

## Tilburg University

### The cool entrepreneurship program for at-risk youth

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*Publication date:*  
2013

[Link to publication in Tilburg University Research Portal](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Zumaeta, J. N. (2013). *The cool entrepreneurship program for at-risk youth: An illustration of the social construction of economic thinking.* [s.n.].

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**The Cool Entrepreneurship Program for At-Risk  
Youth:  
An Illustration of the Social Construction  
of Economic Thinking**

**Proefschrift**

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan Tilburg University op gezag van de  
rector magnificus, prof. dr. Ph. Eijlander, in het openbaar te verdedigen ten  
overstaan van een door het college voor promoties aangewezen commissie in de  
Ruth First zaal van de Universiteit op

dinsdag 12 november 2013 om 16.15 uur

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## *ABSTRACT*

# The Cool Entrepreneurship Program for At-Risk Youth: An Illustration of the Social Construction of Economic Thinking

This study explores and expands on the understanding of the social construction of economic thinking, by showing general benefits derived from socio-economic development initiatives sensitive to social constructionism perspectives. Social constructionism as a philosophical position considers all knowledge and meaning in a social context. The socio-economic development initiative I use to illustrate the benefits of utilizing social constructionist perspectives as a framework was a customized entrepreneurship program for at-risk youth. In addition to achieving its initial purpose, the customized entrepreneurship program helped participants appreciate the importance of education and feel more welcome at school, while feeling more confident, hopeful and self-assured. “The Cool Entrepreneurship” Program's name made it more appealing to youth.

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## **Acknowledgements**

My sincere appreciation to Dr. Harlene Anderson for helping prepare this manuscript. Also, special thanks to Dr. Abdy Javadzadeh; his familiarity with the research was important during the programming and writing phases. And thanks to Dr. Kenneth Gergen, Dr. Raul Moncarz, and Dr. Rupert Rhodd for their valuable input.

Last but not least, special thanks to my family for their love, inspiration, and understanding.



# Introduction

## **Purpose of the Study**

In this study we introduce principles of a social construction of economic thinking, and see how social construction perspectives provide a base for implementation of socio-economic development initiatives. The program we describe shows the potential of such programs to increase socio-economic integration and personal growth of this population. More specifically in this study, we hope to clarify the link between economic behavior, and society and culture, and to show how individuals and communities tend to behave economically in relation to culture-based frames. The whole description of becoming a “Cool Entrepreneur” for At-Risk Youth project is a general attempt to illustrate these linkages within the social construction of economic thinking. The context used is the US open market economy. The reader should bear this in mind when reading this manuscript.

## **Benefits**

Real-life examples of how economic thinking is socially constructed are few and far between. So this study serves to show how policy and programs for at-risk youth are shaped by the society—despite contrary views as introduced in chapters 2 and 3. The study also shows that by adopting the social constructionism perspective during program development, policy and program developers increase their sensitivity to the needs and expectations of at-risk youth, thus increasing chances for having a positive impact on youth.

Next we will summarize some conceptual frameworks offered by schools of economic thinking related to entrepreneurship. We briefly review the development of the entrepreneurship concept—an important avenue of future advancement and personal development for at-risk youth.

And perhaps most significantly for anyone wishing to do more for at-risk youth and program stakeholders, we illustrate the transformative force of social constructionism of economic thinking during an entrepreneurship program's development. A sensitively customized entrepreneurship program could give at-risk youth an important tool to help them improve their socio-economic integration and growth for the rest of their lives.

## **Background**

To develop a productive entrepreneurship program for at-risk youth, we must take a fresh look at entrepreneurship and its implications in an open-market economy, from a social constructionism perspective. This will help program facilitators pinpoint at-risk youth's preconceptions and bring them to the surface in a productive exchange of ideas during a program (See later chapters).

For the purposes of this study, “economic thinking” refers to economic principles, fundamentals, corollaries, hypotheses, and theories. Economic knowledge is one part of the

social communication process that combines preconceptions, prejudgments, and predilections<sup>1</sup>. Some economic schools see economic thinking as the result of physiological or biological human needs and desires. I believe this limited view precludes consideration of valuable alternatives, and prefer the kind of fact-based economic thinking which, in a socio-economic context, may have a stronger positive impact on policy and program development and outcomes. This approach, which incorporates social construction principles, recognizes what I call the “*naturalization process*.”

Through this lens, economic thinking past and present can be seen as socially constructed, in other words strongly influenced by local social contexts. Our economic ideas are formed and shaped as part of our daily interactions with others. Once they are accepted and internalized<sup>2</sup> by an individual, they are expressed as economic behavior—the way we choose goods and services based on their quantity and quality.

Economic thinking, then, develops as part of a relational process<sup>3</sup>. Its institutionalization,<sup>4</sup> spread and degree of impact are also highly influenced by social conditions. It affects an individual’s perceptions, interpretation of reality, and ultimately his or her contributions to common knowledge and culture. Economic thinking<sup>5</sup> and its knowledge base are subject to a similar dynamic relational process. All these factors define an individual’s economic behavior, as well as collective market practices.

We base this study on socially constructed policies and procedures that influence business, markets, and government practices. Besides shaping the individual’s economic and financial behavior as noted above, they determine socially acceptable boundaries of individual economic conduct--expressed as value and belief systems--within communities and groups. Traditional economic thinking is based on individual-oriented perspectives such as Rational Choice Theory, which incorporates a form of naturalization process. We offer social constructionism as an alternative perspective. Several economic principles<sup>6</sup> including

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1 Individual’s formation environment refers to the person’s context as it relates to his or her place, culture, relationships, experiences, etc. Also, the individual’s formative environment could include sociological or biological factors that shape his or her personality, perceptions, and interpretations of reality.

2 This refers to economic ideas as part of the individual’s value system.

3 Concepts that are socially constructed through the interaction of individual economic agents.

4 Institutionalization of ideas is the process that integrates fundamental values and objectives into society’s culture and structure. In this particular case, we refer specifically to an economic concept becoming part of the main body of knowledge.

Read more: <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/institutionalization.html#ixzz2CgOJ7wlu> Referring to the institutionalization of ideas, in this particular case, the institutionalization of economic ideas in our American culture and economy.

5 Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: a Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967, c1966).

6 The Economic Principle is the application of rationality to situations of scarcity: Minimize cost with regard to a given goal (e.g., level of utility) or maximize utility for a given level of cost or input. Hence the "economic principle" frames situations as a minimizing or a maximizing problem, and allows one to assess efficiency. Do not mix the two formulations! Applying the principle avoids wasting valuable resources. Here are some definitions: Scarcity: Economists study situations where needs or wants exceed

Rationality, Preferences, and Opportunity Cost are driven by individuals' desire to maximize benefits and minimize cost<sup>7</sup>. Those who succeed accumulate wealth. No other animal species exhibits this behavior in the same manner, or as extensively, as humans<sup>8</sup>. Ants and bees, for example, only store the food they need to survive. Traditional justification for the naturalization of human socio-economic behavior in a market context is thus straightforward . . . and challenged by social constructionism.

Adam Smith, considered the father of classical economics, used “elevator words<sup>9</sup>” such as economic reality, truth, fact, etc. to make his theories more accessible. This tended to popularize less altruistic behavior in everyday life and business. By “naturalizing” self-interest, society undermined the relational process for generating knowledge.

Rational Choice Theory sees rationality as the result of psychological conditioning, while trivializing behavior and social constructs because they don't support the theory. Social Construction has another view of why individuals become active in philanthropic campaigns, neighborhood initiatives, political movements, and associations. Let's explore this difference a bit.

Rational Choice Theory, originally a sociological concept, supports Smith's naturalization of self-interest motivators. In economic terms, Rational Choice Theory<sup>10</sup> is about consumers' transitive preferences<sup>11</sup> and desire to maximize the benefits of those preferences within constraints such as budget, income, etc. For Rational Choice Theory proponents, consumers are fundamentally “rational,” calculating costs and benefits before making a purchase. Social Construction Theory, explaining why consumers buy sports cars or fancy designer shoes, adds consideration of inter-subjectivity<sup>12</sup> as one factor in the decision-making process<sup>13</sup>.

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means. Therefore, people have to make choices. Rationality is assumed to guide people's choices or decisions. They systematically gauge all pros (benefit or "utility") and cons ("cost") of all alternatives or options they are facing when deciding. Preferences: People are equipped with fixed and given preferences that allow them to assign utilities to all options, and to choose the option that maximizes (net) utility. Combining the first four points makes up for the "rational choice approach" of neoclassical economics. Opportunity Cost is induced by scarcity, and by the need to make choices. All choices always involve opportunity cost because deciding in favor of one option always means deciding against some other option(s). There are two main aspects of opportunity cost: 1) Utility maximizing choices induce opportunity cost to be minimal (static aspect). 2) Choices may be revised when opportunity cost rises (dynamic aspect).

<sup>7</sup> This statement aligns with Rational Choice Theory.

<sup>8</sup> Jong-Chul Kim, *The Political Economy of Aristotle: Aristotle's View of Value and the Economic Implications of his Soul-Body Metaphysics* (2005).

<sup>9</sup> Ian Hacking in his book *The Social Construction of What* (1999, 22–23) calls words such as “fact,” “truth,” and “reality” “elevator words” because they tend to work at a number of different levels in philosophical debates attempting to increase their validity

<sup>10</sup> Scott Plous, *The Psychology of Judgment and Decision Making* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> Transitive preferences are those for which, if some good or bundle of goods denoted A is preferred to another good or bundle of goods denoted B and B is preferred to a third good or bundle of goods denoted C, then it must be the case that A is preferred to C.

<sup>12</sup> A. Gillespie & F. Cornish (2010). Inter-subjectivity: Towards a dialogical analysis. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior*, 40, 19–46.

<sup>13</sup> Inter-subjectivity states that shared cognition and consensus are essential in the shaping of our ideas and relations. Additionally, from this perspective, language is viewed as communal rather than private.

Rational Choice Theory's highly individualistic perspective attempts to explain all social actions as rational calculations, made by self-interested individuals. It views social interaction as a simple social exchange driven by an individual's economic self-interest, rather than as part of a process that also generates knowledge, understanding, values, and behavior. By seeing consumer motivation as only about the rewards and costs of actions, and potential profits, it ignores possible motivators such as altruism or community engagement, because they do not support this rationale. Rational Choice Theory does not address topics such as altruism, reciprocity, or trust.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Socio-economic development policies are traditionally based on Rational Choice Theory principles. Policy makers and policy implementers endorse a view of economic reality based on Rational Choice Theory that doesn't align with the socio-economic realities of the individuals they intend to assist. It therefore fails to provide effective solutions to their challenges.

Rational Choice Theory economic policies, based solely on control rationality, can have a devastating effect on macro and micro socio-economic development initiatives. This is on top of the secondary effects on income per-capita, standards of living, quality of life, and socio-economic integration. For example, workforce and economic development programs based on such a simplistic perspective are unlikely to mitigate adverse socio-economic situations. Allocation<sup>14</sup> program resources based on data may even aggravate socio-economic problems<sup>15</sup>. The gap between based Rational Choice based policies and real-life solutions can skew policy focus, sidetrack policy implementation and make program frequency, intensity, duration and funding unsustainable over the long term.

### **Key Economic Thinking Concepts**

We will explore several schools of economic thinking and the principal concepts that relate to entrepreneurship. We demonstrate their dependence on the healthy interaction of contributors and other social constructions, first looking at Adam Smith's self-interest approach and his attempt to naturalize economic behavior by describing a natural order in economic behavior. We then review Bentham's Utilitarianism, and its prescription for Society's Happiness; and John Stuart Mill's definitions of love, feelings, and altruism as they relate to entrepreneurship.

Alfred Marshall was the first to formally recognize the need for entrepreneurship in a production process. The Austrian School with Leon Walras and Joseph Schumpeter, like

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14 Resource allocation refers to the process and decision making of allocating money to a specific socio-economic development projects (i.e., workforce development welfare programs).

