structure of the SEED initiative. Interview topics were reviewed and the theoretical reasoning behind their inclusion was discussed. The interview guide was reviewed in detail, and team members were able to ask clarifying questions to enhance their understanding of the intent of each topic and item to be covered in the interviews.

Interview Protocol

Pilot interviews were conducted in November 2004. After the six audio taped interviews were completed and transcribed: (1) names of the youth were changed to protect identities for the purposes of reporting and (2) minor modifications were made to the interview guide in preparation for use in the remaining interviews with Juma youth. These modifications were guided by youth reactions to questions during the pilot interviews, and involved re-wording some questions and phrases for greater clarity and adding a few new prompts to help interviewers handle potentially difficult interview topics. The modified guide was used in subsequent in-depth interviews with 27 additional SEED participants at Juma in February 2005. Of those interviews, three were eliminated from the sample because of very poor audio-tape quality, and 24 were able to be transcribed. Our final sample, then, included a total of 30 young people who were participants in the SEED program at Juma Ventures.

Interview Topics and Format

An in-depth interview guide was developed that concentrated on six main topics: (1) the background and financial experiences of youth and their families (2) facilitators of, and barriers to, saving in SEED (3) perceptions of the savings program (4) savings patterns (5) perceived effects of saving and program participation and (6) goals and plans for the future. The guide included suggested questions in each topic area, but interviewers were given latitude to deviate from the guide when it would enhance the quality or depth of the conversation. Thus, the specific follow up questions and probes were unique to each interview in the tradition of qualitative inquiry.

Twenty-five of the interviews with youth were conducted at the Juma offices in San Francisco's financial district. The other five interviews took place at Burton High School, one of the organizations that referred participants to the Juma SEED program. Interviews lasted from 45 to 90 minutes, and were audio recorded. Parental consent forms were obtained when respondents were under 18 years old, and respondents received $35 to thank them for the time it took to participate in the study. The interviewers had access to basic demographic information and SEED savings histories for each youth they interviewed. This data helped guide certain aspects of the interview, making it possible for interviewers to choose the most appropriate follow-up questions and probes given the individual circumstances of each respondent.

Data Analysis

It has become conventional to analyze qualitative materials using software programs that help to code and organize the voluminous data that is gathered through in-depth interviews. We used the qualitative software program ATLAS.ti in data analysis. Following transcription of the audio taped interviews, the data was entered into ATLAS.ti. Some additional data were enumerated and entered into an EXCEL spreadsheet for descriptive reporting.

Qualitative data are coded by themes. In order to accomplish this, we began with a set of deductive coding categories based upon savings theory, asset effects theory, and findings from earlier case studies of matched savings programs. We coded the transcripts line by line using an open coding technique to develop additional codes in an inductive manner as we analyzed the data. This process transformed the original code list in an iterative manner. Two researchers who had been on the interview team worked together on coding themes so that inter-rater reliability could be assessed regularly. The lead researcher developed the thematic categories working deductively and inductively at different times. The second analyst did not construct new codes, but worked from the coding list of the lead researcher. The lead researcher read all of the interviews and cleaned the coded data, eliminating those codes that were not applied to any narrative data, and merging duplicative codes. Throughout data analysis, the researchers worked together to assess reliability in their identification of themes, coding, and interpretations.

Groups of codes that are related conceptually, and respondent characteristics that are shared, are sometimes referred to as “families” in qualitative analysis. We developed families of codes that collectively addressed key questions and concepts. Respondent families were also developed which linked high and moderate saving respondents in one family, and low saving respondents in another family. For major conceptual questions, matrices were developed to aid in analysis. The matrices allow for ideas to be developed inductively and to help organize explanatory frameworks. At other points, theoretical frameworks, such as Sherraden’s (1991) theory of asset effects, helped to guide the analysis. This report, then, reflects understandings derived deductively from theoretical concepts. However, by using inductive reasoning to analyze narrative data that didn’t fit existing theory, we also developed new ideas about saving patterns and effects among young people.

Organization of Report

Section two of this report provides information about the respondents, including age, gender, racial and ethnic background, parental occupation, family structure, educational levels, income level, and employment status. Distributions and frequencies of this demographic background information are summarized in the text and in tables. Qualitative data about the respondents' families of origins, as well as their neighborhood and housing experiences, are also included in this section. In section three, we focus on youth saving patterns, comparing the experiences of moderate to high savers with low savers. Factors that facilitate saving and those which create barriers to saving are presented. Section four is concerned with youth experiences of the SEED program itself, and the features of program and account design that youth perceive positively and negatively. Section five summarizes the findings of the report, and makes a set of policy and practice recommendations designed to enhance youth savings. Particular attention is paid to constructing policy and practice solutions that might assist those youth who had the most difficulty saving.

2. The Respondents

This section describes characteristics and background information regarding study participants. We provide information regarding their demographic characteristics, parental employment and educational attainment, household structure, and family asset ownership in order to paint a clear picture of the familial and socio-economic circumstances of young people in this study. The quantitative data reported in this section comes from agency records, and includes information from the management information system (MIS IDA) used by Juma and most of the other programs in the SEED initiative to facilitate and monitor participant savings. Qualitative data is also reported in this section in order to provide background information about issues such as participant housing and neighborhood circumstances, family interactions and dynamics, and messages about savings that participants heard during childhood. A table of each of the respondent's names and relevant demographic characteristics can be found in the appendix.

Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

Table 2.1 provides an overview of demographic characteristics of SEED participants who were interviewed for this study. The respondents were primarily female (67%) with a mean age of 17.9 years. The majority of participants in this study (72%) were still enrolled in high school. Respondents were overwhelmingly people of color, with 36.7 percent identifying as Latino or Hispanic, followed by Asian and Pacific Islanders (30%), African Americans (23.3%), and Caucasians (10%). The mean household monthly income was $2,924, which is equivalent to $35,079 annually. This compares to a mean annual household income in 2004 in San Francisco County of $84,130.

Demographic characteristics of participants differed by savings level. High savers were those participants who had saved more than $72.22 after 6 months of participation in the program, or 150 percent of the median which was $48.15. Thirteen of the 30 participants interviewed were high savers. The high savers were predominantly female (69.26%). The mean age of high saving respondents was 17.5, slightly younger than the overall sample of respondents. Turning to race and ethnicity, most of the high savers in this sample were Asian and Pacific Islanders (53.8%) or Caucasian (23.1%). All three of the Caucasian respondents in this study were high savers. By comparison, one of the seven African American respondents and two of the 11 Latino respondents were high savers. The mean household monthly income for high savers was $3,672, a slightly higher mean household income than the full sample mean.

Moderate savers were those participants who had saved between $38.53 and $72.21 after 6 months of participation in the program, or between 80 and 150 percent of the median savings of $48.15. Seven of the young people who were interviewed were moderate savers. Male respondents comprised 57.1 percent of moderate savers, and the mean age for this group was 17.9 years, the same as for the overall sample. African Americans and Latino/Hispanic respondents comprised 85.7% of this group. The mean household monthly income was $2,443 for the moderate savers, a lower mean household income than the mean for the full sample.

Table 2.1 Demographic Characteristics of SEED Youth (n=30)

Gender	
Female	20 (67%)
Male	10 (33%)
Age	
15	1
16	5
17	6
18	12
19	5
20	1
Mean Age	17.9
Educational Level	
High School Student	24
High School Graduate/No College or Univ.	3
College/Univ. Student	3
Race/Ethnicity	
Asian American	9
Latino/Hispanic	11
White Caucasian	3
African American	7
Household Income	
0-$1,000	2
$1001-$2000	10
$2001-$3000	11
$3001-$4000	4
$4001-$5000	2
$5001-$6666	1
Mean Household Income	$2,924

Low savers were those participants who had saved less than $38.52 after 6 months of participation in the program, or less than 80 percent of the median savings of $48.15. Ten of the 30 SEED participants interviewed were low savers. Low savers were predominantly female (80%), with a mean age of 17.6 years. Nine of the ten low savers in this sample were African American or Latino/Hispanic. The mean household monthly income among low savers was $2,289, lower than the mean for the overall sample.

Selected Characteristics of Youths' Families of Origin

Data on parents and caregivers of SEED participants, as well as other family characteristics, were available through the Juma participant data base. Because the agency data base is not completely standardized, we worked with the records carefully and developed categories for the purposes of reporting family characteristics. One such characteristic is household structure, which we categorize as extended family households, two parent households, single parent households, foster households, and residential care facilities.

Table 2.2 provides information on SEED respondents' household structures. Six respondents (20%) lived with extended family, which included co-residence with aunts, uncles, grandmothers, cousins, and close family friends. Fourteen respondents (46.6%) lived with two parents, while eight respondents (26.6%) lived in single parent households. One youth was in foster care, living with his best friend and his friend's grandmother. Another respondent lived in a group home setting, following multiple foster care placements.

Table 2.2 Household Structure of SEED Respondents (n=30)

Household Structure	
Extended Family	6 (20%)
Two parent family	14 (46.6%)
Single Parent Family	8 (26.6%)
Foster Care	1 (.33%)
Residential Care	1 (.33%)

Table 2.3 provides information on the number of adults residing in SEED participants' households. Most of the youth who participated in this study lived in households with one or two adults (22 of 30). One respondent had seven adults in the household, which included parents, grandparents, siblings, a sibling's spouse, and a non-custodial parent and her new family. Households with three and four adults typically included parents, grandparents, and adult siblings. The compositions of two-adult households varied a great deal, and often included grandparents, aunts, and uncles. Single adult households were typically single parent households, although the youth residing in a group home identified only one adult in the household, likely the house manager.

Table 2.3 Number of Adults in Household (n=30)

Number of Adults	
7 adults	1
4 adults	1
3 adults	6
2 adults	14
1 adult	8

Table 2.4 provides information on the educational attainment of parents and caregivers. Seven of the respondents provided no data on the educational experiences of their parents or caregivers. The other 23 SEED participants in this study had 45 caregivers in total. Seventeen of the 45 caregivers had less than a high school education, either not attending school at all or leaving school prior to completion of high school. Eleven additional caregivers had attended some college. The remaining 17 caregivers of SEED participants in this study had completed post secondary vocational training programs (in areas such as electronics, cosmetology, and photography), college, or graduate school.

Table 2.4 Parent and Caregiver Educational Attainment (n=45)

Educational Attainment	
No school	2
Elementary	5
Middle School	4
High School	6
Some College	11
College	8
Grad School	1
Vocational Training	8

Table 2.5 provides information on caregiver occupations. One SEED participant who was interviewed as part of this study had provided no occupational information. The other 29 respondents provided occupational information for 50 caregivers in total. The caregivers, overall, were employed in relatively low paying jobs, with the exception of one professionally trained teacher, a police officer, and several who worked in the construction industry or in trades such as plumbing and electronics.