15 This study refers to economic afflictions as poverty, unemployment, underemployment, etc.

Marshall, strongly supported entrepreneurial practices, the social importance of entrepreneurial behavior and their impact on open-market economies and societies.

Most economic ideas presented in the last paragraphs, even those highlighting altruistic behavior, are based on the Rational Choice Theory and also obviate more subtle human behaviors (consumer irrationality, irrational exuberance<sup>16</sup>, etc.). Social constructionism returns a human perspective to economic thinking as an alternative to Rational Choice Theory.

### **Significance of the Study**

Any study of how much of our economic thinking is socially constructed suggests that as a society, we are able to create and change our economic behavior. It follows that perhaps we can solve many social economic woes that afflict today's society. It makes it feasible to create, fine-tune, destroy, and recreate our own economies by adjusting some basic perceptions and interpretations. We can align our socio-economic behavior with community well-being, a healthy environment, a stronger middle class, and more educational opportunities, etc.

To understand these perceptions and interpretations of economic thinking, we will revisit some key economic philosophical pillars, and evaluate them from a socially constructed perspective. The Cool Entrepreneur Program illustrates how at-risk youth may benefit from programs such as this.

### **Research Questions**

This study clarifies the strong link between economic behavior, and society and culture. We also show how individuals and communities tend to behave economically in relation to culture-based frames. It demonstrates the value of social constructionism perspectives when developing socio-economic development programs of the future. A number of research questions will be answered through literature reviews, interviews, a review of the entrepreneurial program for at-risk youth and administration of a written survey tool. These include:

- What are the main economic reasons to support entrepreneurship?
- What are the benefits of social constructionism perspectives to new policies and socio-economic development programs?

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<sup>16</sup> Definition of 'Irrational Exuberance' - Unsustainable investor enthusiasm that drives asset prices up to levels that aren't supported by fundamentals. The term "irrational exuberance" is believed to have been coined by Alan Greenspan in a 1996 speech, "The Challenge of Central Banking in a Democratic Society." He said that low inflation reduces investor uncertainty, lowers risk premiums and implies higher stock market returns. Investopedia - <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/i/irrationalexuberance.asp#ixzz25Q9cdIc3>.

- What are the chances of a customized entrepreneurship program for at-risk youth being able to promote effective social integration and personal growth? <sup>17</sup>.

Certainly, there are several perspectives on how to conduct qualitative research (e.g. McNamee and Hosking<sup>18</sup>, Denzin and Lincoln<sup>19</sup>, and Miller and Salkind<sup>20</sup>), but I deliberately chose to be as broad as possible to be able to capture persuasive evidence from participants and community.

### **Chapter Summaries – Organization of Chapters**

Our first chapter describes the genesis of the Cool Entrepreneurship Program (details about development and implementation are covered in another chapter). It describes the role of participating agencies: Florida International University, US Department of Labor, Miami Children’s Trust, Youth Coop, Inc. Insight, Inc. and South Florida Workforce. It briefly introduces my discovery of social constructionism, and my role in the program. Chapter 2 expands on the professional and personal experiences that led me deeper into the subject of social construction of economic thinking, including my training in qualitative methods and assignments. Chapter 3 provides a conceptual context for social constructionism and the role of language creation as it relates to the program. Chapter 3 also presents different philosophical positions in an attempt to explain the origin of knowledge and perception of reality; and my contention that social constructionism as a philosophical position enables humans to develop new understandings of economic reality. Chapter 3 also summarizes transition from social constructionism theoretical principles to practical applications in the Cool Entrepreneur Program for at-risk youth.

In chapter 4, we establish the Social Construction of Economic Thinking's relationship to Entrepreneurship and the Cool Entrepreneur Program. Chapter 4 covers the impact of social construction of economic thinking on the market--a dynamic progression of economic ideas related to entrepreneurship. These economic ideas encompass the microeconomic foundations and principles of sociology/social psychology presented by Adam Smith and other economists as mentioned above. This theoretical framework hopefully will prepare the reader to evaluate the merits of our Cool Entrepreneurship Program for at-risk youth, even as it helped me prepare to make the best use of an initial meeting with them

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<sup>17</sup> As stated earlier dominant economic philosophies in America refer to laissez-faire (i.e. non-involvement of the government in business), free enterprise (including free trade), and focus on the bottom line (maximizing profits = maximizing revenues and minimizing cost).

<sup>18</sup> Sheila McNamee and Dian Marie Hosking, *Research and social change. A relational constructionist approach*. NY: Routledge. Or linking it to the work of Hosking on “change work” methods, 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, SAGE Publications, Inc. 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Miller, Delbert C., and Salkind, Neil J. *Handbook of Research Design & Social Measurement*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, c2002.

Chapter 5 shares specifics of the Cool Entrepreneurship Program's conception, set up, and implementation. We define entrepreneurship as a social construction of economic thinking through observation of potential participants' social psychology: their desires, voices, and ultimately their potential to transform themselves from within. Chapter 5 describes program development and customization based on specific at-risk youths' needs, which entails a complex identification process of motivational factors and participant preconceptions in order to develop a more humane program. We expand on the convergence of social constructions to follow the exchange of ideas, emotions, understandings and perceptions that affected program implementation. We also mention the Brookings Institution's *Growing the Middle Class; Needs Assessment Study of Hispanics in South Florida* and *Advancing Economic Prosperity through Workforce Development* publications, which helped to justify creating the Cool Entrepreneur Program.

Chapter 6 gets into specifics of the Cool Entrepreneur Program's objective, at-risk youth definition, challenges in working with at-risk youth, case management, and customized program curriculum. The chapter covers the program's fifteen entrepreneurship modules, along with three additional sessions on Leadership, Communication and Portfolio/Illustration.

Chapter 7, entirely devoted to program evaluation and outcomes, first discusses several evaluation criteria. Following social constructionism guidelines, these evaluations incorporated participants' voices as quickly as possible.

Chapter 8 briefly tells how we got out the word about the Cool Entrepreneur Program-- primarily at conferences and workshops hosted by the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, the Tri County Regional Economic Councils, South Florida Workforce Development Board, and the Association of Universities Continuing Education (AUCE).

Chapter 9, explores the program's intriguing impact on participants' daily lives, and what form that impact took. The program staff wanted follow-up to help support and sustain positive program outcomes. This "relational continuity" principle grew from the program staff's dedication to participants and their futures. Participant follow-up included one survey after six months, another after twelve months, verbal communication with case managers after eighteen months, and ongoing communication between instructors and participants via social networks.

"Summary and Conclusions" recaps the theoretical base for social constructionism of economic thinking, and describes Program benefits. I conclude that understanding economic thinking and entrepreneurship as social constructs will enable all members of society to seek a better world by breaking away from rigid thinking platforms.

# Chapter 1

## Genesis of the Cool Entrepreneurship Program

The genesis of the “Cool Entrepreneur” program dates back to June 2004, when the Brookings Institution published “Growing the Middle Class: Connecting All Miami-Dade County Residents to Economic Opportunity<sup>21</sup>.” In it, the Brookings Institution clearly delineated the socio-economic challenges of Miami-Dade County residents. One, the decline of income, had kept Miami-Dade County languishing in a low-wage economy with high poverty levels. Another challenge was the relatively small middle class and growing disparity between rich and poor, particularly troubling for the minority populations less likely to join the middle class. The most troubling challenge was the low educational levels among high school students from low-income families, pointing to fewer opportunities to move out of poverty.

The Brookings Institution study included several policy recommendations for a comprehensive countywide strategic initiative to mitigate poverty. One recommendation welcomed by workforce development practitioners and local elected officials was an entrepreneurship pilot program for at-risk youth. The entire community agreed this was a good idea; but developing a funding source for such a program proved to be more challenging.

Finally, after two years, the idea had gained enough support for ad-hoc US Department of Labor financing to be identified. The Children’s Trust and the South Florida Workforce Development Board established the Cool Entrepreneur Program for at-risk youths in the summer of 2008. Program sponsors collaborated with the FIU College of Continuing and Professional Studies and Insight Inc.--a private company that teaches entrepreneurial skills to high school students--to develop an entrepreneurship program to introduce at-risk youth to the entrepreneurial perspective, and help some of them succeed in an open-market society. The Cool Entrepreneurship Program components came together in an educational program that included civic involvement, social enterprise, skills remediation, and most significantly, entrepreneurial improvement. 2008 was the turning point. Within FIU, three academic units cooperated to build a customized entrepreneurship curriculum for the program. The College of Continuing and Professional Studies (CAPS), the College of Business Administration (CBA)<sup>22</sup> and the College of Education (COE) began working together in early 2008. This educational collaboration played a major role in getting the program off the ground.

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21 Brookings Institution - Center on Urban and Metropolitan, Growing the Middle Class Connecting All Miami-Dade Residents to Economic Opportunity, Policy, 2004.

22 The FIU College of Business Administration houses one of the top twenty centers for entrepreneurship development in the nation. The FIU’s Pino and Family Center for Global Entrepreneurship’s mission is to create entrepreneurial leaders and organizations in all segments of society, throughout South Florida and Internationally. <http://business.fiu.edu/entrepreneurship>.



As the person responsible for managing and coordinating the resources-- curriculum development, implementation, hiring instructors, and program evaluation, etc.-- my goal was to recruit at-risk youth by showing our sensitivity to their perceptions. This proved essential to the program's eventual success.

It was exciting to help bring together associates from agencies and organizations with fresh perspectives<sup>23</sup> which had looked for alternatives to help young adults in Miami-Dade County become more integrated into society. As we know, at-risk youth face particularly discouraging odds, and find it difficult to obtain adequate education, training and overall well-being.

Over the years as a Department of Labor economist, I had always searched for new ways to mitigate challenges facing different populations, including at-risk youth. One afternoon in the library, I came across some social constructionism literature which I could not put down: *Social Construction of What?* by Ian Hacking. This text provided a new take on economic reality and methods for evaluating social afflictions. I became more aware of, and sensitive to, my own perceptions and interpretations of economics, especially social constructionism of economic thinking and its innovative view of economic reality. More about this is in chapter 2.

The American market economy honors entrepreneurial behavior, as do many at-risk youth. The Cool Entrepreneur program brings theoretical and abstract arguments about the social constructionism of thinking in economics to life. It melds economic reality (market) and the individual (at-risk youth) in a dynamic relationship that generates exciting new meaning, values, culture, and even behavioral expectations. In other words, our program brings together the context (market), the individual (at-risk youth) and the program (instructors/curriculum) as a transformative new combination that affects everyone involved. It encompasses the social constructions related to economic thinking, to individuals in terms of his/her definitions for success and expected behavior, and lastly, to the social constructions of program facilitators in a unique convergence of trends and influences. It allows youth and instructors to exchange perceptions and interpretations of entrepreneurship, while developing new ideas about meaning, values and behaviors. They transform themselves around their new understanding of their realities in a mutually beneficial way.

The next chapter will relate my experience of social construction theory and practice, then some general notions of social constructionism in chapter 3, followed by a deeper analysis of the social constructionism of economic thinking in chapter 4. I will return with an in-depth description and discussion of the Cool Entrepreneurship program in chapter 5.

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<sup>23</sup> Not accepting the status quo refers to agencies and groups of professionals looking for alternative solutions to social challenge, and not giving up.

## Chapter 2

### My interest in the Social Construction of Economic Thinking

Let's look at my changing perceptions of reality: from a purely quantitative analytical perspective, to one that incorporates qualitative methods for better understanding of socioeconomic phenomena.

Following my undergraduate education in Economics, I worked as a regional economist in Southeast Florida for the Department of Labor. This meant calculating, and maintaining files of, key socioeconomic statistics<sup>24</sup> for a geographical area with about 6.5 million inhabitants in a very dynamic and culturally diverse geographical area. My analyses of local, state, and national socioeconomic trends supported policies and programs to mitigate socioeconomic afflictions. I also prepared economic and labor market research reports on prevailing wages for labor certification, migration patterns to determine supply and demand for labor and skilled-labor shortages, and regularly provided local and state workforce development and welfare boards with statistical and economic analysis. This gave me a strong sense of how quantitative methods can be used to measure social-economic indicators, interpret macro-realities<sup>25</sup>, and develop policies and strategies to help solve socioeconomic afflictions.

I gradually became interested in identifying macroeconomic (sociological factors, employment levels, unemployment, earning levels, etc.) and microeconomic (psychological) factors that drive local labor market statistics in the context of policy effectiveness. I became familiar with rigorous quantitative analytical methods for collecting, interpreting and storing data, scientific estimating and projecting methods, economic and statistical analysis, and socioeconomic impact analysis.

My new understanding of the calculation and interpretation of macro and microeconomic indicators pointed to the relevance of economic and sociological foundation principles. I became increasingly interested in the formation and development of economic ideas, their institutionalization, spreading and implementation<sup>26</sup>. More importantly, I recognized the value of the social construction of economic thinking<sup>27</sup>.

Socially constructing economic ideas helps shape the behavioral expectation of people in various communities. I soon realized that any policy or program's success would depend on more than experts' understanding and efficient policy implementation. It would hinge on the

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24 Unemployment rates, non-farm employment, ES202-Employment Census, Personal Income, Salary and Wages, Industrial and Occupational Employment Projections, etc.

25 Macro-realities concept relates to statistics that describe society as a whole.

26 Institutionalization of ideas (ways of thinking, perceptions, taboos, judgments, etc.) is a process of embedding knowledge and human behavior into a culture or specific groups' practices.

27 To describe as socially constructed is to emphasize its dependence on contingent aspects of our social selves. For more information see *What is Social Construction?* By Paul A. Boghossian.

target group’s motivation to comply or participate, based on their perception and interpretation of their situation, the policy/program and their relationship with the market. I had come to realize the importance of understanding the target group and their priorities.

Some economists and policy developers attempt to mathematically standardize human behavior, ignoring quantitative<sup>28</sup> techniques or contributions. Economic theorists developed econometric equations to estimate and predict human behavior under very specific environmental conditions--unintentionally minimizing information derived from qualitative collection methods. Their equations followed established analytical reasoning popularized by like-minded economists, who had also followed established policy development practices under familiar budget constraints.

I knew about Alfred Marshall, a neoclassical economist<sup>29</sup> well known for his contributions to understanding market supply and demand who warned about the limitations of quantitative analysis<sup>30</sup>. Despite his a strong support for of the role of mathematics in economics, he considered mathematics a nomenclature system best used to share concepts. Marshall saw “mathematics as shorthand language, rather than as an engine of inquiry and analysis.”<sup>31</sup> Agreeing with him, I kept my interest in learning about quantitative methods and social constructionism.

### **Next Step on My Journey: A Rapid Assessment Tool**

Two and a half years later, now a Policy Analyst, I had more leeway to implement and allocate research funding. I was working to develop and implement an econometric model that would estimate the probability of a welfare recipient becoming self-sufficient in a given local labor market, within a specified time frame. Participating agencies hoped that such a mathematical model would help estimate challenges and support recommendations to assist welfare populations. The research project--“Rapid Assessment Program” for welfare participants--provided helpful recommendations for services for 60% of Broward County welfare participants. However, the remaining 40% of welfare participants were not included, despite all the data already available. When collecting additional information using our

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28 In the social sciences, quantitative research refers to the systematic empirical investigation of quantitative properties and phenomena and their relationships. The objective of quantitative research is to develop and employ mathematical models, theories and/or hypotheses pertaining to phenomena. The process of measurement is central to quantitative research because it provides the fundamental connection between empirical observation and mathematical expression of quantitative relationships. Quantitative research is widely used in social sciences such as sociology, anthropology, and political science. Research in mathematical sciences such as physics is also “quantitative” by definition, though this use of the term differs in context. In the social sciences, the term relates to empirical methods, originating in both philosophical positivism and the history of statistics, which contrast qualitative research methods. Qualitative methods only produce information on the particular cases studied, and any more general conclusions are only hypotheses. Quantitative methods can be used to verify which of such hypotheses are true.

29 A member of the neoclassical school of thought. “Neoclassical economics” refers to approaches to economics with a focus on prices, outputs, and income distributions in markets through supply and demand, often mediated through a hypothesized maximization of utility by income-constrained individuals and of profits by cost-constrained firms employing available information and factors of production, in accordance with rational choice theory.

30 Hans Brems, Marshall on Mathematics. *Journal of Law and Economics*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Vol. 18, No. 2, Oct., 1975), pp. 583-585.

31 Campbell R. McConnell, *Economics*, (Nebraska, Mcgraw-Hill College; 15th edition, October 15, 2001).

quantitative scientific guidelines, we were unable to reduce the margin of error in terms of econometric modeling predictability. It became clear that other information sources were needed to develop a more nuanced and useful program.

Using the Broward Rapid Assessment Program<sup>32</sup>, welfare case managers would just enter key participants' data into a database and push a button to get participants' probability ratios. The first screen looked like this:

Figure 1. Data Elements Screen

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Access window titled "Microsoft Access - [Table1]". The main form is titled "Broward Workforce Development Rapid Assessment Tool" and includes the "WorkForce One Employment Solutions" logo. The form contains the following fields and controls:

- id: (AutoNumber) [text box]
- SSN: [text box]
- First Name: [text box]
- Last Name: [text box]
- DOB: [text box]
- Marital Status: [dropdown menu]
- Gender: [dropdown menu]
- Highest Edu Attain: [dropdown menu]
- Work Experience: [text box with value 0]
- Received Serv: [dropdown menu]
- # of Dependts: [text box with value 0]
- Deferred: [dropdown menu]

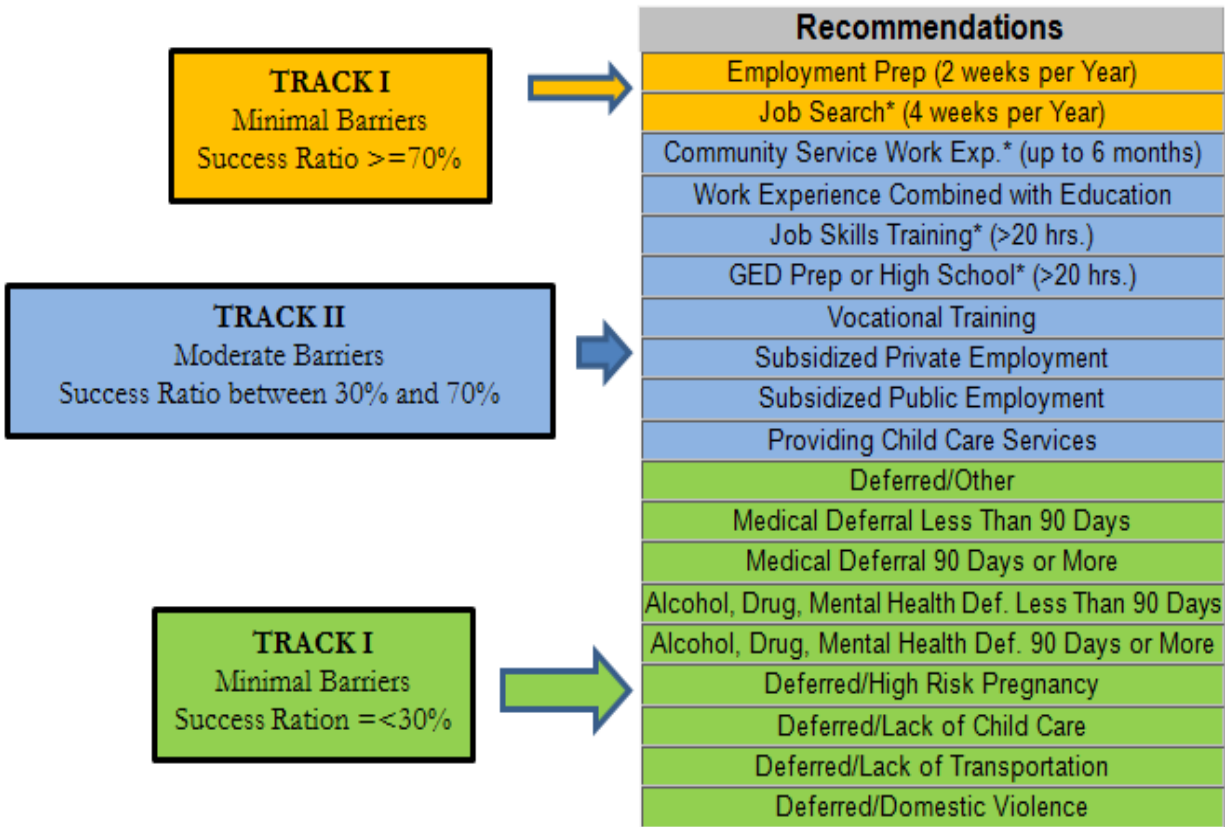
At the bottom of the form, there are four buttons: "Add New Record", "Close Form", "Recommendations", and "Exit". The status bar at the bottom of the window shows "Record: 1 of 3" and "Form View".

Based on our probability results, if a welfare participant received a score of 70 % or greater, the case manager referred them to Employment Preparation and Job Search services (Track 1). If the total was between 30% and 70%, the case manager referred participants to a different combination of workforce development and training services (Track 2). A participant with a score of 29 or less would be referred to intensive services.

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<sup>32</sup> Rapid Assessment Tool was the name given to the system that calculated the success ratios. This system was installed for case managers in two workforce development sites: Pompano Beach and Fort Lauderdale Workforce Development Centers.

Figure 2. Recommended Services Tracks



The Rapid Assessment Tool provided a guide and recommendations for new case managers to help them handle growing caseloads. The econometric model<sup>33</sup> based on quantitative research methods provided a partial solution to the socioeconomic challenges experienced by county welfare recipients, yet a critical question remained unanswered: *what about the 40% of participants' not addressed by our innovative methodology?* The Department invited twenty-six academicians and experts on labor econometrics from around the nation to determine how to improve the predictability rate of the econometric model. The meeting, at The Jacob France Institute at the University of Baltimore in June 2003, brought in a Welfare Program Supervisor veteran with 26 years of experience for a different perspective on the welfare participants. The Welfare Program Supervisor said:

<sup>33</sup> The primary purpose of this project is to investigate the following issues relating to the successful outcome of employment, and ultimately, self-sufficiency: a) The probability that a participant succeeds in getting a placement after he or she receives services and factors that affect the attainment of obtained employment b) The probability that a participant achieves self-sufficiency, and the factors that affect the successful achievement of economic sufficiency.

“During my 26 years as a welfare case manager in Broward County, Florida, I have seen thousands of welfare cases. Many of these welfare cases needed a combination of services in different proportions and intensities at different times for different lengths of time. This is simple to say but very challenging to implement. It will be very difficult, if not impossible, to exactly prescribe a services recipe for some cases based on a formula. What works for somebody may not work for another. This is true for large groups also. You, as a case manager, need to develop a good understanding of the individual as a whole, as a person, his/hers motivations, his/her perception of reality and his/her perception of the objective of the program. When I interview a welfare participant, I am not only gathering quantitative statistics; I am also sensing the individual’s willingness to participate in the program, their preconception of work, their perception of who they are as part of society, their limitations with respect to their aspirations, etc. I don’t know how to quantify these indicators that, to me, are very important to the prescription of services to assist the welfare participant. It may be that the participant scores low in his/her tabulation for success ratio but he/she is a very motivated individual, a go-getter, a problem solver, etc. At this point, during my involvement with a specific welfare participant and his/her engagement in the workforce delivery system, I am gathering information through body language, casual conversation, attempting to understand their heritage and upbringing. In other words, I am collecting sociological and psychological information about the participant through all my senses. This is when case management becomes an art. Not doing this may translate into failing the participant in terms of assisting them to grow as a person.”