Table 2.5 Caregiver Occupations (n=50)

Occupation	
Clerical	9
Retail	5
Janitorial/Housekeeping	4
Service Industry	7
Manufacturing	3
Food Service	3
Construction	1
Trade	4
Business Owner	2
Education	1
Health Care	2
Law Enforcement	1
Retired	1
Unemployed	3
Disabled	4

Table 2.6 provides information on household asset holding for the SEED participants interviewed. One respondent provided no information on household asset holding. Most of the other 29 households held checking accounts (n=28) and savings accounts (n=25). Twenty-three households had health insurance for at least some members, and someone in more than half of the households owned an automobile (n=18). Less than half of the respondents reported life insurance policies covering anyone in their households. Turning to homeownership, fewer than a third of the respondents lived in owner occupied homes (n=9). Finally, a very small number of SEED respondents had household members who had investments (n=3), businesses (n=2), or rental property (n=1).

Table 2.6 Assets in SEED Participant Households (n=29)

Household Assets	
Home	9
Rental Property	1
Car	18
Business	2
Investment	3
Checking	28
Savings	25
Life Insurance	13
Health Insurance	23

Navigating Hard Times: Family Financial Struggles for SEED Participants

Talking with youth about family finances was one of the most difficult parts of the interviews in this study. The research team had only one interview session with each youth. The length of these sessions gave us time to establish rapport for many topics, but more sensitive topics such as family finances seemed difficult for a number of the SEED participants we interviewed. Respondents seemed eager to cast their families in a positive light, and hesitant to share financial information. It may be that some SEED youth feel as though they are betraying their parents if they discuss financial problems. In addition, many of the youth in the sample are the children of immigrants and may come from cultural backgrounds where sharing household information is discouraged or seen as impolite. Further, many of the SEED participants we interviewed likely lack an adequate picture of their parent's finances because of their youth itself and / or the desire of many parents to protect their children from monetary worries. Thus our conversations with youth about family finances may represent an overly optimistic picture of actual circumstances. Still, some useful information emerged from these conversations.

The SEED participants we interviewed described the financial circumstances of their families in one of four ways. One group of youth reported that their families did well financially and that they could not recall any financial problems. A second group reported financial difficulties experienced when they were young children, but thought that their present circumstances were much better. A third group reported continuing difficulties with making ends meet. Interestingly, the final group responded to our questions about facing hard financial times with stories of illness, death, divorce, and even physical and sexual abuse that occurred in their families of origin.

There were seven respondents who did not think their families faced extraordinary financial difficulties. These youth reported that, while their family may have struggled to pay a bill on occasion, they never experienced their situations as dire or felt financially deprived. This group typically made comments such as "things are fine, we have what we need" or "from what I've seen, there wasn't much difficulty or times we needed extra help." If their families faced financial difficulties, they were unaware of them. Given the data from agency records about household income and caregiver educational and occupational status, it is possible that some parents shielded their children from difficult financial circumstances.

A second group of respondents (n=12) could recall financial difficulties but did not think their families were currently struggling with such issues. For this group, financial problems were recollections from their early childhoods, or stories their parents had told them. They frequently could recall financial setbacks following unemployment or divorce, or remembered a time when their families had to utilize public benefits such as welfare, food stamps, or Medicaid. Amy reflected on her family's lot after her parents divorced several years earlier:

> When my parents divorced…my dad wasn't paying child support, so she was selling stuff like jewelry…And then our grandpa helped us out and she started substitute teaching and then suddenly one of the jobs wanted her to stay so she got more credentials. And then after that we were a lot more stable.

DeAndre, who was 18 years old at the time of the interview, also recalled his family facing hard times a few years earlier. As with Amy, the hardship was related to a specific life stressor. In his case, financial distress was secondary to his mother's illness, and the stress resulted in his decision to engage in illegal activities to secure family income:

> It was way back when I was like in the 8th grade, times did get hard, or like when my mom had maybe moved in with my god-dad and times were getting hard…she got real sick and couldn't work so times was getting hard. My little sister moved from a big house to a smaller house and she was doing bad. My sister couldn't get no school clothes. I did some illegal things to get the money, but all the money I got from the illegal days, I gave it all to my mom. Because I didn't need it. I was with my dad. So, I didn't keep none of it, I gave it all to her.

The third group included ten respondents who were aware of current financial difficulties facing their families. These respondents spoke of difficulties in making ends meet, paying for school expenses, and financial stresses secondary to medical problems or marital disruptions. Often times, the interviewers could hear the frustration and concern in respondents' voices as they shared their stories. Hong, age 19, discussed how immigration and language barriers have impacted her family's finances, resulting in stress felt by the entire family:

> Of course it is easier in China because, if you are a teacher, you make more money than you can make working here. I don't know … my parents don't speak much English so they can only find jobs at the Chinese stores. It is harder to compete with other immigrants.

Rosio was painfully aware of changes in her family's financial fortunes following her father's loss of a good job. The job loss had created strain in her parents' marriage as well. Rosio noted:

> Well, ever since my dad got laid off, it was a lot harder because he made a lot less. …right now he's looking, cause like then he was like, oh, I'm going out to find a job. So he's trying to find a better job because my mom, she can complain a lot, and she's like, when they get into arguments or whatever, they like talk about, oh, I pay for this, it's your turn. So he's out there looking for more. I think before we had…everything we needed. I wasn't really spoiled or anything, we were asking for what we wanted. So she thinks he's not working as at high a paying a job as he could because he used to work at the stock exchange.

A final group of five SEED participants responded to questions about family finances with stories of deaths, immigration, violence, divorce, and illness which caused monetary resources to be strained. These stories were sometimes recounted tearfully. In the midst of all of this loss and pain, however, SEED youth also told stories of strength and resilience. For example, when LeSean shared his story of his grandmother's death, his own resiliency in recovering was apparent:

> …and like all her organs just shut down. With all that shutting down, it was pretty much over and after that she died. She was in the hospital for, she was in that particular room in ICU for like 38 days, so it was well over a month before she actually died after she was admitted to the hospital… I learned how to…pray and all that. My family is real big on that. My grandma raised us to always pray because if it's going good or going bad, stay focused on God. I just live through them. Like everybody…I feel like my life wasn't that difficult, so you know, I have a lot to live up to, a lot of good times to live up to. I got a lot of good friends too. My girlfriend is very supportive.

The hard times experienced by SEED youth are not surprising given the low levels of income and assets in their families. The data presented here paint a picture of families, many of whom are immigrants and first generation citizens, struggling with relatively low-wage work in the context of one of the most expensive cities in the US. The high cost of housing in the Bay Area amplifies this struggle, so it is not surprising that we found low levels of homeownership, and a large number of SEED caregivers who dream of someday owning a home and seeing their children succeed economically.

Parental and Caregiver Messages about Saving

Most of the respondents reported receiving strong messages about saving from their parents. Many of the SEED participants in this study had parents who had immigrated to the US and had faced tough financial struggles. Given these circumstances, parents were often extremely focused on the need for assets to cushion financial blows and to help pay for education so that life for their children would be easier. The parental messages seemed to have urgency to them, reflecting concern about the financial obstacles their children might face. The youth we interviewed responded to our questions about parental encouragement to save by giving examples of comments parents made, requirements for saving they had, and saving mechanisms such as "piggy banks" or formal savings accounts they provided. Several respondents noted that their parents reinforced saving through their own example of regularly putting money away. More than half of the youth we interviewed (n=16) reported that their parents or caregivers gave clear and unqualified messages that saving is important.

One example of such a message came from our interview with Fernando, the 18year old son of El Salvadoran immigrants who said:

> My mom would always tell me to save my birthday money, so when I need it for some good reason, then I could take it out and I'd have it right there with me … instead of spending it on junk or things I don't need…

The SEED participants we interviewed gave a number of similar examples of messages from parents that saving would be useful for future expenditures that youth might value more than impulsive or frivolous purchases now.

Youth also reported that their parents encouraged saving, not just for future expenditures but also to help them develop good habits of thrift. As one participant said, "…they just wanted me to save for saving's sake." For many of the respondents, these kinds of parental messages made sense. In fact, a number of the youth we interviewed discussed how their parents taught them to save and indicated that they wanted to pass the same messages of thrift onto their own children someday. Rosio put it this way when discussing her mother's messages about and demonstration of regularly saving:

> Yeah, it was a good example because, like, I know that when I get older and if I have kids, I'm going to do the same with them because it's for a good reason and also it's just…it's a good example to have.

A smaller number of youth reported not hearing any messages about saving from their parents. In response to follow-up prompts, these SEED participants indicated that their parents/caregivers never mentioned savings, bought them piggy banks, opened savings accounts for them, or showed them how to save regularly. Farah, a 19 year old, who emigrated from South Asia four years ago with her parents, said that in her culture savings wasn't emphasized, especially for girls:

> No. We didn't even talk about this stuff in Pakistan. When you got married you got into a home and stuff, then you start talking about this whole thing...

A final group discussed parental messages about savings in complex ways that reflected feelings of pain and frustration. Some of these youth received mixed messages, either by having only one parent tell them to save, while the other ignored the topic, or by having messages of savings undermined by the lack of resources. Basic daily expenses kept their parents from helping them save, or their own expenses made such actions impossible. Johnny said plaintively of his mother: "She told me to save but where do I get the money to save?" Manny echoed this sentiment about his family's struggle with saving:

> To tell you the truth, any money that comes in, it would go right back out, just on living. So why save money if we're struggling? If we don't have food to eat, why have money just sitting in the bank? Know what I mean?

For other SEED participants in this group, conflict with parents undermined any messages they may have been hearing about saving. For example, some youth reported that while their parents told them to save, they didn't *require* them to, and their own youthful impulsiveness made it difficult to keep money for any length of time. These participants reported breaking open their piggy banks their parents gave them to spend money on candy or food, or arguing with their parents about their savings until they were allowed to purchase consumer items. One youth reminded us that "it's easy to take the bottom off a piggy bank," and another shared, with some embarrassment, that she found ways to spend her savings against her mother's advice:

> She'd tell me you better save it because if you want to buy shoes, you're going to have to buy them with that money because I can't give you…stuff like that. Or I'd be, like, "I have money; I'm going to go buy some clothes." And she'd tell me not to do it and she'd get mad. But if I kept insisting, she'd be, like, "Do whatever you want."

Mixed messages from parents, and conflict with them, about saving emerged from interviews with several of the SEED participants we interviewed. Perhaps this should not be a surprise, given the limited household resources and related family struggles. The fact that more than half of the youth in this study reported clear and positive messages at home about the importance of saving was, in many ways, more surprising, and very consistent with SEED participant reports of parent and caregiver goals for the future.

Parent and Caregiver Goals

Dreams and aspirations of family members were relatively easy for SEED participants in this study to identify, despite the hard financial conditions facing many of their households. The interviews included some questions such as "Do your parents ever talk of owning things in the future" and "What goals do your parents have?" In response, only a small group of SEED participants said that their parents did not speak at all of hopes for the future. Most respondents were able to describe caregiver's plans for the future, which often focused on aspirations and hopes for their children, or on the purchase of a home, business, or durable consumer items. Finally, other SEED participants spoke of their parent's dreams, which they saw as unrealistic given financial struggles and related realities of their families' lives.