His insights changed our open-ended question “What about the other 40%?” into a clarion call for better understanding of welfare participants’ motivations, state of mind, willingness to work and to become self-sufficient, psychological state, upbringing and context, sociological factors<sup>34</sup>, etc. Doubting our mathematical model’s ability to solve Broward County’s welfare problem, we began to investigate different ways we could assess motivations, desires, wants, perspectives, perceptions and interpretations. This led to a series of focus groups around Broward County to capture the voice of the welfare participants.

As years passed, information gathered through these new approaches into the Rapid Assessment Tool never made an appreciable difference<sup>35</sup>. Lacking any qualitative aspect, the fully quantitative econometric model remained the primary information-gathering tool despite our best intentions.

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34 Sociological factors are defined in this study as cultural backgrounds, social conditions, family arrangements, education back grounds, etc.

35 Possible reasons: the change of government administration, lack of funding and re-prioritization of resources during the economic downturn.

Trying to answer the question “*What about the other 40%?*” made me realize that although qualitative analysis<sup>36</sup> has contributed greatly to our understanding and studies, mathematical and statistical models only partially address our complex socioeconomic challenges, and must be enhanced by qualitative methods.

Many economic theorists recognize the validity of social construction theories, but have yet to combine qualitative and quantitative methods to fully address socioeconomic challenges such as those faced by at-risk youths. The Cool Entrepreneur Program's success shows how social constructionism has enhanced our knowledge about “the 40%.” Social constructionism helped me to reevaluate what I thought, and what I thought I knew.

Economists may attempt to advance their careers by demeaning the value of information that's difficult to quantify or explain scientifically. Working with welfare recipients and at-risk youth has inspired me to develop a deeper understanding of the social construction of economic thinking and its implications for enhancing human behavior.

The next chapter provides the contextual framework for a social constructionism theory that we can use as a theoretical base for a more social construction of economic thinking and its relationship to entrepreneurship.

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<sup>36</sup> Qualitative analysis is the use of non-quantifiable methods to evaluate investment or business opportunities and make decisions. This is different from quantitative analysis, which relies on a company's income statement, balance sheet and other quantifiable metrics.

## Chapter 3

### What is Social Construction?

The social construction of reality as a philosophical position suggests that perception and interpretation of reality (knowledge, habits of mind, and cultural perceptions) are mainly derived from, and created through, social interaction. Once any socially constructed concept becomes generally accepted (meeting our social, moral and ethical standards) it transforms us through a cultural embedding process that expands and perpetuates our new shared knowledge. A socially constructed concept becomes part of our laws, traditions, official rules and regulations, and in many instances the work of churches, police departments and judicial systems.

Edmund Husserl<sup>37</sup> and Alfred Schütz's<sup>38</sup> research and writings described the phenomenological fundamentals<sup>39</sup> that serve as a base for the social construction of reality. Later Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann<sup>40</sup> further developed the concept that knowledge (meaning) is constructed from perceptions and interpretations of interactions, circumstances and events. In other words, individuals construct their own realities and ultimately self-image through interaction with others).

Social constructionism became prominent in the U.S. after Berger and Luckmann's 1966 book, *The Social Construction of Reality*, in which they argued that all knowledge, including common-sense knowledge of everyday reality, is derived from and maintained by social interactions. As people interact, they experience individual perceptions of reality; then acting on this new understanding, they reinforce and spread their common knowledge of reality. Because this common sense knowledge is negotiated by people, we should consider human preferences, priorities and institutions part of their objective reality, particularly the realities of future generations who weren't there. For example, parents negotiate and reinforce rules

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37 Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy—First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*: The Hague: Nijhoff, 1982.

38 Alfred Schütz. *The phenomenology of the social world* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967).

39 Phenomenology is a philosophical movement. It was founded in the early years of the 20th century by Edmund Husserl, expanded together with a circle of his followers at the universities of Göttingen and Munich in Germany, and spread across to France, the United States, and elsewhere, often in contexts far removed from Husserl's early work. Phenomenology, in Husserl's conception, is primarily concerned with the systematic reflection on an analysis of the structures of consciousness, and the phenomena that appear in acts of consciousness. Such reflection was to take place from a highly modified "first person" viewpoint, studying phenomena not as they appear to "my" consciousness, but to any consciousness whatsoever. Husserl believed that phenomenology could thus provide a firm basis for all human knowledge, including scientific knowledge, and could establish philosophy as a "rigorous science" of measurable perception. Husserl's conception of phenomenology has been criticized and developed not only by himself, but also by his students Edith Stein and Martin Heidegger, by existentialists, such as Max Scheler, Nicolai Hartmann, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre, and by other philosophers, such as Paul Ricoeur, Emmanuel Levinas, and sociologists Alfred Schütz and Eric Voegelin.

40 Thomas Luckmann; and Peter Berger, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Open Road Publisher, 1967), 46-93.



for their children to follow, and those rules become a child's externally-created reality that they cannot change. So reality is socially constructed.

Specific mechanisms underlying Berger and Luckmann's notion of social construction are discussed further elsewhere. Its roots in phenomenology show its links to Martin Heidegger<sup>41</sup> and Husserl through Schütz--Berger's doctoral studies adviser. In the 70s and 80s, the theory of social constructionism was adapted by sociologists influenced by eminent experts such as Michel Foucault, particularly as part of their social sciences narrative. This new narrative had a noticeable influence on the new sociology of science and the expanding field of science and technology studies.

Social constructionism was also employed by Karin Knorr-Cetina, Bruno Latour, Barry Barnes, Steve Woolgar, and others to shed new light on what scientists usually call objective facts, demonstrating that human subjectivity influences what we consider to be objective, and not the other way around.

A very stimulating example is Andrew Pickering's *Constructing Quarks: A Sociological History of Particle Physics*<sup>42</sup>. Widely regarded as a classic in its field, *Constructing Quarks* recounts the post-war conceptual development of elementary-particle physics. Pickering provocatively suggests that scientists are not mere passive observers or reporters of nature. Rather they are social beings and active constructors of natural phenomena who engage in both experimental and theoretical practices.

Other contributions in this field focus on technology, particularly the social construction of technology, or SCOT<sup>43</sup>. Authors like Wiebe Bijker, Trevor Pinch, and Maarten van Wesel are well known contributors to the literature. Even mathematics, perceived as an objective science, isn't immune to social constructionist accounts. Sociologists such as Sal Restivo and Randall Collins, mathematicians Reuben Hersh and Philip J. Davis, and philosophers including Paul Ernest, are among those who published social constructionist treatments of mathematics.

Needless to say, these contributions are very relevant to the social construction of economic thinking due to the traditional connection between mathematics and economics. These contributions enrich any qualitative analysis of economic thinking, and contribute to the creation of successful workforce development programs.

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41 Martin Heidegger. *Being and Time*; (New York, Harper & Row, 1962).

42 Andrew Pickering, *Constructing Quarks: A Sociological History of Particle Physics*. (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1984).

43 Social construction of technology (also referred to as SCOT) is a theory within Science and Technology Studies. Advocates of SCOT—that is, social constructivists -- argue that technology does not determine human action, but that rather, human action shapes technology. They also argue that the ways a technology is used cannot be understood without understanding how that technology is embedded in its social context. SCOT is a response to technological determinism and is sometimes known as technological constructivism.

Berger and Luckmann's manuscript, "The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge," presents three views of social life that explain the dynamic social construction of reality:

1. Society is a human product (specification, objectification)
2. Society is an objective reality (institutionalization, legitimization, ratification), and
3. Man is a social product (Internalization, socialization)

As stated earlier, Berger and Luckmann employed Husserl and Schütz's phenomenology to help them describe the overlap of culture and reality. They concluded that reality exists independently from our own willpower, determination or desires. Berger and Luckmann defined reality as "a quality of appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volitions<sup>44</sup>." In other words, individuals do not choose reality, it just exists.

So culture transforms reality regardless of any individual's intentions. It grows from socialization between individuals, and between individuals and their personal context. Individuals learn how to feel, think, and behave by following preset cultural standards and sets of values developed during the relational process of socialization. We consider culture our reality, but it is not. Individuals create culture, based on perceptions and interpretations of reality. Thus, culture is a social construction, and not an individual abstract endeavor that delineates reality.

Berger and Luckmann say there are three phases to the construction of social reality process. The first, externalization, refers to the manifestation of physical and mental activity in an individual's reality. Individuals create and externalize their perceived reality through cultural expressions.

Culture has two primary attributes. It produces meaning, and is passed from one generation to the next. Both elements are important; the first makes culture immensely powerful. Culture shapes individuals' value systems and perspectives of life. Individuals inhabiting their reality are led to believe, value, think and feel in explicit and quantifiable ways.

The second phase, objectification, deals with any matter or thing as an object. It allows individuals to assign meaning to human actions, creating the possibility of interaction and making meaning real. Once purpose or knowledge has been objectified, it eventually becomes fact. Stories, anecdotes, and reports serve to legitimize social world in the individuals' lives. Humans need legitimization, seeking meaning by asking themselves if the "facts" represent truth.

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44 Peter L. Berger, Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Page 153.

The third phase is internalization. During the first years of life, humans acquire lifelong memories, emotions, events, explanations, and language as they are imprinted in the brain as part of socialization<sup>45</sup>. Meaning is thus internalized and understood as a common sense—part of the culture we see as reality.

According to Karl E. Weick<sup>46</sup> the social construction of reality is a sense-making process and organizations ‘sense-making systems’, which constantly create and recreate conceptions of themselves and of everything around them. Their members reaffirm reality as they see it, and decide how to respond to it. Sense-making boils down to interpretation. Social construction identifies factual information by making sense, classifying, and understanding. Jacques Derrida<sup>47</sup>, Michael Foucault<sup>48</sup>, Louise Nicholson and Alistair R. Anderson<sup>49</sup> affirm that perceptions and interpretations are influenced by relational processes such as the colloquial exchange of ideas, discussions, narrations, and mass media communications.

Social constructionism emphasizes relational meaning creation processes as part of public knowledge development, and creating multiple perspectives on behaviors.

An individual gains insights while interacting with society and dealing with situations. Others observe this interaction, classify and label it using language, mathematics, signs, codes, etc. The interpretations spread, become dominant, and gain wide acceptance<sup>50</sup>. Individuals construct an external factual order that defines behavioral standards and sets of values that may become social norms.

The social construction of reality is subjective and objective at the same time. Individuals make decision based on subjective understandings of reality. People share facts, knowledge and interpretations of situations and events that are fixed in time and place, and labeled as being events of a category, note or consequence.

The concept of entrepreneurship grows from interaction among individuals in the marketplace; in process we call the social construction of economic thinking. It is based on market participants' positive image of entrepreneurship. It also motivated our program's participants, as we will see. This was communicated to case managers before the youth joined the program.

## **Language and Social Construction**

Language must also be considered in any analysis of social constructions. According to Gilbert Ryle<sup>51</sup>, and Karl Weick and Karlene Roberts,<sup>52</sup> language precedes thought as a

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45 P. L. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1966).

46 Karl Weick, *Sense-making in Organizations*, (New York, Sage, 1995).

47 Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1978.

48 Michael Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language* (New York, Pantheon Book 1969).

49 Louise Nicholson, Alistair R. Anderson, *News and Nuances of the Entrepreneurial Myth and Metaphor: Linguistic Games in Entrepreneurial Sense-Making and Sense-Giving*, *Entrepreneurship: Theory & Practice*, 29, 153-172. March 2005.

50 Elizabeth Chell, *The Entrepreneurial Personality: a Social Construction* (New York, New York, 2008).

51 Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2002).

precondition for thought; so without social interaction there can be no language. And as Ryle put it: “intelligence is the extent of our ability to comprehend social interaction and execute social behaviors adeptly<sup>53</sup>.”

Language objectifies a newborn's world and interactions. It defines father, mother, food, etc. At this stage of development, the child absorbs information shared by his/her parents or caregivers. Such information has a long-lasting impact on the way he or she perceives life's aspects, and how to react to scenarios in relation to others and within a given context.

Having acquired language, children begin constructing knowledge about themselves and others by labeling and categorizing their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. This prepares people to externalize their thoughts so they can articulate ideas, beliefs, and views. Through social interaction the individual accumulates knowledge and experiences, begins to categorize or label them, and adds meaning to present and future social situations.

Our program participants clearly followed this well-observed pattern, willingly adopting the label “entrepreneur” as they undertook a new economic behavior and identity within their society.

## **Knowledge and Social Construction**

Questions about knowledge have always attracted philosophers, policymakers, and social development practitioners<sup>54</sup>. Some sources of knowledge<sup>55</sup> are clearly outside the scope of this inquiry: mystical, spiritual, magical or religious insights for example. Figure 3 shows the two sources which have received by far the greatest attention<sup>56</sup>: (a) material determinism and (b) mental determinism.

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52 Karl Weick, and Karlina Roberts, *Collective Mind in Organizations: Heedful Interrelating on Flight Decks* (Michigan, University of Michigan Ann Arbor, 1993).

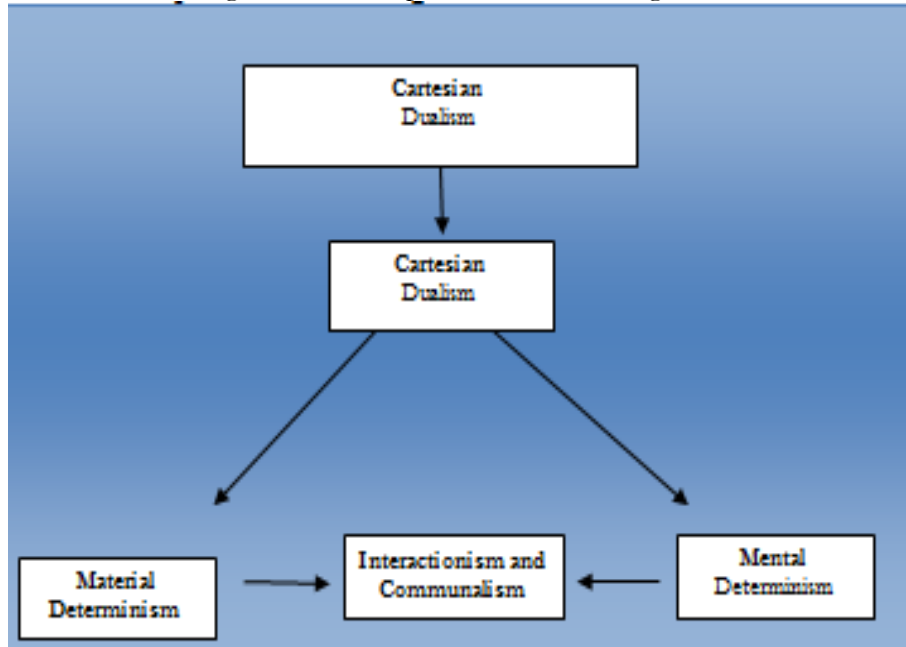
53 Same as prior two footnotes.

54 Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge & Kegan, Paul, 1975).

55 Michael Polanyi and Harry Prosch, *Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1975, Book).

56 Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1945).

Figure 3. Philosophical Positions Diagram<sup>57</sup>



As Dan Sperber observed in his book *Anthropological Knowledge*<sup>58</sup>:

If humans share specific attributes beyond anatomy, these must be the mental capacities which make possible the development of languages, cultures, and social systems. But what are these capacities? For an empiricist like Locke, these capacities amount to an indefinite malleability and receptiveness, so that knowledge owes all its content and structure to experience and the environment. For rationalists such as Kant, human cognitive capacities comprise innate categories and principles, which structure human knowledge and limit its variability<sup>59</sup>.

This mind/matter distinction even applied to Platonic ideals vs. Aristotelian substances<sup>60</sup>, but the contemporary narrative began with Descartes and the Cartesian dualism that distinguished body and soul, mind versus matter, mental versus the physical, and subject versus object<sup>61</sup>. Besides emphasizing a mind/body problem that has always intrigued modern

57 Elizabeth Hirschman and Morris. *Handbook Postmodern Consumer Research* (London: SAGE Publications. 1992).

58 Dan Sperber, *Anthropological Knowledge* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985).

59 Same as prior footnote.

60 Roger Scruton, *From Descartes to Wittgenstein: a short history of modern philosophy* (New York: New York, 1981).

61 R.J. Bernstein, R. J. *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), p.116; and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *Meaning and Modernity: Social Theory in the Pragmatic Mode* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

philosophers, Cartesian dualism created an epistemological division between two extreme approaches to the problem of knowledge.

At one extreme, as indicated by our diagram in figure 3, one might follow Descartes himself into a kind of mental determinism or rationalism, in which all knowledge originates in the operation of pure reason. At the other extreme, following in the footsteps of Galileo, Newton, Bacon, Hobbes and Locke, one might espouse common sense empiricism of material determinism and state that all knowledge is developed from our direct experience of the material world via self-awareness. Of course, any specific individual may choose consciously or unconsciously to which sources of knowledge to employ when considering a given aspect of reality or problem, and another to comprehend an alternative reality or problem. It's also possible to acquire knowledge about the same issue, reality or problem from both sources of knowledge.

Cartesian dualism posits two partially separated routes of interactionism and communalism: what we now know as the continuum of possible epistemological positions on the origin of knowledge.

At one extreme are philosophies rooted in material determinism, such as common sense or logistic empiricism, associated with a physical construction of reality (PCR). At the other extreme is the rationalism that assumes mental determinism of knowledge and the mental construction of reality (MCR). In between, other philosophies feature some combination of the two. In order of relative relevance and alignment to material determinism or mental determinism, these include: social-economic construction of reality (SCR), linguistic construction of reality (LCR), and individual construction of reality (ICR).

Elizabeth Hirschman and Morris B. Holbrook interestingly write that all these positions can coexist in different proportions within the same individual or group in a very dynamic and interrelated manner. For example an economic theorist might be in the habit of methodically gathering most of his or her knowledge concerning everyday life, while maintaining a strong interest in spirituality. This is because any source of information or knowledge has a limited ability to explain any issue, problem or reality. Similar limitations and benefits also apply to the social sciences, including economics.

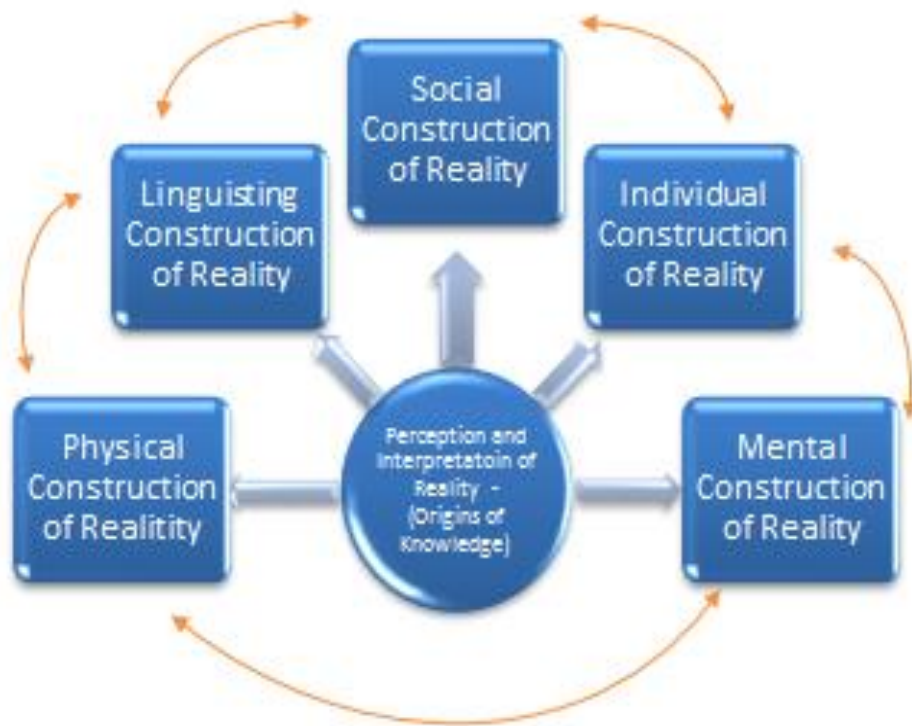
Figure 4. A Continuum of Philosophical Positions on the Origin of Knowledge

	Material Determinism		Mental Determinism		
	<u>Empiricism</u>	<u>Socio-economic Constructionism</u>	<u>Interpretivism</u>	<u>Subjectivism</u>	<u>Rationalism</u>
Philosophy	(Commonsense Empiricism, Logical Empiricism)	(Marxism, Sociology of Knowledge, Ethnomethodology, Genetic Structuralism)	(Hermeneutics, Semiotics, Structural Criticism)	(Phenomenology, Existentialism)	(Ideals, Innate Ideas, Archetypes)
View or Reality	Physical Construction of Reality (PCR)	Social Construction of Reality (SCR)	Linguistic Construction of Reality (LCR)	Individual Construction of Reality (ICR)	Mental Construction of Reality (MCR)
Representative Scholars	Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Ayer, <u>Hempel</u> , Popper	Marx, Engels, Mannheim, Schultz, <u>Garfinkel</u> , <u>Goldmann</u>	Schleiermacher, <u>Dilthey</u>	Sartre, Heidegger, Husserl	Plato, <u>Liebnitz</u> , Spinoza, Fichte, Kant, Jung

Figure 4 lists the five philosophical positions used in this study to indicate primary sources of knowledge. Yet I consider the socioeconomic construction of reality the one approach that can help us understand the development of economic thinking, and the role of entrepreneurship in the American economic system. It alone can promote inter-subjectivity and social interactions in the creation of knowledge.

Figure 4 lists each philosophical position and respective view of reality, along with representative scholars. Any of these philosophical approaches might serve as the genesis of any idea. They are also compatible with social construction perspectives. Ideas are generated and spread by people and become part of culture and tradition. Later they may be institutionalized into law, rules, and regulations that monitor and perhaps regulate various markets or socioeconomic behaviors.

*Figure 5: Philosophical Positions on Origin of Knowledge*



Advocates of any school may argue that it started through a process of subjectivism or rationalism; but it founder(s) always started with their own social constructions. As mentioned earlier, when ideas are conveyed, accepted, and practiced by others, the concept or idea becomes socially embedded to some extent, and eventually a part of social reality. When trying to measure the impact of ideas or philosophies in a society, we take into account socially constructed socio-economic ideas that had a profound influence on a community's standard of living and quality of life.



According to Dr. Sheila McNamee<sup>62</sup> the fundamental premise of social constructionism is that knowledge is not created by individuals, found in the his or her mind, or discovered by only one person; meaning is a joint achievement of people interacting with each other. In the case of the social construction of economic thinking, it occurs in a market context. Such interaction leads to the construction of knowledge, value systems, and behavioral norms in the market. Also, all knowledge (as the interpretation of reality) is provisional and contestable by some other culture or community over time. Any interpretation of reality may be considered a fallacy in another culture and time when the social construction of reality is different; knowledge, as dynamic and universal as it is, is the basis for reality. We use these criteria, dependent as they are on culture and specific socioeconomic situations, as a lens when evaluating contributions to economic thinking.

### **From Theory to Practice - Micro-enterprise to Macroeconomics**

In this section we summarize our study's thought process as it supports a case for the social construction of economic thinking, and its virtue as a transformative force. First, we suggest that individuals and their cultures, through a socialization process construct their own socioeconomic realities and marketplace. The market's social constructs come from a relational process of business interactions performed by individuals in a market context.