A few respondents addressed our questions about whether their parents or caregivers had any hopes or dreams for the future with short, pithy responses of "no" or "not that I know of." Follow up probes failed to yield more detail on this topic from these youth. It's possible that parents in these cases are so involved in making ends meet on a day-to-day basis that they are unable to think about the future in the context of surviving on a low income household budget. It's also quite possible that these SEED participants are not aware of their parents' hopes and aspirations.

Respondents in a second group were cognizant of their parent's financial goals, and reported that they had high aspirations for the future which were typically (1) to become homeowners or, at least, to move to a better neighborhood (2) to save for their children's futures or (3) to purchase a business or some other kind of investment.

Buying a home was a central parental goal, and was often associated with the desire to live in a different neighborhood. Ten of the SEED participants we interviewed spoke of hearing their parents talk about owning a home, owning a bigger home, or moving to a more desirable neighborhood. Amy's mother currently rents, but dreams of moving to her own home:

> Right now she and her boyfriend are actually saving money so they can buy a house because she doesn't want to live in Excelsior anymore, and they want to have a house big enough for me and his three kids.

Gerald's mother had already achieved the goal of homeownership, but now desired to "trade up" and buy a larger house. Gerald said:

> She always talks about buying a bigger house. Like when we lived in Oakland in an apartment, she was talking about buying a house because we didn't have a house. So we moved out to Richmond at our house and now she wants to get a bigger house. So we've been working on that for, like, the past five years.

Other respondents perceive that their parents are forgoing their own dreams in order to help their children have brighter futures. These SEED participants told us that their parents were saving, but that their goals and hopes were for their children to go to college and have employment experiences that were more lucrative and satisfying than their own. Terry, the 17 year son of Chinese immigrants, stated that his parents had no goals for themselves except to help him get through college. After that, his parents plan to return to China. Farah similarly told us her father was putting her educational needs above his desire for homeownership:

> The only goal I heard from him is "see his kids have a better education." He said, "the only goal I have is to see you kids in a good place, that is what I am aiming for. But a house … I can afford a house right now, but I don't want to because a lot of expenses. Rather I put on you guys, so in the long run I will get something."

A third group of youth reported that adults in their lives spoke of opening businesses or changing careers when they discussed goals for the future. Some of their parents wanted to open stores or purchase investment property, while others had desires to start new careers in fields such as nursing or cosmetology. Andy told us:

> My mom has a lot of plans. For instance, she plans to buy a lot of property in the Philippines, like apartments and that, so, like, when she retires and goes back to the Philippines, she will have something to make money on. She is planning and thinking about 12 years from now. She is also planning to buy a house somewhere, not far away from San Francisco…

Rosio, a Mexican immigrant whose parents had no formal education, also spoke of her father's desire to own his own business:

> My dad probably would wish in the future to like have his own bakery again, like he did, since he has been baking since he was, like, eleven. And that's probably what he would like to have in the future.

SEED participants in the remaining group were aware of their parent's hopes, but didn't seem particularly confident that those hopes were realistic. These respondents seemed, at times, somewhat sad or worried about their parents as they discussed their goals and dreams for the future. Kim told an especially poignant tale about her mother, suggesting that while she has dreams, she has never had the time or ability to make them happen:

> I know she wants to do things with herself in life. Exactly what, I don't know because I can't say that she has taken the time to stop and think about what it is she wants to do in life. But at the same time I think she still needs to find herself and find, you know, what does she think she's good at? You know? … I think she wants to go into cosmetology and probably own her own hair salon or something like that. But that's just a thought, you know? I mean, I have all different types of things that I want to do, but I think she's still at the point where she's finding herself and finding out what she's good at and what she likes and what she may want to do.

Similarly, some respondents indicated that homeownership was a goal that was out of reach for their parents. Inez believes her mom would like to own a home but that she perceives housing costs in San Francisco as making this implausible:

> Well, yeah, they're like, "When I win the lottery"…but my mom is, like, "Oh I'd like to…move to another home." She wanted to move to Sacramento and the main reason we didn't move is I was, like, "Well, we should all finish school first, you know, and then move away. She'll talk about it, and I take her seriously but not as serious as…it just seems like something you're wishing for rather than trying for…. I don't mean like she's not doing anything. It just seems, like, you know, she goes, "Oh, I could win the lottery," that kind of thing, but it doesn't seem like she'll…like she wants to but she can't really want to do it because of what's holding us back.

Despite the financial difficulties for many families, SEED participants we interviewed were generally able to identify dreams, goals and aspirations of their parents and caregivers. Only a few respondents said that their parents did not speak at all of hopes for the future. Most respondents reported that parents were focused on making sure that their children's lives were financially more secure than their own. Other common hopes and dreams were to become homeowners, business owners, or investors. Some SEED participants said that their parents' goals for the future seemed unlikely to be achieved because of their financial struggles.

Housing and Neighborhood Contexts

SEED participants at Juma were asked about their perceptions of the housing they occupy and the neighborhood contexts in which they live. In this part of the interview, youth talked about frequent moves (n=5), the size and space of housing units (n=3), neighborhood safety and crime (n=29), neighborhood noise levels (n=5), access to amenities (n=2), the ethnicity and racial background of neighbors (n=3), and the quality of relationships with neighbors (n=8). About half of the respondents overall found their housing and neighborhoods desirable, while the other half were less satisfied with their living conditions. In this report, we focus on the two most common themes, which were crime and safety, and the quality of relationships with neighbors.

Almost all of the respondents discussed their perceptions of crime, violence and safety in their neighborhoods. Those satisfied with their neighborhoods were likely to mention that they felt safe, that crime rates were low, or that they were exposed to little violence. Conversely, those less satisfied had concerns about their exposure to crime and violence. Kim told us:

> I mean people shoot all the time. And now, people not trying to just do a drive-by at nighttime, they shooting people in broad daylight, you know? I mean you never know when you may be sitting off by the bus stop and get hit by a stray bullet. You know, I mean, for the most part I live, like, I just mind my own business and stay to myself, and I try to stay away from trouble and people who are involved in it. But at the same time, it's either guilty by association or you're at the wrong place at the wrong time, you know?

Other youth discussed the violence in their neighborhoods but, while acknowledging high crime levels, offered the caveat that "it's all what you're used to." For them, the violence is moderated by knowing neighbors. Some of the SEED participants we interviewed also understood that outsiders might view their neighborhoods as dangerous, but indicated that insiders had a higher comfort level. Consider the following comment by Manny:

> Would it be safe for other people? ... like, we live there. That's how it is everywhere. Say you go to Hunter's Point; people are scared to go there. But people that live there, it's, like, "Whatever, I see this every day." I live in the Tenderloin right now, and everybody's like, "It's bad." But I live there, and it's …whatever. I know everybody. It's just how it is.

This theme of knowing neighbors and being comfortable with the people who live in one's neighborhood emerged from respondents' explanations of how they coped with violence. It also emerged from discussions of why youth liked their homes and surroundings. SEED participants discussed both good and bad relationships with neighbors as a factor in their satisfaction with their communities. Niesha explained to us how knowing people helped her feel safe in a violent environment:

> I went outside more because I had a lot of cousins around there. All my cousins was older than me, so they were looking out for me. And it seems better, you know, even though people still get hurt and, you know, shot and all that. It's still a lot of violence, but then again I know some people. Like if I was stuck somewhere, I could go talk to the house down the street. You know, if I'm locked out or it's raining, or I'm hurt, I have somebody to call and I feel comfortable.

The benefits of "having good neighbors" was echoed by Lucy:

> Yeah. They were so nice that, I don't know … it was during the winter, our heater broke and it was like snowing there, and then we had to find someone to fix our heater but we didn't want it too expensive, right? And then we go to our neighbor and see if he knows anybody who can fix it, right? Yeah, they just help us. And this one time, the shower got something, I don't know, something going wrong with the shower, and then, another neighbor come up and they help us to fix the shower.

The importance of relationships with neighbors was compounded for some respondents who felt comfortable and happy in their neighborhoods because they lived near extended family. Several SEED participants spoke positively about living near grandparents, aunts, and cousins. Juanita lives on a block with many of her extended family, which contributes to a sense of security:

> Oh, we live in Excelsior District. It's nice. It's calm. It's safe. I mean, for me I feel like it's safe because I can just walk, you know, from one corner to another, my grandma lives right there and I can just walk at night without having to worry.

In this section, we've used a combination of quantitative and qualitative data to provide a profile of the families and neighborhoods of SEED participants in the study. The picture that emerges suggests that many SEED youth face challenges in saving due to the relatively low levels of education, income, and asset holding of their primary caregivers. Moreover, many SEED youth face deleterious family and neighborhood circumstances marked by exposure to violence, frequent moves, and low levels of homeownership. Still, the majority of SEED participants we interviewed have parents and caregivers who encourage their children to save and work to help them achieve greater economic security. In the next section, we examine factors that facilitate saving among SEED youth, as well as factors that appear to hinder their asset accumulation efforts.

SEED Participants, Their Families and Their Neighborhoods:
Summary of Key Findings

- ✓ Thirty young people who are participating in SEED at Juma Ventures were interviewed about their experiences in the matched saving program.
- ✓ Thirteen of the 30 were relatively high savers. Most of these youth are Caucasian or Asian. As a group, their family incomes are about 30 percent higher than the average income of all SEED participants' families.
- ✓ Ten of the 30 SEED participants interviewed were relatively low savers. Most of the youth in this group are African American or Hispanic. The average family income for this group of SEED participants is about 30 percent lower that the overall average family income of youth in the study.
- ✓ Two-thirds of the SEED youth in this study live in either two-parent or extended family households.
- ✓ The number of adults in SEED households ranged from 1 to7, with an average of 2.2 adults per household.
- ✓ More than half of the parents and caregivers of SEED youth had completed high school or higher education. Almost one third had completed vocational school, college, or graduate school.
- ✓ Most of the parents and caregivers of SEED participants work in lower paying clerical, housekeeping, food service or retail occupations.
- ✓ The majority of families of SEED participants have access to banking services and health insurance, but only 33 percent are homeowners and only 10 percent report other assets beyond savings accounts.
- ✓ The majority of the young people in this study were encouraged to save as children, but many were unable to do so before SEED because they had day-to-day expenses and minimal resources.
- ✓ Despite difficult financial realities, most of the SEED participants in this study said that their parents had hopes and dreams for the future. Their goals were often to own a home and to help their children become economically secure.
- ✓ Many of the respondents viewed their neighborhoods as dangerous or otherwise problematic, but the neighborhoods were tolerable because of the presence of family or friendly neighbors who increased feelings of safety among SEED participants.

3. Saving Barriers and Facilitators for Youth

A central goal of the in-depth interviews was to explore youths' perceptions of factors that aided them in saving money, and factors that proved to be barriers to successful saving. The questions and topics we included in the interviews on barriers and facilitators were largely drawn from prior theoretical and empirical work on saving, yet our discussions with SEED youth were unstructured enough to allow respondents to guide us through their stories to a deeper understanding of their saving experiences.   Interviewing about these topics was a nuanced process, since we had to be careful to ask about barriers without increasing defensiveness among the respondents or creating an atmosphere in which the youth felt that their savings performance was being judged.

Approaching these topics carefully appears to have helped SEED participants talk fairly openly about saving barriers and facilitators. The respondents were quite forthcoming in sharing their experiences with saving. Our analysis of data from the interviews on these topics suggests that barriers can be categorized as employment related and consumption related. Facilitators can be categorized as institutional factors, individual factors, and caregiver factors.

Employment Related Barriers to Saving

Juma Ventures operates concessions in the Bay Area's stadiums, and a number of young people associated with the agency have jobs selling food in the stands and from kiosks. As youth gain experience, some move into management positions and take on responsibilities such as training new workers, scheduling and supervising other youth, ordering supplies, and tracking inventory. The employment and training focus of the agency makes it an ideal setting for asset-building initiatives like SEED. Jobs give young people the opportunity to save for the future.

In this context, it may seem surprising that the most common barriers to saving for Juma youth are related to employment. Some SEED participants we interviewed were not involved in employment and training activities through the agency, and those who were part of the Juma youth employment program had seasonal work. Youth also reported limited formal employment hours and unreliable informal employment. Overall, a main message on barriers to saving from the youth in this study was that saving was difficult because of unemployment, seasonal or temporary employment, limited work hours, and informal jobs that offered unreliable income. This lack of a reliable income streams makes depositing difficult, especially for SEED participants whose families face especially difficult financial circumstances.

Lack of employment emerged from these interviews as a central barrier to saving.   Youth savings comes primarily from earned income for many of the SEED participants in this study. A number of respondents said that they would be able to save if they had jobs, or that they had saved until they lost jobs. For low saving youth especially, finding employment was cited as the thing that would most help them begin saving. When asked was she could do to begin putting more into her SEED account, Lucy replied:

> Maybe have a job, like for the summer…It would be the easiest way. Yeah, you could earn a lot from a job.

Further, Lucy said that she only wanted to work during the summer so that she would be able to focus on her studies during the school year. Even though postponing employment meant that she would be able to save less, she still felt that it was a better investment for her future: "I would rather spend my time trying to write an essay for a scholarship than just obtaining a job." Similarly, Ann, who was not employed at the time of the interview, said that it was her preference not to work while in school.

> I don't really want to work over the school year because I want to concentrate on school and, like, my life ahead. I don't just want to, like, concentrate on the here and now. I want to concentrate on the here and now *and* the future.

Obtaining an education was Ann's primary goal which, for her, meant forgoing employment that might interfere with her schoolwork. Significantly, she is one of a number of high saving youth who have made this decision and yet are still able to save in their SEED accounts. On average, these youth receive considerably more financial support from adults in their lives than do low or middle savers, and this support allows them to make decisions about employment, spending, and saving that are not possible for other youth. More disenfranchised youth are often not realistically able to consider whether it is in their best interests to take time away from academic pursuits for employment opportunities that may benefit them less in the long run.

Episodic employment is a second employment related barrier that SEED participants discussed in their interviews. Many respondents have summer jobs, seasonal jobs like working concessions at the stadiums and political canvassing, or informal jobs including babysitting, yard work, or hair braiding. Few youth had job experiences that had lasted more than six months.

SEED participants who worked through Juma Ventures enjoyed their jobs at the stadiums, but were frustrated that they were unable to work and earn money all year. Amy, for example, deposited money into her SEED account consistently when she worked at the stadium, but was unable to save much in the off season. She wished that it was possible for her to work throughout the year, and more frequently, and looked forward to baseball season beginning so that she would once again be able to make deposits.

> It's starting up again and I was telling my mom and she was, like, "you're getting paid again, you're gonna put it in your SEED account!"

When reviewing his deposit history, we asked Le Sean if the end of the baseball season explained why direct deposits into his SEED account had stopped. He replied:

> Yeah, because I didn't get paid again because they didn't go to the playoffs, so I mean…we ended in October and I think I started working, like, the last week in September. And that was my last pay period…

At the time of his interview in February, Le Sean had not worked in about four months and had no other job prospects until baseball season began in the spring.

Other youth had been working over the holiday season and had more recently experienced a layoff. Josefina had been working at a Target for a few months, during which she saved regularly in her SEED account. When she lost her job as business slowed in the early part of the year, her deposits stopped. Her mother now pays her to baby sit her younger sisters one day every other week. Several youth described this type of informal employment, through which they were able to earn a little money by doing a few hours of work for people they knew. Dontriece, for example, does not get any type of allowance from her parents, but has a reputation in her neighborhood as a good hair braider and is able to earn money when someone needs their hair done.

In summary, since most youth rely upon earned income to make their SEED deposits, unemployment and under-employment make it difficult to save. Seasonal jobs and informal employment are the norm, and the unreliable income from such jobs is a barrier to consistent saving. Youth are further limited in the number of hours they can work, because of their age and/or school schedules. Overall, many SEED participants report that they are rarely able to make enough earned income to both pay their expenses and save money for the future.

Consumption Related Barriers to Saving

A second barrier to youth saving had to do with expenses that they perceived as necessities, and the desire to make day-to-day purchases of popular items like fast food, music, and clothes. Two significant themes emerged from our interviews with SEED participants regarding consumption. First, many youth reported the difficulties related to having debit cards. Second, our discussions with SEED participants at Juma included much information about the presence of "fixed expenses" that were not covered or subsidized by their parents.

Many youth have debit cards for their non-SEED bank accounts, and describe being unable to resist using the cards. Not having a debit card for the SEED account was typically seen as a good thing; a way to impose discipline upon themselves in advance of being confronted with the temptation to make a purchase. Josefina described the difference between her debit card and non-debit card accounts.

> In Citibank I have two of them (accounts), which are the Juma SEED account, and that's obviously the only good account I have because I

> can't get any money out of it, and the other one is the one with the ATM card that I opened with the Juma as well. But this is more of like a savings account, and that one is more new but since it has the ATM card I haven't done very well with it. Like, I started very good until I activated the card.

Not as aware as Josefina of the problems associated with excessive debit card use, Manny blames his bank for the difficulty he has had managing his non-SEED account:

> Wells Fargo, they screw you. So far, going to Wells Fargo, I would use my debit card, and I would look and see I have 3 bucks in there. I'm going to go buy a candy bar or toilet paper or whatever with a debit. Because sometimes they don't take ATM so they just have to use debit. And it takes like five days to go through….Yeah, I think I have money but when it comes in they're charging me 20 bucks every time it goes over. So eventually I had to pay 60 bucks for stupid stuff, like a candy bar. So I'm, like, "screw it. I'm going to another bank." This California Savings bank account I got, it's low budget, it's not like Wells Fargo, it's a lot better.

Manny places responsibility for his overdraft fees on the bank and understates problematic aspects of his spending and saving behavior. Although an extreme example, this portrays the bewilderment apparent in many of the youth as they described their dealings with financial institutions. It is of course important to note the difficulties that millions of US citizens have with managing credit and debit card use, and a rather widespread dissatisfaction with ATM and overdraft fees that many consider exorbitant. Other youth, however, have cancelled the cards on their non-SEED accounts or opened new accounts and decided not to get the debit card. Amy said:

> I decided not to get the check card. I decided that if I wanted the money, I should at least be able to go to the bank and take it out there because then I'll think about what I'm spending it for…they offered, but I said no.

The second consumption related theme that emerged from our discussions with SEED participants about saving barriers had to do with consumption needs that they saw as "fixed expenses." Many youth have expenses such as cell phones, school dances, and senior year activities that they do not perceive as discretionary, but as necessities that they have to cover before they can save. Respondents wanted to save in their SEED accounts, but truly felt that they could not forgo certain purchases. When asked for an example of money that she perhaps could have saved instead of spent, Jen replied:

> The boat dance. I did not have to spend that but it's my senior year and I've gotta go…it's for the whole school but I didn't go any of the other three years.

Because of this dance, the prom, and other expenses she had during her senior year in high school, Jen did not expect to begin saving until the school year was over.

> I think that I'll save, like, right after my senior year…because prom is coming up, you know…right after my senior year all those extra expenses are going to be done for. … So basically when I'm done with that, I want to continue with this program.

Josefina has been able to save a bit more than Jen, but says that she, too, must spend on certain items during the school year. She was asked about her method of saving money, and said:

> It's hard, like right now I can't count on a job, so it's going to be harder for me. Just because prom is approaching, so definitely I have to spend a little bit of money. That's my only life dilemma right now but as long as I'm working I always consider saving whatever amount I make.

The vast majority of youth interviewed (n=21) had cell phones. Of the 13 whose parents paid for their phones, six were high savers, four were moderate savers, and three were low savers. Of the seven youth who paid for their own phones, four were low savers, two were moderate savers, and one was a high saver. This relatively high saving youth received a $20 weekly allowance from his parents that he typically used to pay his bill, but the rest of the youth used their own earned income to pay for their phones.

This pattern of cell phone payment illustrates a broader theme that emerged from many parts of our interviews, including discussions of school activities noted above. Youth with access to a broader range of resources from their parents and caregivers were able to save more in their SEED accounts. High savers, by and large, had their phones and activities paid for by their parents, and were able to deposit more money into their accounts. Low savers, in contrast, tended to pay these expenses themselves and had less money left over to save.

Institutional Facilitators of Saving

Several institutional factors emerged as aiding youth in the process of committing funds to their SEED accounts. This included the matching deposits, the dedicated nature of the accounts and the related inaccessibility of the savings, and direct deposit. That these factors emerged as helpful is perhaps not surprising to any adult holding a matched retirement account through an employer, which typically have all of these features.

One of the most predominant themes to emerge was the positive way in which youth responded to the match structure offered through SEED. The promise of matching funds was what motivated a many youth to participate. Describing how he first heard about Juma and SEED, Phillip said:

> There was a flier up on the wall of the school. Yeah, and then my friend saw it and he just kind of told me, he said free money! 1500! And then we just got interested and went to the meeting and found out about it.

Ann was similarly excited by the prospect of the match. "The whole like, double your money thing was like, that was like the hood for me. I'm like…money!" A number of youth became quite animated as they spoke about this aspect of the program, with a look that was both incredulous and pleased, perhaps that they had managed to find out about such a good opportunity. Amy's family, like other families, thought that it must be too good to be true, and was worried that she might be taken advantage of. It was only after speaking with Juma staff to confirm the program's details that they encouraged their youth to participate, offering to help with deposits as well.

> I told them all. I was like, there's this account and it's amazing. He goes they double your money? And then my grandpa said that like it was a joke where they said double your money, but I meant, you know, I don't know where he got it, so I called and he was like you have to do it, I will give you money to put in there, you have to do it.