Second, as these constructions develop, different socioeconomic behaviors serve as a base for the formation of different types of markets and later of economic systems. Once fully functional, the economic system will favor the type of economic behavior that shaped it, such as entrepreneurial activity. Individuals with entrepreneurial potential are welcomed into communities that embrace market economies, because they expect to benefit from successful entrepreneurs.

Lastly, members of a group that finds it difficult to integrate into an economy could benefit from developing their perceptions and interpretative constructions within the existing economic system, transforming how they perceive themselves, their behavior, and potential for growth within their communities.

Cool Entrepreneurship Program participants developed mentally at least in part from interaction with in the US market. They tend to have a positive view of entrepreneurs and an appreciation for entrepreneurial activities. Yet their realities are also influenced by race, class, education and gender impediments. These factors determine how participants' realities are constructed—what may hinder or enhance their lives. When deconstructing any socioeconomic reality, it is important to understand the implications of the barriers faced by

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<sup>62</sup> Sheila McNamee, *Research as Social Construction: Transformative Inquiry* (New Hampshire, University of New Hampshire Press, 2010).

at-risk youth participants—many with minority backgrounds<sup>63</sup>. Despite such significant barriers, the entrepreneurship program allows students to interact with facilitators and each other to create a language, a meaning, and understanding that is unique and useful to them. Students surprised us with the new insights developed during this social process of learning. This experience increases their chances of overcoming future challenges, and opens opportunities for alternative realities and perspectives about who they are and what they have to offer.

The social construction of economic thinking has a profound impact on how communities develop business practices, from micro-enterprise transactions in local retail markets, to the macroeconomic financial markets. Ultimately it even defines prevailing economic systems. Individuals' cultural backgrounds influence the social construction of market business practices. The social construction of markets builds on perceptions and interpretations nurtured within the socioeconomic reality, which is ultimately based on social construction of economic thinking.

In other words, depending on the perception and interpretation of their socioeconomic reality, communities construct economic systems characterized by specific business practices. The three most basic and general economic systems are: market economy (such as capitalism), mixed economy (a centrist economic system) and planned economy (the basis of several socialist or social democratic systems).

In a market economy, the price of goods and services is determined by supply and demand; in planned economies, on the other hand, prices are set by the state. A mixed economy has a mixed price-setting system that varies from country to country. Today's fundamental economic philosophies are: laissez-faire (i. e., non-involvement of the government in business), free enterprise (including free trade), and focus on the bottom line (maximizing profits equals maximizing revenues and minimizing cost). A market economy is similarly based on a social construction of economic thinking that is relevant to individuals and communities.

This inquiry is based on a US social construction of the market and entrepreneurship, more specifically, in Florida's Miami-Dade County. The US operates as a market economy and thrives on entrepreneurial activity to maintain high standards of living; as a result, entrepreneurs are highly regarded and encouraged. US entrepreneurs are considered agents of change and increasing prosperity. Entrepreneurs--essentially people who aggressively develop new enterprises, ventures or ideas--assume significant personal responsibility for the inherent risks and outcomes. The entrepreneur is the innovator in a market economy.

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63 2010 Miami-Dade County, Florida Reform of the Juvenile Justice System Report. Miami-Dade County Administration, Miami, Florida, 2011.

Under this country's socially constructed models of market and entrepreneurship, workforce development programs develop entrepreneurship programs intended to align client populations facing social integration challenges for greater success. This inquiry discovered the real value of intervention programs that help individuals develop social constructions of economic thinking in their particular context or market. The same social economic constructions of economic thinking that shaped the nation's macro and micro-economics can support the development and customization of programs that promote socioeconomic interventions for groups challenged by long-term social integration. The last section of this inquiry will present the conception, development, implementation, and evaluation of an entrepreneurship program customized for at-risk youth based on socially constructed concepts of entrepreneurship in the US market economy.

### **Another Example of Social Constructions**

On March 1, 2012, Ms. Krista Tippett, host of the American Public Media radio show "On, Being," interviewed renowned physicist Sylvester James Gates Jr. on uncovering the codes for reality<sup>64</sup>. Dr. Gates is professor and director of the Center for String and Particle Theory at the University of Maryland. During the interview, he mentioned concept constructions in physics as a very inclusive and dynamic process. Such communal activity among physicists requires a common language to help exchange perceptions and interpretations of reality. Needless to say, these interpretations of reality are highly influenced by human limitations and linguistic limitations. The most common language utilized by physicists is mathematics, despite its many limitations and constraints. He said: "I wanted to find a beautiful mathematics piece of magic which was also an accurate description of something in nature<sup>65</sup>." He suggested that in order to increase knowledge or meaning, scientists must be in constant dialogue with nature as well as with other scientists. This reminds us that some aspects of reality cannot be measured; thus mathematics--a quantitative science--can only explain a piece of the universe or reality. We also need to integrate qualitative sources of information gathering to measure and develop more subtle or nuanced realities.

Exploring the act of naming objects, subjects, processes, etc., he suggested that the process of naming in the US reflects an awareness of the existence of something or somebody, and not necessarily Americans' understanding of the subjects. Although the interview didn't specifically mention social constructionism, the connection to Ian Hacking's book *The Social Construction of What* was striking; particularly to Chapter Three "What about Natural Sciences?"<sup>66</sup>

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64 Sylvester James Gates, interview by Krista Tippett, On Being, 91.3 NPR-APM FM, March 1, 2012.

65 Same as before.

66 Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999).

When discussing scientific concept construction as a communal activity, I was reminded of Kenneth Gergen's<sup>67</sup> perspective on human intelligibility (including claims to knowledge), where he describes knowledge as being generated through a relational process. He states that human relationships provide a base for our conceptions of what is real, rational, and good. Therefore, all scientific theories should be evaluated in terms of practical human outcomes, rather than their correctness or empirical "Truth," because our understanding of truth is directly influenced by individuals' values, morals and culture-- economic theories in this case.

Hacking's and Gergen's contributions can be applied directly to Gates' discussion on codes for reality. Economics as a discipline benefits from the same contributions, and economists experience the same relational process of knowledge creation as physicists.

My study is not simply intended to introduce economic thinking as a social construction. It also shows how at-risk youth construct realities that align to the prevalent market philosophies. The At-Risk Youth program works is transformative. In the next chapter, let's look more carefully at the Social Construction of Economic Thinking.

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<sup>67</sup>Kenneth J. Gergen. *An Invitation to Social Construction*. (London: Sage Publications, 1999).

## Chapter 4

### Social Construction of Economic Thinking

#### Are Economic Ideas Socially Constructed?

Any answer must account for psychological and sociological factors including the perceptions, interpretations and creativity of the economic theorist. Meaningful economic ideas start when economists attempt to understand social phenomena, tap into systematic approaches that measure the challenges, and provide alternative interpretations and possible solutions. Economic ideas are socially constructed because they are not independent of historical and contextual influences. Economic meaning is socially derived and developed.

The Industrial Revolution marked a major turning point in Western history; almost every aspect of daily life was influenced in some way, impacting how a person perceives and interprets life as a whole. During this period, from the late 18th to the 19th century, technology exerted a profound effect on socioeconomic and cultural conditions. Thousands of people moved into cities, abandoning their farming lifestyles in search of employment opportunities in the manufacturing sector. The Industrial Revolution was about systematically organizing factors of production --resources--to create wealth. This set the stage for entrepreneurial business practices, and eventually ingrained entrepreneurial behavior.

Economists, like other social theorists, think abstractly. They do math, write and read silently in completely independent processes; this does not mean that these mental processes do not need economic knowledge influenced by socioeconomic contexts. Analytical processes are learned behaviors, in which interactions with other practitioners are a precursor to the learning process. Thus, economic meaning is indeed socially derived and constructed.

The mind is not a mirror simply reflecting reality or the external world<sup>68</sup>. Economists and other social theorists prefer to assume that his or her mind can operate independently of subjective influence; objectively, without prejudice or bias. But Kenneth Gergen<sup>69</sup> argues that “objectivity” cannot refer to a relationship between the mind and the world; rather, objectivity is achieved when professionals--in this case economists and social theorists--speak and write in particular ways. Such practices create economic schools of thoughts that may splinter into sub-cultures and groups; however, as Deetz<sup>70</sup> points out, scientists also make judgments, decisions and choices based on his or her psychological and sociological makeup before conducting research. This doesn't make their judgment erroneous. It just

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68 Kenneth Gergen, *An Invitation to Social Construction* (New York: Sage, 2009), 74.

69 Kenneth Gergen, *An Invitation to Social Construction* (New York: Sage, 2009), 74-76.

70 Stanley Deetz, *Describing Differences in Approaches to Organization Science: Rethinking Burrell and Morgan and Their Legacy* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Organization Science, 7:191–207).

shows that scientists (including economists) are also averse to expressing subjective reflections or judgments in public. Extrapolating from Berger and Luckmann<sup>71</sup> in their *Social Construction of Reality*, the social construction of economic thinking, as a public activity, provides a platform for private psychological constructionism by establishing the meaning of a market as context.

Studying complex and multi-dimensional socio-economic phenomena, we evaluate and analyze intangible data elements that challenge important scientific methodologies to demonstrate the validity of our data and the reliability of econometric models. Economists may gather data scientifically for empirical and theoretical purposes, but should remain keenly aware of prejudgments and/or personal bias.

As with other social sciences, in economic research objectivity and subjectivity are a matter of perspective. The knowledge derived from analysis is not absolute. It hinges on the special reality within which the analysis has been conducted. Social science knowledge, built up from the perspectives of multiple observers, allows for multiple and alternative understandings of the same socioeconomic reality. So what is the context and background of the socioeconomic analysis? These will be shaped by language, the social setting, and implicit measurement methodologies.

Our perceptions of reality carry meaning, information and shared understanding of a phenomenon. Multiple layers of meaning and understanding appear as the economist builds upon existing economic theories. Generally speaking, empirical economic knowledge is based on probability, scientific methods, and collective understanding; it follows then that economic thinking is socially constructed, while economic knowledge contributes to the social construction of the market and, therefore promotes entrepreneurial activity.

Language always plays a very important role in carrying the meaning which influences policy-making and implementation. Alfred Marshall, knowing how a lack of linguistic clarity and precision leads to misunderstanding when explaining economic propositions, introduced calculus to his economic analyses to simplify information sharing. Marshall saw mathematics as a kind of shorthand language, rather than an engine of inquiry. Combining mathematics and economics in this way is certainly a novel approach. After all, mathematics deals with well-defined and abstract relationships, and economics with an empirical set of facts and socio-economic relations subject to the perception and interpretation of the economist and the influence of the predominant culture. Marshall himself said, "economists should always illustrate by examples that are important in real life,

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<sup>71</sup> Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, N.Y.:Anchor - Doubleday, 1967).

and burn the mathematics after the analyst is finished with the Study<sup>72</sup>.” Yet Marshall sought a better way to communicate economic ideas to avoid misunderstandings, concerned about the misuse of language and rigid formalism. He was aware of that seductive intellectual trap, the illusion of objectivity<sup>73</sup>; it occurs when the sense of certainty and security from manipulation of mathematical axioms and techniques contaminates an account of empirical socioeconomic phenomena. In social interaction, language is a prerequisite to thought and meaning when defining reality; this also applies to using economic thought and meaning to define socioeconomic reality.

### Dynamic Progression of Economic Ideas

An economic idea shapes schools of thought in a dynamic process that progresses from perception to implementation. Figure 6 illustrates the dynamic progression from perception to interpretation, group expectations, decision-making, and implementation under social constructionism. An individual perceives reality as part of a relational process, interprets it based on social expectations, creates meaning, then decides what action is needed. Descartes’ “I think, therefore I am,” confirms our existence. Despite evidence of the real source of knowledge and our realities, he emphasized the mind as pre-existing matter.

Figure 6: Dynamic Progression of Economic Ideas



<sup>72</sup> Joel Franklin, *The American Mathematical Monthly*, April 1983, Volume 90, Number 4, pp. 229–244. *Mathematical Methods of Economics*, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California.