A second institutional factor perceived as helpful by youth was the restricted nature of the funds. Youth told stories of saving money with the intention of keeping it for emergencies or college, only to find themselves spending it on an evening out with friends, new shoes, or music. Many saw themselves as lacking the ability to save, even though they wanted to, and the SEED program as a way to finally force themselves to do it. Josefina has one bank account that her mother opened for her when she was young, and says that this account is "untouchable" because of her mother's influence.

Josefina describes needing to have some mechanism in place, either her mother or the SEED rules, to prevent herself from taking money out of her savings. Other youth said this was the case for them as well. Because she has not been able to in the past, Hong wants to learn how to save money through SEED. "So that's why I wanted to try because they said that I can't take the money out. So I think that's good because I don't spend all my money now."

Kim wants to own a house and to begin her own business, but is not confident in her ability to save enough for either goal.

> I want to start my own business, and I think, hey that would be good…but also I want to buy my own house and I figured, hey, if I had to save money and I can't touch it, that'll be better on me. If I know I can't access…I mean I think about that $350 all the time but I know I can't touch it and that's what's gonna help me and that's why I did it - because I know it's money that's going to be there that I cannot touch.

For Kim, like other youth, the inaccessibility of her SEED account has two benefits. First, it makes it impossible for her to spend the money she is currently accumulating, and second, it is a way for her to learn to save long term, into her future.

The third institutional factor that emerged, not surprisingly, was illustrated by the commonly heard comments regarding the way in which automatic bank deposits made savings easier. Participants were pleased with how much easier electronic transfer of their funds made savings, noting that they didn't have to remember to make the deposit, or have to make a trip to a bank that might be located inconveniently for them. Too, direct deposit helped them because they didn't have the option to use that pre-allocated money for consumption items when tempted. When asked what made saving easy for her, Rosio commented:

> The fact that I signed up so that out of every paycheck they automatically take it out, and I'm like, oh I would have had that, but then I'm like, no okay, good because then it's not like I have to go to the bank and drop it off or something. It makes it a whole lot easier.

When we asked Le Sean to describe the SEED program, it was notable that he responded by specifically mentioning the beneficial aspects of direct deposit:

> …every paycheck you have the option…to tell them, well I want to save $25 of my $150 paycheck to go toward my SEED account, and I mean it's that easy. You just have them take out that. It's easy. Just have them take it out and put it in your account and you know, you have $100 without ever having to go to the bank and put it in there!

While direct deposit was valued universally by the participants who utilized it, their saving typically stopped when their employment ended. As noted earlier, Juma youth who work at the stadiums have direct deposit linked to their employment. During the off season, the youth either have no access to other funds to deposit or they forget about the need to make regular deposits on their own. Some SEED participants also indicated that knowledge of how to fund their accounts outside of direct deposit was lacking. When asked why he stopped depositing money in October, Gerald explained:

> Yeah, that's when the season ended. And I was trying to figure out how to put the money in! I have no idea. Because my mom, she's been trying to figure out how to put the money in but we don't know how.

Other youth, however, seemed to know how to make deposits on their own, and shared some individual strategies that have helped them save in their SEED accounts.

Individual Strategies as Facilitators of Saving

Through our interviews with SEED participants at Juma, we found that many youth have devised an intermediate step to saving in their SEED accounts that involves putting money aside until they have an amount that they feel is significant enough to take to the bank. Jen and Kelvin both save money in jars they keep at home and, when the jars are full, they deposit their savings into their SEED accounts. Fernando also saves money at home, but has a somewhat different approach.

> I would take it home with me, put it somewhere in the box, and then keep working until I reached a certain limit, like $500 and from there I would just automatically put it in my account. And then I would do the same thing all over again. I would save up to like $200 or $100, not $183. I would save up to a round amount. I would round it out and then put it into the bank.

Several high saving youth had a practice of setting aside money from each paycheck for pocket money or to save toward a special purchase. After this, they deposited the rest in the bank. Amy, for example, used this method before signing up for the SEED program, and was able to save for an I-Pod while also building a small savings account. When she signed up for SEED, she simply continued this way of saving. Ann described how she used direct deposit in the same way.

> I did, like, kind of a direct deposit thing. Like, every time I worked they'd take out $25 from my paycheck so that money was going in, and I would still be getting a paycheck, so it felt like I was actually working for something.

Deciding in advance that they would keep a certain amount of money out of the bank to use when going out with friends, or for a special purchase, seemed to help these youth from feeling deprived of their earnings. Experiencing a tangible benefit of earning money seemed to make it easier for a number of SEED participants to save.

Caregiver Behavior as Facilitators of Saving

One of the factors most closely associated with saving among SEED participants we interviewed was a high degree of parental involvement. Parents and caregivers of relatively high saving youth often drove them to the bank and to Juma's workshops, provided encouragement, made deposits for them, or gave them money to deposit into their SEED accounts.

Phillip's parents gave him $40 to open his SEED account, and all of the money he has deposited to date. He has not located employment to earn money for making deposits on his own, and is happy about this because it allows him to focus on school. Terry's account is also funded by his parents, who make all of the deposits as well:

> I: So, after that money that your parents gave you, what did you do after that to put money in your SEED account?
> R: Actually, they put it in for me.
>
> I: They kept putting in it?
> R: Yeah, they put it in regularly too, like 50 bucks each month.

> I: Have you been working to put any of your own money into the account? Or is it mostly them?
> R: Actually, it's all them.

Some low saving youths' parents also provided money for deposits, although this was not nearly as common as among the high saving SEED participants. One of the relatively low-saving youth, Dontriece, told us that all of her SEED money has come from her immediate family and other relatives who give her small amounts of money for her birthday and other holidays. Like many other youth whose parents contribute the bulk of SEED savings, Dontriece's parents have exceedingly difficult work lives and struggle to make ends meet. She reports that they want her to concentrate on school, to enjoy her youth, and not be too eager to begin a life of working for wages.

A more common way for parents to contribute to their children's accounts is to provide an initial sum to open the account, and additional gift sums on occasion. This was the type of assistance most moderate and low savers received from their parents. Josefina was especially touched by her mother's efforts to help her begin the SEED account, "My mom opened it actually with all of her change, so it was cool; $176, I will never forget that, and, like, more pennies than anything." Now that her account is open, she earns her own money to make deposits because:

> I feel like it's my responsibility. I wouldn't feel right to ask my parents, "Oh can I have $5 for my SEED account?", because the whole point of it being mine is for me to take responsibility to manage my money. If I ever get money in a month, I think, like, "What should I do with it instead of spending it?"

As discussed earlier, the logistics of getting to the bank and to evening workshops was a challenge for many youth, and providing help in these areas was another way that parents supported their children in their saving. We noted that all of the youth who did not receive help with these tasks were relatively low savers. When asked if she had talked with her mother about her SEED account, Angela replied:

> R: Yeah, I have, but she's always treated me as an independent person, because, like, she never pushed me to do my homework. It was up to me to do it. She'd never be the type of mom to say, "Oh let me see your homework. Let me look at it." It's up to me to do it on my own….
>
> I: So nobody is offering to drive you to the bank.
> R: Oh no.
>
> I: You have to do it on your own?
> R: Yeah.

In contrast, Gerald received a great deal of assistance and support from his mother as he began to save in his account:

> Like, every time I needed to put some money in of get some money out for something to buy, like school clothes or something, she would be able to drive me to the bank so I wouldn't have to walk a long way. And she would do it for me because she knew I really needed it.

Similarly, Fernando described how much his mother helps him save.

> She set my account in her name, but it was basically my account. And she would be the one, if I were to give her the money, she would go and deposit it. Either that or she would take me, so she would help me out.
>
> I: Does she ever encourage you or remind you?
> R: Yeah she does. She tells me to save my money that I want to spend.

The encouragement and reminders from parents may have been as important to SEED participants as the act of driving them to the bank, if not more so. Many youth spoke of forgetting to make deposits, being overwhelmed by program requirements, and being tempted to spend their savings. As Gerald and Fernando illustrate, having supportive parents made a big difference to a number of youth in this study.

This section focused on saving barriers and facilitators for SEED participants at Juma. Barriers such as unemployment and under-employment, as well as relatively high personal expenses, were significant for many SEED youth. On the other hand, institutional factors such as matching deposits, direct deposit, and the inaccessibility of SEED accounts increased participants' confidence about saving, and their ability to save. Some SEED youth also benefited from developing their own individual savings strategies, and by drawing on the financial and practical support of parents and caregivers.

Saving Barriers and Facilitators: Summary of Key Findings

- ✓ **Unemployment, seasonal employment, and unreliable informal employment made saving difficult for SEED participants. This was especially true for youth who did not have much financial help from their parents.**
- ✓ **Youth consumption needs and desires, complicated by access to debit cards, made saving more difficult for SEED participants.**
- ✓ **Fixed expenses, such as phones, clothing, food, and school expenses made saving more difficult. This was more likely to occur for lower-income youth who didn't have such expenses subsidized by their parents.**
- ✓ **Matching deposits were a central facilitator of saving among SEED youth.**
- ✓ **The dedicated nature of SEED accounts facilitated saving by discouraging withdrawals for consumption.**
- ✓ **Automatic, or direct, deposits facilitated savings, although youth with seasonal employment who used direct deposit tended not to make deposits during periods of unemployment.**
- ✓ **Relatively high-saving youth developed personal strategies for saving such as accumulating money at home before depositing it, connecting savings to specific consumption goals, and planning to use a percentage of earned income for consumption.**
- ✓ **Parental involvement in saving facilitated accumulation of assets. Parental involvement consisted of providing funds, reminding and encouraging youth to make deposits, driving youth to the bank or to workshops, and making deposits for their children.**

4. SEED Program Perceptions and Experiences

Respondents were overwhelmingly excited and grateful to be participating in the SEED program, speaking highly of the JUMA Ventures staff, the financial gains they were able to make, and the knowledge they were gaining about financial matters. However, interviewers could not be entirely certain that response bias was not influencing some of the participants' statements. Many of the youth eyed the research team somewhat warily and may have been eager to provide responses that they believed we wanted to hear, assuming that we were connected to the funding of the program. A number of the youth were slow to warm to us, and questions we posed early in the interview about family financial issues may have created some greater reserve in their comments to us. Moreover, participants who came to SEED through their employment at JUMA have strong relationships with their program staff, and their comments might have been influenced by a level of protectiveness toward those staff. Still, useful insights—both positive and negative—were gained from the interviews, particularly when respondents were guided to describe the program, rather than asked to evaluate its favorability. This section examines youths' experiences with recruitment, decision making about participation, program design features, workshops and classes, and savings goals. General perceptions about strengths and weaknesses of the programs were also a topic of conversation probed by the interview team.

Experiences with Recruitment

Youth participants in the program were referred from three sources. The first group was comprised of low-income youth employed at Juma Ventures in their job training program. The second referral source was GirlSource, a similar agency which develops employment and leadership opportunities for low-income girls. The third source was the Phillip and Sala Burton Academic High School, a multi-cultural high school with a rigorous academic program developed as a result of a consent decree between the City of San Francisco and the NAACP. Burton High School is located in the Silver Terrace neighborhood of San Francisco. Of the 30 youth we interviewed, 14 were Juma participants, seven were referred by GirlSource, and the remainder (n=9) were students at Burton.

Although these agencies were the official referral sources through which kids accessed the SEED program, they learned about it through a variety of methods. Youth reported hearing about SEED through: 1) conversations with Juma staff (n=7), 2) word of mouth information from friends (n=7), 3) community or classroom presentations (n=6), 4) observing flyers (n=3), 5) conversations with school counselors or advisors (n=3), word of mouth information from family members (n=3), and advice from teachers (n=2). Several youth made comments about the importance of formal presentations in conveying information about the SEED program to youth. For example, Angela felt that the presentation was crucial in convincing youth to participate:

> It was the reputation and the fact that they presented it. It does work probably, I don't know. But if you put flyers around, people, they look at it and go, OK. If they're interested, they're interested, if they're not, they're not. I think it's better if they bring it to you.

Deciding to Open an Account

Once youth learned about the SEED program, they went through a decision making process before agreeing to sign up for the structured saving account program. Youth shared with us their perceptions of what made them take notice of SEED, and who they consulted with before agreeing to be participants.

Asking youth "what made you sit up and take notice of the SEED program?" elicited a variety of responses both expected and unexpected. These responses included: 1) access to match funds, 2) the opportunity to learn about savings and finances, 3) to receive help with savings goals, 4) access to direct deposit, 5) the desire to begin saving, 6) the inaccessibility of SEED funds, 7) the desire for a specific purchase or savings goal.

Not surprisingly, the promise of financial matching of their deposits was enormously attractive to a large number of respondents (n=12). Youth were enthusiastic as they recalled learning that an opportunity existed to have their saving efforts matched with funds from Juma. This excitement was shared by Josefina who had learned of the program from her college advisor:

> …so the person who was part of the college advising, she's in charge of all these little programs…and I was working with them, so they were like hey…you know they told us a little bit about it and I was like that's good - I put in a dollar and they put in a dollar? Whoo! Like that's what I heard.

A second group (n=11) was motivated to participate because of the anticipation of using the funds for a specific purchase, such as a computer, college tuition, books, or a home. That is, the asset they planned to obtain using SEED funds was itself the motivation. As we noted previously, Kim commented on savings goals of homeownership as her first motivation for participation. Josefina told us that the consumer use of the SEED account could be a motivator for other youth to participate in structured savings account programs. She described other students' reactions when she told them about the SEED program:

> ….they're like, really what can I do with the money? And a lot of people are like clothes and whatever and I'm like, no, there is are certain regulations, certain things you can spend it on like a laptop or computer or owning your own business or down payment for a house or even financial aid and people are like really? I want to get into it! Can I get into it? I'm like, well let me give you the number, you know.

A third theme was that youth wanted help getting started with savings. These respondents had an awareness that they needed to begin saving to meet life's challenges. For them the opportunity to simply begin saving—something that they had never done, or had done with only limited success—was the allure of the SEED program. One comment that typified this response was heard from Kelvin who said: "What do you mean 'what convinced me'? I've really wanted to start my own savings for a long time". When asked why her peers who chose to sign up for the program did so, Juanita told us:

> Probably for the same reasons or because they…I know like a lot of people, they need someone to like push them for them to get started in that way, and you know, like if you want to succeed in life, you have to try something, you know? So, I guess that's it.

A fourth group (n=5) was motivated by the opportunity to learn more about savings, finances, and managing money. These respondents saw participation as a chance to learn *how* to save, and the financial literacy aspects of the program as a way to increase their understanding of issues such as credit and finance. Niesha noted that "she could learn something from it", while Kelvin stated it would "…help me learn how to manage my money". This group of youth, then, seemed aware that practicing saving, and attending financial literacy classes would help them become adults who knew how to manage money and credit more effectively.

Finally, two respondents mentioned aspects of program design that provided them with motivation to sign up for the SEED program. These were access to direct deposit and the inaccessibility of funds. That these two design features motivated some participants to be involved is not surprising in light of the large role they play in helping to facilitate savings after enrollment, as discussed in the previous section.

Once the youth developed an interest in the program the final step of their decision making process was either to talk to family members about the program, or to sign up without their families' advice. The majority of youth did discuss the program with their parents first, but a substantial portion of the respondents did not feel such consultation was necessary. In a few cases, youth who were hesitant about enrolling were convinced by the encouragement of family members.

While a number of youth (n=10) made their decisions independently, the majority spoke with their parents. This occurred both because youth wanted to get permission, wanted to make certain their parents thought the program was legitimate, and because some wanted to secure their parents' help in saving. Terry's parents voiced legitimate concerns about the possibility that asset holding could reduce eligibility for government grant and loan programs:

> They think it's okay. But the only thing they're concerned with is will that affect the time that I apply for the financial aid.

A small group of respondents were hesitant about participation, thinking that their families didn't need the assistance, or for other reasons not feeling prepared to commit to the program. For this group, family members or others encouraged their participation, perhaps noting the unique opportunity to receive matched funds from SEED. Le Sean told us:

> …..I got savings through my grandma, so I was like, I don't need to join this. It's cool, but I told my auntie about it and she's, you know, she's very young at heart and she was like, just join this program, it's going to help you in the long run. Because she owe a lot of credit card debt from college, books and stuff and she said, don't do that!

Similarly, when Juanita was uncertain, it was a conversation with SEED staff that helped her to seal her commitment:

> Actually, I talked to Mimi. I talked to Mimi and she convinced me. She was like, yeah, it has all this and that. You know, she like really convinced me and I was like, why not, I'm not going to lose anything.

Savings Goals

Upon entry into the program, participants are required to identify their savings goals—that is the purpose for which they intend to use the assets they accumulate. Structured, matched savings account programs such as SEED have limited uses—that is, they are to be used for specific purposes. Withdrawing money for reasons other than this limited number of uses results in the loss of match funds. Acceptable uses for SEED funds include training/education, small business development, home purchase, or retirement. Participants identified their savings goals as education (n=21), home purchase (n=2), business start up (n=1), and retirement (n=1). Among those selecting education, 10 specifically wanted to purchase a computer, while 2 mentioned they hoped to use the funds to purchase books for college classes.

The SEED respondents had given some thought to how they wanted to use their money, and in many cases, their conversations with us revealed a shrewd calculus about the wisest way to use the funds. Ann really wanted to buy a car, but knew she couldn't use her SEED money that way. Instead, she will save money to pay for college which will leverage resources from her parents:

> It's like, I guess I just don't want my parents to have to pay for everything, and like I can't just take out the money and use it to buy myself a car or something that I can actually use like when I'm at college, so I figured that I could probably use, put this money toward college and then have my parents buy me a car. And then you still get both things but it's a way of managing which money you spend where.

Similarly, Kim wants to go to college, but she thinks grants and scholarships will pay for that, and she wants to use her money for a home purchase. Kim surprised us with her knowledge of the high cost of housing in the Bay Area. Aware of these expenses, Kim is saving for a home over the long haul:

> Because I know that, you know, $3500 is not enough for a down payment on a house, I know that. So you know, I'm going to have to keep saving money. And I don't think I'll be ready to buy a house at 19 or 20 years old anyway, so yes, I'm going to just let the money sit. And keep adding on to it. For the time being I can still stay with my parents to help me because, like I said, it makes no sense to get an apartment, you know, and all that money could be going towards, you know, a down payment on a house. I'll just stay with my parents until then.

Blanca is also thinking strategically about the benefits of education versus homeownership. She is also aware of the high cost of housing in the area, and is aware that she too could likely qualify for aid. However, Blanca is also concerned that she is not really prepared for a university education, and thinks that attending a lower cost community college or training program makes more sense financially. This will allow her to continue saving for a home for herself and her mother:

> Plus, like I knew I wasn't going to go to a university because I didn't think my high school prepared me enough to go to the university so I was thinking, I'm not going to waste $1000, $10,000 if I know I'm going to flunk some of the classes, so I was like, I'll just go to City College, get my AA or whatever, and then if I still want to continue my education, continue it to a university.

Making Deposits

After signing up for accounts, and establishing savings goals, youth began the process of saving through depositing money into their accounts. We were curious about youths' perceptions of the ease or difficulty of making deposits and explored our conversations with them for insights about the process of depositing money. Here three themes emerged: the ease of using direct deposits, problems with direct deposits during spells of unemployment, and difficulties with deposits arising from bank location or confusion about deposit procedures.

As mentioned in the previous section, one of the most commonly heard comments about depositing money was the way in which automatic bank deposits made savings easier. Comments were focused on: 1) the ease of direct deposits, 2) the assistance of not having to remember to make deposits, 3) the fact that banks are often located too far away to make manual deposits convenient, and 4) the benefit that direct deposit kept them from spending on consumption items rather than saving.

Also as noted in the previous section, while direct deposit was valued universally by the participants who utilized it, the topic also surfaced as we explored reasons that savings diminished during some months. The inability of direct deposit savers to become "bank visiting" depositors when their employment changes or ends is one potential flaw of the youth's reliance on direct deposit. It may be that savings behaviors are not developed when deposits are made electronically.

The third theme that emerged regarding the deposit process was forgetting to make deposits or not understanding how the deposit process works. Several youth told us that they were confused about where they were supposed to go, literally being uncertain about the location of the savings institution. Others misunderstood the deposit slips, or simply got too busy with life to remember to make deposits regularly. This is particularly problematic for youth who didn't have supportive family members who would remind and encourage them to make deposits. Finally, for a significantly smaller number of youth, the location of the bank made it difficult for them to make deposits.

Participation in Online Classes

The Juma Ventures program offers financial incentives to youth to help them build assets and to motivate school completion and participation in financial literacy courses. Juma provides $300 to youth when they complete high school, contingent on them providing the agency with a copy of their high school diploma. They also provide a $200 incentive for completing 36 on line financial literacy modules. Additionally, attendance of two "on-site" financial literacy workshops is mandatory during the course of participation, and the agency offers these on a monthly basis.

The most negative reactions to the SEED program were reserved for the financial literacy classes. While there were exceptions among the respondents, the online classes were problematic for a large number of SEED youth. A variety of concerns were noted about financial education: 1) the length and number of the on-line modules, 2) difficulty in accessing on-line modules without home computer access, and 3) a difficulty in finding time to complete on-line modules.

Perhaps the most commonly heard complaint was that the on-line modules were tedious and time consuming. Many of the youth knew that they were forgoing an opportunity to earn incentive money, but simply found it too difficult to complete the courses. A large number of the youth had not completed the 36 modules required to earn the $200 incentive. This was frequently attributed to the length of time it takes to complete the classes, and to a certain level of tedium associated with the process. As Angela said when asked why she hadn't completed the work:

> It's kind of long. So it's hard to stay focused and read because I read everyday and I don't like reading much. Its like, okay, I've got to read some more…

The time intensive nature of the modules was difficult for students with busy academic and personal lives. Finding the time to complete the program was perceived as difficult, and not the first priority for those juggling busy schedules. Lucy said:

> …money skills…I finished one exercise and I still got a lot to do. And I kind of stopped because I am focusing on my school work. I will probably do it over spring break or something.