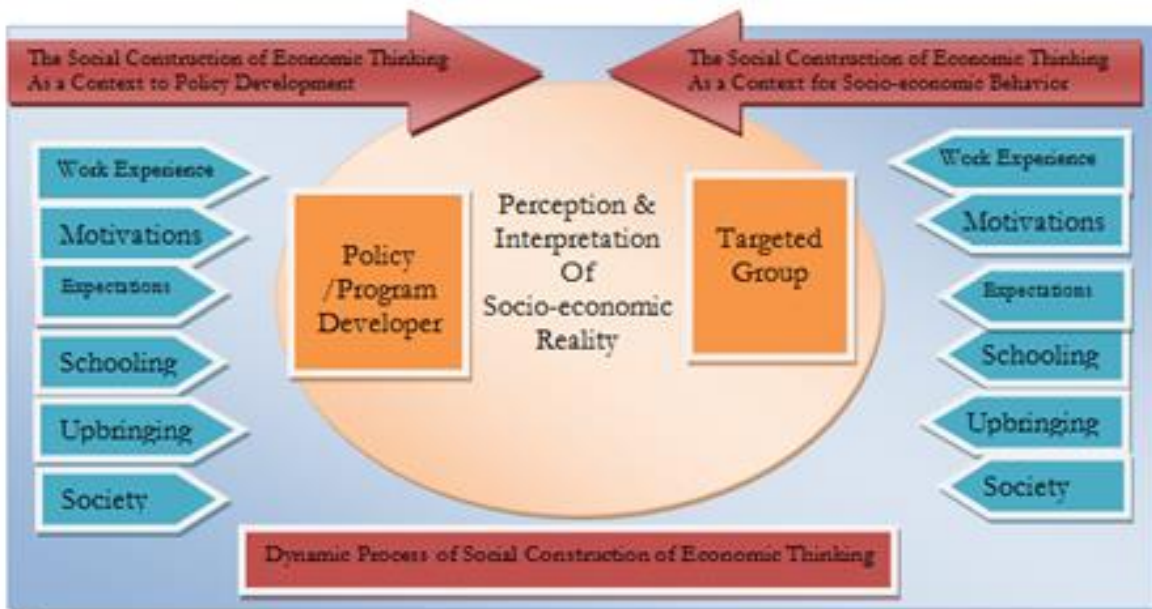
<sup>73</sup> Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947) was a British mathematician, logician and philosopher best known for his work in mathematical logic and the philosophy of science. According to Whitehead the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness is the error of mistaking the abstract for the concrete. *Science and the Modern World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926 (1925, 64, 72).

In the case of the social construction of economic thinking, “We perceive, we interpret, we develop knowledge (meaning), we internalize<sup>74</sup>, then we think, and then we decide and take action<sup>75</sup>.” When describing socioeconomic behavior, this statement relates to consumption behavior in specific markets.

### A Dynamic Process

The social construction of economic thinking is a dynamic process. When accepted, spread, and institutionalized it generates value systems, which in turn create expected socioeconomic behaviors shared by members of a society or groups. The developer and target group meet and negotiate a reality. The following chart illustrates the dynamic process of the social construction of economic thinking during policy/program development and promoting desirable socioeconomic behavior.

Figure 7: Dynamic Process of Social Construction of Economic Thinking



### Social Construction of Economic Thinking and Its Impact on the Market

The market is a public place where sellers and buyers gather to exchange money for goods or services. Buyers come to the market with needs and expectations in search of goods and services that offer desirable quality and pricing. When buyers' needs and expectations are

74 The study uses the concept of internalization as creation of value system.

75 This is my own proposition.



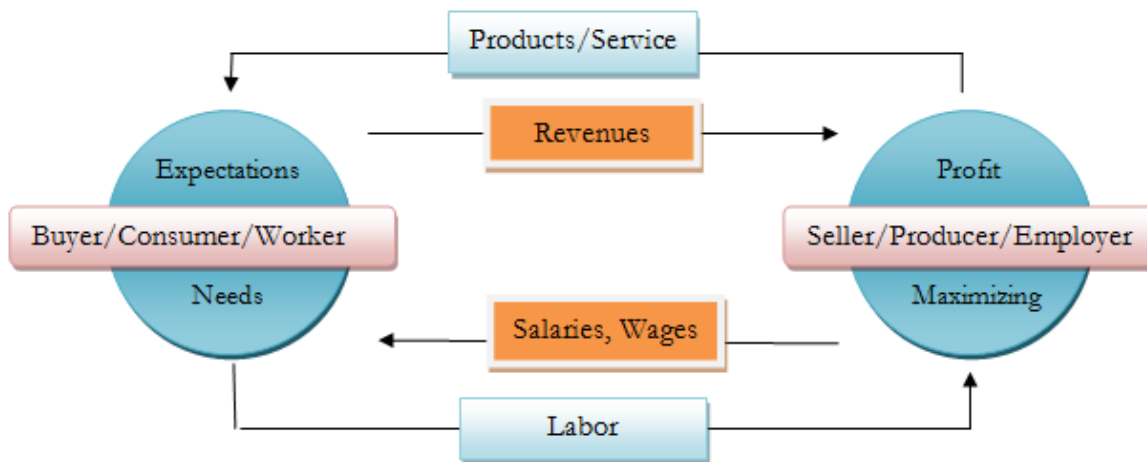
met, their satisfaction levels go up<sup>76</sup>. On the other hand, sellers attempt to maximize their revenues and profits by selling their goods and services in markets no longer confined to a specific physical area, but with reasonable expectation of a transaction in which a dynamic, mutually beneficial experience for buyer and seller is still the ideal.

Of course such transactions are subject to the understanding, perceptions and interpretation of the buyers, regarding their relationship with the products or services, prices, vendor-buyer relationships, buyers' expectations, etc. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann in *The Social Construction of Reality* write that any basic knowledge is derived from and maintained by social interaction. The following remarks from the book suggests the premise on which the concept of the market is built, built on the social interaction and relationship building:

“The world of everyday life is not only taken for granted as a reality by the ordinary members of society in the subjectively meaningful conduct of their lives. It is a world that originates in their thoughts and actions, and is maintained as real by these<sup>77</sup>.”

The market, as another way in which human beings interact socially, makes it subject to all of our social expectations, perceptions, interpretations, preferences, etc.

Figure 8: Dynamic Market Flow from Households to Business (Vice versa)



This diagram represents the flow of market interactions between buyers and sellers. Both have a set of expectations which the market is intended to fulfill. Berger and Luckmann<sup>78</sup> write that social order exists only as a product of human activity and

76 Measuring satisfaction levels could be a tricky proposition particularly because the complexity of aggregating individuals needs and expectations in an attempt to develop market trends. Each individual internalizes satisfaction and fulfillment differently from every other.

77 Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Anchor Books, 1966), 20.

78 Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Anchor Books, 1966), 52.

socialization. The market is a stage on which buyer and sellers exchange money for products and services, or other products, but also where reality is created by social interaction.

Berger and Luckmann do not describe the market as a product of social interaction, but indirectly support the idea of market as social construction. The market is undoubtedly created by individuals' social actions, which they come to know through their socialization within a particular community and their personal experiences with buying and selling goods and services. In other words, the market is one byproduct of social interactions that exist as both objective and subjective reality.

The market shaped by socially constructed ideas may function either within a democratic open-market economy or a totalitarian closed economy. Either extreme establishes different standards of living, quality of life, and expected socioeconomic behavior based on prevailing views of entrepreneurialism.

If, for example, a group of buyers and sellers is encouraged to promote entrepreneurial business, then the community is much more likely to practice an open-market economy<sup>79</sup> that features entrepreneurship. If, on the other hand, the entrepreneurial spirit is regarded as opportunistic, negative and even evil, then the community most likely not be opened market economy.

All of this is based on socially constructed ideas created by economists at the center of their different schools of thought on socioeconomic realities. Sometimes, the natural evolution of a socioeconomic behavior can reflect a socially constructed idea; so anyone developing and implementing ideas that end up becoming the pillars for policy development must be aware of all possible ramifications. By naturalizing specific socioeconomic behaviors, we as communities promote values that govern our socioeconomic relationships with one another.

The social construction of economic ideas determines how we interact with each other in the universe called a “market”—delineating value formation, linguistic expression, and human behavior—and ultimately create our socioeconomic realities. When this understanding is internalized<sup>80</sup>, a number of alternatives can help us tackle the socioeconomic challenges we must deal with as a society.

Another key point about the social construction of economic thinking was made by Professor Ha-Joon Chang in his book *Globalization, Economic Development, and the Role of the State*<sup>81</sup>.

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79 Market Economy, InvestorWords., “Definitions.” 2011.

[www.investorwords.com/2971/market\\_economy.html#ixzz14KgyVZUU](http://www.investorwords.com/2971/market_economy.html#ixzz14KgyVZUU).

80 The study uses the word “internalizing when referring to the way that a person experiences something - influenced by the meaning they attribute to it and creating a value system.

81 Ha-Joon Chang, *Globalization, Economic Development, and the Role of the State* (New York: Zed Books Ltd. New York, NY, USA, 2008).

Chang sees the market as a socio-political construction<sup>82</sup> process that is anything but scientific or natural—a social entity with its structure defined through interpersonal relations. In another book, *23 Things They Don't Tell You About Capitalism*<sup>83</sup>, Professor Chang also challenged several economic principles regarding the direct relationship<sup>84</sup> between attained skill sets and earnings. It is a truism that the higher an individual's educational level or skill set, the higher their pay or compensation. Professor Chang compared skill sets and compensations of two bus drivers: one in Calcutta, India and the other in Waco, Texas. A bus driver in Calcutta has stronger skill sets due to the demands of the job. He also must be a skilled mechanic, able to drive through crowds of people, street animals (cows, dogs, etc.), street vendors in poorly maintained roads, and without traffic lights and signals. The bus driver in Texas enjoys better working conditions, equipment, better roads, higher technologies, and in many regards a much less demanding job. Yet the Indian bus driver gets paid one-fiftieth as much as his counterpart in Texas.

Professor Chang states that compensation is determined by the market structures created by people's interactions with one another. This means salary is not naturally or scientifically determined, but the result of the same social constructions that created the market. This example illustrates social constructionism's alternative perspective on salary structure among occupations in different realities, and how we interact with each other in the market.

A study for the Social Construction of Economic Thinking lays out how the shaping and formulation of America's market economy, and its relationship with the entrepreneurial in theory and practice, can be understood from a social construction perspective. It shows how the perception and interpretation of individuals' economic and social "realities" play a crucial role in the development of micro-enterprises, as well as the community's macroeconomics. It further illustrates how the market economy developed through a relational interaction with the individual constructs' knowledge, meanings, value systems, and standards, and how this interaction transformed and opened alternative realities for the at-risk youth participating in the "Cool Entrepreneur" program.

### **Social Construction of Economic Thinking and its Relationship to Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurial fundamentals find their support in open-market economic philosophies discussed in the prior paragraphs and in Chapter 3 concerning dominant economic philosophies. In other words, entrepreneurial fundamentals and practices can take advantage of economic systems based on *laissez-faire* (i.e., non-involvement of the government in business), free enterprise (including free trade), and focus on the bottom line

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82 Socio-political construction of market is equivalent to social construction of market in the sense that the concept gets institutionalized in society through a political ideology which develops from social constructions of their political participants.