Some participants even thought that the on-line module discouraged participation in the recruitment process for the SEED program. When asked why others didn't participate in savings she replied, "…because they don't want to take the time to fill out papers or attend workshops…its kind of discouraging…they're like 'you have to do 200 modules!'". This sense of distaste for the money skills was further explained by Lucy who stated that she didn't enjoy the courses:

> It was like they have like different sections, right, and then each time you do it, it has 100 questions or 50, I think that's too much. That's like taking a test!

Others noted problems with accessing the online modules due to computer access difficulties or technical problems. One participant stated "I tried to get on a couple of times actually, and I don't know why it wouldn't let me". Others noted that the program "booted" them off line before they could complete the module, while others noted simply that they didn't enjoy spending time on-line.

Participation in Juma Workshops

A requirement of participation in the structured savings program is that you would attend two workshops about financial issues over the course of their time with the program. Juma staff offers workshops every month, and each month provide different presentations covering topics such as savings, credit, loans, identity theft, and even advice on how to buy the right computer. The workshops are offered at Juma's offices, which are located in the downtown financial district of San Francisco. As with the on-line classes, participants were critical of the workshop attendance requirements, but often did acknowledge that they had learned important and useful information from SEED staff. Respondents were more likely to have reported attending the workshops than to have completed the online classes. This may be explained by the fact that the workshops are mandatory, and because the participants only need to attend two workshops as compared to 36 on-line modules.

For many SEED participants, sitting through the workshops felt boring and, in the words of one respondent, "like being in school." Some youth felt that they already knew the information. Manny stated: "To tell the truth, I don't go to a lot of the workshops. They would be helpful…a lot of the stuff I know about". Johnny echoed his sentiments stating: "They did talk about some good stuff but most of the stuff I already knew". In part, this may be explained by the fact that the participants in job training programs had been exposed to such information through those programs, while Burton High School students had recently been required to take a financial literacy course as a requirement for graduation.

The location of Juma Ventures was problematic for some youth, particularly those living in the East Bay or other outlying suburbs within the city of San Francisco. When we asked Inez about how the workshops are offered she replied:

> Oh, I'm not sure even. I assume that we can talk all of the lessons on line because like, I'm not allowed to go anywhere…it is far from my home. From my house to

> here (Burton High School) it almost takes me an hour…so it would take me even longer to get downtown.

Angela similarly was concerned about the distance of Juma from her home, and the potential that she would be in a dangerous neighborhood:

> Yeah, I was thinking right now I'm going to get a ride down to Antioch, but if I wasn't going to get a ride I would have left early because it gets dark early now and I don't like being around in BART (subway) stations in dark.

Despite these concerns, youth did acknowledge learning from workshops, and enjoying the opportunity to interact with people they had never met before. Hong noted that they were "kind of interesting and fun" and stated that they were valuable because "…they know about things you don't know: financial things, investing, things like that". She went on to tell us:

> I think this program has helped me to know what savings is like. Like those other options: online banking, I learned to save ways like ways to eliminate some expense that I don't need, how to protect my future, learned about bonds and stuff.

Blanca was one of the most appreciative of the knowledge gained in the workshops. She was impressed with the information provided about homeownership and about credit:

> And then, you have classes that help you know how to save up money. If you're buying…if you're renting and are going to buy a house, they'll help you about leasing programs, like your rights and the rights of other people if you're going to have roommates and stuff, and then they also have classes for like, they had a class about credit, like how to start good credit, how to be careful with some credit cards because some of them trick you and they tell you to like read the fine print because it really, they always try to hide something from you. And also that, what did they tell me…they told me that if you waste $1000 on your credit card, overall you're going to be paying that $1000 plus interest in two years, five years, or something like that, so it's awful better to just keep credit cards for emergencies only, and if you're going to buy something like $1000 or $500, make sure that you're going to have that money like next week or the next month.

Interactions with Staff and JUMA Ventures

A significant strength of the Juma program is the positive relationships formed between Juma staff and the SEED participants. Participants were uniformly effusive in their praise of JUMA staff for their encouragement, accessibility, helpfulness, and capacity to provide useful information. The degree of familiarity with staff varied by respondent however, and some youth reported that they simply hadn't the time to interact with JUMA staff on a regular basis.

As mentioned earlier, Juma staff were perceived as effective in their recruitment process for participation in the SEED program, particularly by Juma job program youth who had previous relationships established with the agency. As Juanita told us about her decision making process:

> Actually, I talked to Mimi. I talked to Mimi and she convince me. She was like, yeah, it has all this and that. You know, she like really convinced me and I was like, why not, I'm not going to lose anything.

Similarly, Juma staff were credited by youth as helping them to save through their encouragement and advice. Kim spoke highly of the staff in this regard, noting, "…they teach me responsibility with the SEED program, teaching me how to save money and be responsible….basically just getting ready for life". When asked what helped her to save, Blanca said:

> People that support you, like the SEED program…Gabe, Mimi, they always tell you, you know, like they don't tell you put big amounts, like oh you gotta put 20 bucks or 50 bucks, they're like, oh as much as you can save up because gradually its going to add up.

Juma staff was also perceived as knowledgeable about the program and about financial issues of interest to the youth. Comments from Juanita typify this perception that knowledge sharing by Juma staff was valued:

> …I went with Gabe and he was just assigning everything and telling me how it was. He sat in a room and just explained everything. Made me understand deeply and I did. And then he was telling me about…he was showing me how to use the web site on line.

One discordant note was shared by a youth who had a negative experience with the SEED program. Johnny had been involved with the Juma job training program, and due to difficulties with work performance had been fired by his manager. In the process, he reports that she told him his SEED account would be closed. Johnny, who lives in a group home and spoke of many disappoints in adults in his life, felt crushed by the loss of his connection to Juma, and thought his encouragement to save had been diminished. However, he remained positive about the SEED program staff, noting:

> I try to be professional toward my work…the reason I came and did this interview was because Gabe has always been a good person to me. I always seen him as a good person. But my manager and stuff, I would hate coming in here to see her.

Experiences with Withdrawing Money

Because youth had only participated in SEED for 6 months when these interviews were conducted, relatively few had experiences with withdrawing money. As mentioned in the previous section, the difficult in accessing money was perceived as a major selling point of the SEED accounts, as most youth understood that the limited uses available for the funds were an incentive to not draw from the accounts for consumption purposes. As a design feature, the inaccessibility of funds is perceived as very helpful. Blanca stated:

> No, I haven't touched it. Plus, if you want to touch it, you have to come to Mimi and Gabe and tell 'em why and get a receipt…it's really serious.

The interview team had inquired with youth about whether others asked them for money, or whether they had been tempted to use their money or whether they would give it to others if asked. Only one youth had withdrawn money for non approved purposes, taking $300 from her account to help her family pay bills. It was unclear from the interview whether staff had attempted to help her think through this decision before withdrawing the funds.

Two youth did have experiences with withdrawal for an approved use, however, and their experiences suggest a potential problem in the structure of the SEED account program design. These participants had been saving to purchase a computer and had done considerable research in order to find the right computer for their needs at a good price. However, for a youth who needs to make such a purchase quickly, it is too difficult to access the funds immediately. When asked what she didn't like about the program, Stella said:

> The paperwork because for the computer, if you buy a computer, a lot of times I go on line or go looking through the advertisements and I see a computer on sale and it's kind of like a one-day deal where you have to wake up really early and stand in line to try to get one, and if you have to take money out of this account it will be a little more…

In this section we have analyzed youths' experiences of participating in SEED at the Juma Ventures site. Pathways to entry into the program were considered, and we explored the decision making process by which youth chose to sign up for SEED accounts. Of particular importance was family encouragement, but relationships with Juma staff also were key. Indeed, youth almost universally praised the Juma staff for their competence and caring. Other positive aspects of participation in the program included match structure, direct deposit, and the restricted nature of the accounts, echoing comments heard in the previous section. As we noted, some aspects of the program were singled out for criticism: the difficulty for some youth in making deposits, a dislike of the on-line classes and for some, the workshops, and problems quickly withdrawing funds when necessary. In our last section, we summarize the overall findings from the study, and consider its implications for further research as well as policy and program development.

Experiences with the SEED program: Summary of Key Findings

- ✓ Recruitment experiences were viewed as favorable, with information about SEED coming from Juma staff, friends, classroom presentations, flyers, family or school staff.
- ✓ Most youth consulted caregivers or Juma staff before committing to the SEED program.
- ✓ Motivation to sign up with SEED was attributed most often to the match structure, the opportunity to save for a specific goal (usually tuition or a computer), the offer of assistance with learning how to save, access to direct deposit, and the inaccessibility of SEED accounts for daily consumption needs.
- ✓ Youth reported their savings goals as education, home purchase, business start up, or retirement. One-third of youth hoped to purchase a computer with the funds.
- ✓ Direct deposit was viewed positively by Juma youth, but became problematic if employment was interrupted.
- ✓ A lack of awareness of how to make deposits proved problematic for some youth.
- ✓ On-line financial education was viewed as too time consuming, lengthy, and boring.
- ✓ Workshops were viewed more favorably as providing useful information, but for some youth they were repetitive, while for others, the location proved daunting.
- ✓ Juma staff was viewed as extremely knowledgeable, helpful, and encouraging by SEED participants. A significant portion of youth however, had only very limited interactions with the staff.
- ✓ Withdrawal of funds had not occurred for most youth, and many valued the exclusionary criteria for using SEED funds. Two youth who had attempted to purchase a computer felt they were not able to access the funds in a timely way to take advantage of price discounts.

5. Discussion and Summary

While this report is only an initial analysis of SEED qualitative data, a number of factors are emerging as noteworthy, suggesting directions for policy and program development. Moreover, this initial analysis points us toward further research needs, both in terms of additional analysis of this data, as well as additional needs for research in the area of asset based social welfare. This report has been largely descriptive, focusing on youth's perceptions of factors that aid and prevent savings, as well as their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the SEED program being carried out at the Juma Ventures site. Next, additional analyses will be undertaken which will compare the experiences of high and low savers in some detail. Moreover, the next step of analysis will be to place these findings in theoretical context so that our findings become more theoretically grounded and less focused on simple description. This should point to directions for both theory building and additional research, perhaps based on quantitative method. One of the major strengths of qualitative work is to understand social processes more deeply and to understand associations that can then be tested more rigorously using quantitative research techniques.

Section Two provided an overview of the demographic characteristics of the SEED respondents as well as qualitative data about many of their experiences with finances, savings, as well as their perceptions of their housing and neighborhood contexts. Among other findings we learned that high savers were more likely to be Caucasian or Asian and from higher income families, while low savers were likely to be African American or Hispanic and from lower income families. We also learned that a majority of SEED respondents lived with two parent or extended families (66%), and over half of their caregivers had completed at least a high school education. SEED participant caregivers were likely to work in service sector jobs, and only 1/3 were homeowners. The majority did have access to checking and savings accounts and health insurance, but relatively few had any significant investments. Qualitative data indicated that most youth had received strong messages about the importance of saving as children, but a significant portion of respondents were unable to do so successfully. Finally, youth were generally satisfied with their housing and neighborhood contexts, but low levels of homeownership, frequent moves, and dangerous crime levels were the experience of many SEED respondents.

One of the most striking findings in this section was that high savers tended to be Caucasian or Asian and from higher income families, while low savers were more likely to be African American or Hispanic and from lower income families. In fact, 75% of Hispanic SEED participants were lower savers, as were 80% of African American participants. It may well be that the savings rates are simply a function of family income, with low saving youth less likely to receive family income assistance or to have access to their own employment or other income streams. If this finding holds true for all Juma SEED participants, it would be useful to conduct quantitative analysis to determine whether income effects are operating separately from the effects of race and ethnicity.

At a policy and program level, this suggests a need for income streams that will assist low saving youth in accumulating enough money to be able to transfer funds to savings. Further, should this become a universal program, policy may need to ensure that low income households receive higher match rates and direct subsidies to savings accounts to help them to not fall behind higher income families in asset development. Asset policy should not be constructed to further asset inequality, and should be progressively funded and matched.

A need for further qualitative analysis of the demographic characteristics of SEED respondents is suggested by these initial findings. Specifically, we will need to analyze this data to determine whether various demographic factors other than race and income are associated with high and low levels of savings. Family structure, homeownership, early messages about savings, immigrant status (not reported here) and neighborhood safety are all good candidates for further analysis in this regard. Comparing the quantitative and qualitative responses of low and high saving SEED youth along these dimensions might provide insights about savings theory and suggest directions for the construction of asset based welfare policy and program planning. This will occur in the next level of analysis.

Section Three focused on the youths' perceptions of both barriers and facilitators of successful saving in the SEED program. Barriers were reviewed first, with employment and income insufficiency the one which loomed largest for youth having difficulties saving. That is, income inadequacy made it hard, especially for low income youth, to find revenue that could be transferred to the SEED account. This was due in part to spending habits, particularly when youth had access to debit cards that made consumption easier. For youth without parental income supports, many of their expenses, such as cell phones, internet access, music, clothing, and food, were perceived as fixed, and these youth simply didn't have enough income to cover these costs and save in their SEED accounts.

SEED youth also reported factors that aided them in savings, and we characterized those as being program factors, personal factors, and parental or caregiver factors. The match rate was seen as a motivator to deposit money into SEED accounts, and the restricted nature of the accounts, which only allow withdrawals for fixed purposes, were seen as primary facilitators of saving. Automatic bank deposit, or direct deposit, was also viewed as a mechanism which aided youth in saving. However, it was also noted that direct deposit became problematic when employment stopped, often due to the seasonal nature of the work offered through Juma.

Personal and family factors also surfaced in our discussions with respondents. Youth reported strategies that aided them in saving, such as putting money aside at home until a goal amount had been reached, and then depositing that amount. Additionally, youth discussed establishing a goal for a specific use (such as a computer) as a way to increase motivation for saving. Other youth identified budgeting a set amount of money for consumption, with the remainder of income targeted to savings as a strategy for making deposits. Sherraden, et al (2005) identified similar strategies that adult savers utilized in order to build assets in a previous demonstration project.

Finally, youth identified parental support as a facilitator of savings. Parents reminded and encouraged some savers, drove them to the bank, made deposits for them, and in some cases provided initial or even regular deposits into the SEED accounts. Those with strong relationships with their parents benefited from caregivers who were involved in their savings process, or who could at least provide positive support or modeling of savings behavior.

At the program level, these findings suggest the important of utilizing direct deposit as often as possible in structured, restricted savings account programs. The finding that employment looms large for youth also suggests the importance of helping youth develop access to some sort of income stream to aid in savings. Juma's youth employment program coupled with structured savings seems like a step in this direction. Additional job programs that will assist youth during periods of unemployment or that can address the issue of seasonal employment could assist in this process. For youth who have to choose between employment and school success, incentive programs that link academic effort to savings might be useful.

The finding that youth can benefit from developing savings strategies might imply that individual budgeting and planning sessions could be useful in helping participants brainstorm their own strategies. Similarly, making efforts to enhance parental involvement in the program, perhaps through targeted workshops, might spark their involvement in youth savings. In many families, youth seemed reticent to ask grandparents or extended family to contribute to their accounts, which could be addressed through an outreach or workshop format.

Further analysis of these findings, placed in a theoretical context, will allow us to make some kind of contribution to building on or verifying savings theory. In depth analysis of the cases of low resource youth who have managed to save at higher levels might shed some light on the strategies and resources they have employed, which could have program or policy implications. Analyses comparing high and low savers' perceptions of facilitators and barriers will be a necessary next step in our research. It could also be useful to compare the responses of youth about their perceptions of facilitators and barriers to adult respondents, such as the participants in the American Dream Demonstration project which ended in 2003 and which also utilized qualitative methods. Finally, further analysis of our data should yield additional barriers and facilitators not detailed in this initial look at the interviews.

Section Four analyzed youth experiences of participating in SEED at Juma Ventures. The recruitment experience was viewed as positive for most respondents, who seemed to rely on presentations, word of mouth, outreach efforts by Juma staff, and discussions with family before making their decision to sign up. Interactions with Juma staff generally were highly praised, with staff seen as helpful, encouraging, and knowledgeable about the program and financial issues generally. This was moderated by the fact that many youth hadn't had the opportunity to interact with the staff frequently. A question arises as to whether this was related to the referral source. It seems clear that youth who had previously participated in Juma programs had more frequent contact with staff than youth who were referred to the SEED program from GirlSource and Burton High School. It is possible that such contact is related to savings success, and this factor should be explored more fully in studies of youth saving. The open issue of whether “high-touch” versus “low-touch” approaches are more effective should be examined with youth in savings programs in the future.

Matching deposits and the opportunity to reach savings goals were viewed by youth as being of primary importance in their decisions to become SEED participants. The matching dollars were highly valued, as was the inaccessibility of the accounts and access to direct deposit by employers. All of these factors were perceived by youth as contributing to saving success. Moreover, direct deposit was valued for its convenience and ease. However, a small number of youth didn’t understand how to make deposits during periods of unemployment when automatic deposit was not available. In other words, some confusion existed regarding how to make deposits for a few of the youth we interviewed who had relied on direct deposit when they first joined SEED. In terms of withdrawing funds, the dedicated nature of the counts had generally discouraged any withdrawals. However two youth noted that the length of time a withdrawal takes had caused them to miss the opportunity to purchase computers which had been discounted in “one day” only sales events.

The most negative comments were reserved for Juma’s educational programs. Specifically on-line classes were viewed as boring, lengthy and repetitive, and for some, difficult to access. Even though youth knew they would receive a $200 incentive for completion of the on-line financial education program, most youth had not made much progress on this front. The in-person financial education workshops received higher marks for having interesting and helpful content, but some youth we interviewed had a difficult time getting to the workshops because the location was problematic for them. In addition, a few youth believed that they already knew the material that was being presented at the workshops.

If findings from this study were to be paralleled by future, similar studies, a few suggestions for youth savings programs would begin to emerge. Some possible suggestions may include the need to: (1) help participants understand and make both direct deposits and non-automatic deposits into their accounts (2) intervene more aggressively when youth savings drops off, as it did for many Juma youth when the baseball season ended (3) brainstorm and problem-solve with participants about how to identify funds for savings might occur during periods of unemployment and (4) increase interest and enthusiasm for financial education, perhaps by designing such components with the social needs and attention spans of adolescents in mind. Finally, it may be important to explore ways to allow for more timely withdrawals from dedicated accounts in order for programs to facilitate computer and other education related purchases when there are unexpected price reductions that could benefit youth.

This qualitative study has provided us with some initial glimpses into the backgrounds and perceptions of SEED youth in one program. In this report, we have concentrated on participant perceptions of SEED, as well as the factors that they experience as barriers to and facilitators of successful saving. Our next report from this study will focus on youth perceptions of social, psychological and behavioral effects of SEED participation. In concert with quantitative studies of savings, in-depth interviews with participants in asset building programs allow insights to emerge that help us develop a deeper understanding of how saving happens for people of different age group and life circumstances. We hope that this richer and more nuanced understanding of saving efforts among youth in a matched savings program will help inform asset building policies and programs in the future.

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Appendix: Respondent Demographic and Family Characteristics

Saving Level	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Race/ Ethnicity	Monthly Family Income	Parental Education Level
High Saver 1	Hong	F	19	API	2,950	College Degrees
High Saver 2	Fernando	M	18	Hispanic	1,215	High School, Trade School
High Saver 3	Stella	F	18	API	1,700	Middle School, Elementary
High Saver 4	Terry	M	17	API	1,440	Unknown
High Saver 5	Rosio	F	18	Hispanic	1,800	No Formal Education
High Saver 6	Ann	F	16	Caucasian	6,400	Some College
High Saver 7	Kim	F	18	Caucasian	3,200	Unknown
High Saver 8	Phillip	M	17	API	2,000	Elementary School
High Saver 9	Angel	F	17	API	1,900	College Degrees
High Saver 10	Lin Yao	F	18	API	1,660	Trade Schools
High Saver 11	Amy	F	16	Caucasian	4,527	Graduate School, Trade School
High Saver 12	Farah	F	19	API	2,000	College, High School
High Saver 13	Kelvin	M	15	African-American	1,640	High School
Moderate Saver 1	Manny	M	19	Hispanic	1,250	Unknown
Moderate Saver 2	Josefina	F	18	Hispanic	2,500	GED and 7^{th} grade
Moderate Saver 3	Andy	M	16	API	3000	Some College

Moderate Saver 4	Blanca	F	19	Hispanic	3,300	College, 3rd Grade
Moderate Saver 5	DeAndre	M	17	African American	1,200	Unknown
Moderate Saver 6	Gerald	M	17	African American	2,848	Some College, trade school
Moderate Saver 7	Esperanza	F	19	Hispanic	3,000	Unknown
Low Saver 1	Johnny	M	18	Hispanic	200	College, Trade School
Low Saver 2	Angela	F	19	Hispanic	2,800	Unknown
Low Saver 3	Jen	F	18	Hispanic	2,414	Some College
Low Saver 4	Afrei	F	16	African American	2,775	College Degree, Some College
Low Saver 5	Inez	F	18	Hispanic	4,166	Some college
Low Saver 6	Lucy	F	18	API	2,300	Elementary, 10th Grade
Low Saver 7	Juanita	F	18	Hispanic	2,500	Some College, Trade School
Low Saver 8	Dontriece	F	16	African America	2,200	High School, Some College
Low Saver 9	Niesha	F	18	African American	2,848	High School, Some College
Low Saver 10	Le Sean	M	17	African American	685	Trade School, High School