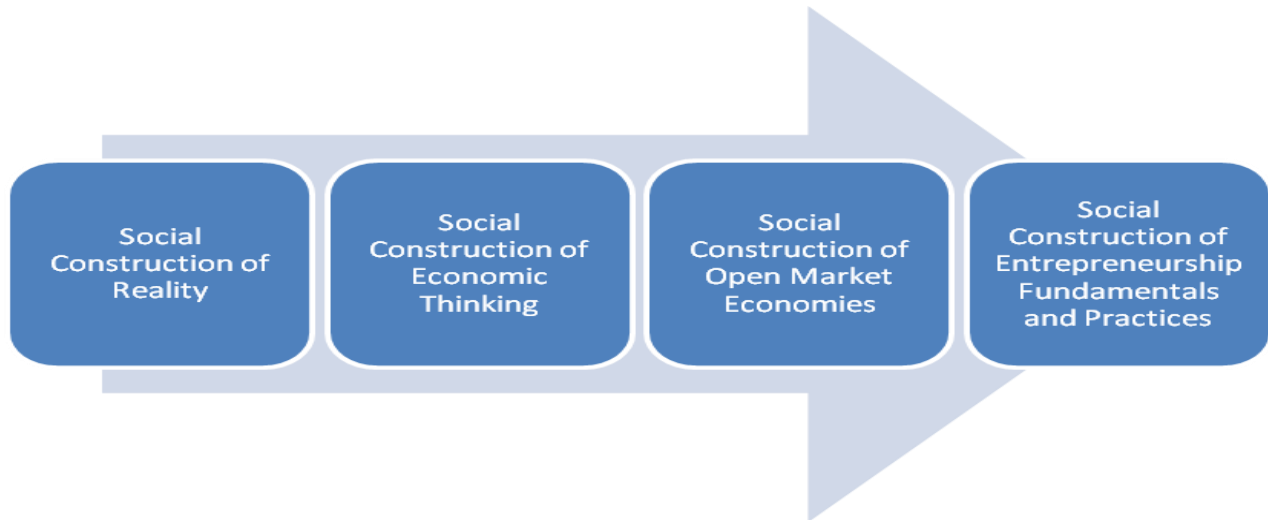
83 Ha-Joon Chang, *23 Things They Don't Tell You About Capitalism* (Bloomsbury, USA, 2011).

84 In mathematics and statistics, a positive or direct relationship is a relationship between two variables in which change in one variable is associated with a change in the other variable in the same direction. For example all linear relationships with a positive slope are direct relationships. Such direct relationships are very widely used in science and mathematics. In a direct relationship, as one variable, say x, increases, the other variable, say y, also increases, and if one variable decreases.

(maximizing profits = maximizing revenues and minimizing cost). As stated before, economic philosophies (economic thinking) are a collection of social constructions. The development and implementation of a market economy--also based on social constructions of economic thinking--serve as a context for the foundation and practice of entrepreneurship activities.

The following graph shows the development and relationship between the social construction of economic thinking, and entrepreneurship fundamentals and practices. Entrepreneurs develop knowledge from a relational process whenever they interact with other individuals, in a market environment socially constructed based on the predominant economic philosophies, which were themselves socially constructed.

Figure 9: The Relationship of Social Constructionism and Entrepreneurship



Historically, entrepreneurs have not been warmly welcomed. Prevailing socioeconomic culture has always preferred risk aversion and employment security, so leaders tend to fear the entrepreneurial management style and aggressive product innovation. This has led to a more gradual development and implementation of entrepreneurial ideas and practices over the years, reinforced by political factions hoping to generate legitimacy by perpetuating the “status quo.” In different eras, cultural shifts have made some interplay between ideas of change and their manifestations possible, eventually facilitating social acceptance of entrepreneurial practices.

### **The Evolution of Entrepreneurship: Main Contributors to Its Concept and Practice**

Over the last four centuries the entrepreneurship model has been built, in varying degrees, from the attention of several important economists. Let's briefly examine the main social constructions that paved the way for the modern concept and definition of entrepreneurs. Several schools consider entrepreneurs a member of a ruling capitalist class that imposes

culture “top down.” Others see an entrepreneur as a risk-taking innovator, decision-maker, industrial leader, organizer and coordinator of economic resources; someone who promotes social transformation through his or her entrepreneurial activities. These social constructions also shaped the understanding of entrepreneurship we introduced to participants in the Cool Entrepreneur Program.

Adam Smith (1723 –1790), a Scottish social theorist and philosopher, authored *Theory of Moral Sentiments*<sup>85</sup> and *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*<sup>86</sup>. The latter dominated theoretical economic thought from the late 1800s until the beginning of the 1900s, influencing the acceptance of an open economic behavior to include self-interest exercised by the “Economic man.” This Economic man concept helped classical economists separate man’s economic behavior from his other behavior. In an individual human consciousness, economic values and ethical values coexist and often affect each other. We motivate a person to behave in a specific way, Smith wrote, through his or her self-interest. In one of his most famous quotes:

It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love<sup>87</sup>. (Smith, 1776, Book I, Chapter 7.)

Smith considered entrepreneurship “the search for the pleasures of wealth and greatness<sup>88</sup>.” Smith gave special honor to entrepreneurial activity as the engine of a capitalist economic system. Smith’s entrepreneur exercises self-controlled economic activity in order to win the approval of his fellow man.

A second contributor to the concept of entrepreneur was Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), an English utilitarian philosopher and social reformer. In *The Principles of Morals and Legislation*<sup>89</sup>, Bentham calls entrepreneurs exceptional individuals whose imagination and inventiveness have promoted the progress of nations and an agent of socioeconomic change ready to develop society. In *Defense of Usury*<sup>90</sup>, Bentham said that usury laws limited the entrepreneur's ability to get financial loans for business, ultimately constraining socioeconomic progress and society’s happiness.

Adding to Smith’s contribution was Jean-Baptiste Say (1767–1832), a French classical economist and businessman whose liberal views favored competition and free trade. Say coined the French word “Entrepreneur,” usually translated as “adventurer.” Having studied Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, he considered the omission of enterprising

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85 Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: London, 1759).

86 Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, (London, London, 1776).

87 Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (London, London, 1776).

88 Same as before.

89 Jeremy Betham, Jeremy, *The Principles of Morals and Legislation* (London, London, 1781).

90 Jeremy Betham, Jeremy, *Defense of Usury* (London: London, 1787).

businessmen a serious flaw. Say highlighted the critical and innovative roles that entrepreneurs play in the economy, describing them as forecasters, project appraisers and risk-taker who exercise moral qualities of judgment and perseverance, is knowledgeable of the world, and who looks for more efficient use of resources and capital to move them into more productive, higher yield areas and create new markets and fresh opportunities. In *Political Economy of Production, Distribution, and Consumption of Wealth*<sup>91</sup>, Say placed the entrepreneur in a central role as an agent of change.

David Ricardo (1772 – 1823), an English political economist, is often credited with systematizing economics. He developed strong professional relationships and friendships with economists such as Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill, leading to regular discussions on the concept of the entrepreneur as "business manager." Smith and Ricardo did not publicly distinguish between a capitalist and the entrepreneur.

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)--political economist, Member of Parliament, and philosopher-- along with Jean-Baptiste Say popularized the academic use of the word "entrepreneur." Mill's popular 1848 book, *Principles of Political Economy*<sup>92</sup>, defined the entrepreneur as a person who exercises risk, makes decisions, and desires wealth and management of a business. Mill distinguished between entrepreneurs and other business owners (such as shareholders of a corporation), who assume financial risk but do not actively participate in the firm's day-to-day operations or management.

Leon Walras (1834 – 1910) was born in Clarens, Switzerland. He is generally considered the father of the "equilibrium theory," which identified four factors of production: labor, landowner, capitalist and entrepreneur. Walras excluded resource management and coordination from the entrepreneurs category, because they receive wages. He mentioned the entrepreneur's equalizing role in the economy, and interest in profitable endeavors.

Alfred Marshall (1842 – 1924), a native of Bermondsey, London, combined Say's resource component with Mill's management component. Marshall believed entrepreneurs must thoroughly understand their industries and be natural leaders. Marshall's entrepreneurs also must anticipate changes in supply and demand, and be willing to move forward on risky forecasts.

Joseph Schumpeter (1883 – 1950) was an Austrian economist and political theorist. He saw the entrepreneur as an innovator, central to business economic growth. Schumpeter's views on entrepreneurs and their importance to economic growth in Europe and America greatly influenced and motivated many individuals to behave more entrepreneurially. Schumpeter considered entrepreneurs the force behind innovation, who lead the way by creating new

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91 Jean-Baptiste Say, *Political Economy of Production, Distribution, and Consumption of Wealth* (New York, New York, 1821).

92 Stuart Mill, James, *Principles of Political Economy* (London; Longmans, Green and Co. 1848).

industries and new products, thus creating new economic activities to push the economy into equilibrium and drive economic development. Schumpeter, believing that innovation and technological change begin with entrepreneurs, coined the term “entrepreneurial spirit.”

Social constructions as described by experts from Smith to Schumpeter affect at-risk youth's views on the entrepreneurial model. As a society we develop the meaning of entrepreneurship and entrepreneur in the social context. All social constructions are embedded in our culture and affect how we see reality. In the next chapters, we will see how at-risk youth's perception of entrepreneur was a key element in the success of the program.

Christ Steyarts' contributions provided a base for defining our assumptions to support our understanding of entrepreneurship. This base enhanced our ability as research entrepreneurs to enact and reflect upon the entrepreneurial process, and consequently, provide the flexibility for innovative forms of intervening in a transformational way. As Steyarts indicated in his essay “Entrepreneurship as in(ter)vention<sup>93</sup>,” it is important to know when teaching entrepreneurship that every question, every comment, every handshake, etc. could be memorable<sup>94</sup>. Therefore, a transformational experience from the social constructionist perspective can occur. This realization is very important in order to create a fertile ground for exchange of ideas, experiences and understandings.

When developing the program and identifying the participating instructors, we needed to understand the scholarship process (teaching/learning) as an intervention. From the onset, we discussed our own understanding of entrepreneurship and its role in the US market economy. We remained sensitive to the way we conceptualized the theory, method, and intervention related to entrepreneurship. This approach assisted us to understand the power of enacting entrepreneurship knowledge through a relational process which made it more meaningful and transformational to our targeted population. This discussion was instrumental in developing the program as the readers will see in the following chapters. Additionally, Christ Steyarts defined entrepreneurship as the creative organizing of resources that is produced by and it is the result in an event<sup>95</sup>. This definition recognizes the dynamic exchange of influence among all participating agents and reality, and in this case among individual entrepreneurs and the experience economy (context). In this regard, program curricula and instructors followed a proactive enacting process to combine invention and intervention.

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<sup>93</sup>Chriat Steyaert, Entrepreneurship as in(ter)vention: Reconsidering the conceptual politics of method in entrepreneurship studies. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 23, 77-88, 2011.

<sup>94</sup>Steyaert, C. (2007). Of course that is not the whole (toy) story: Entrepreneurship and the cat's cradle. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 22, 733-751.

<sup>95</sup>Chriat Steyaert, Entrepreneurship as in(ter)vention: Reconsidering the conceptual politics of method in entrepreneurship studies. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 23, 77-88, 2011.

Additionally, one of the theories that carries the most influence on economic thinking is the Agency Theory<sup>96</sup>. The Agency Theory focuses on mechanisms to reduce the conflict between agent's interests that may differ from those of the principal<sup>97</sup>. These conflicts tend to be managed by selecting certain types of agents, and instituting forms of monitoring and various amounts of positive and negative sanctions<sup>98</sup>. Specifically to our Cool Entrepreneurship program, the Agency Theory provided a guideline to carefully select participating associates and instructors and to develop the program and evaluation process in a manner sensitive to student realities.

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<sup>96</sup> Whenever an individual (the principal) has another person (the agent) perform a service on her behalf and cannot fully observe the agent's actions, a 'principal-agent problem' arises.

Read more: <http://www.answers.com/topic/agency-theory#ixzz2eQ85odek>

<sup>97</sup> Read more: <http://www.answers.com/topic/agency-theory#ixzz2eQ8yoSDy>

<sup>98</sup> Read more: <http://www.answers.com/topic/agency-theory#ixzz2eQ85odek>



## Chapter 5

### A Customized Entrepreneurship Program for At-Risk Youth

#### Background

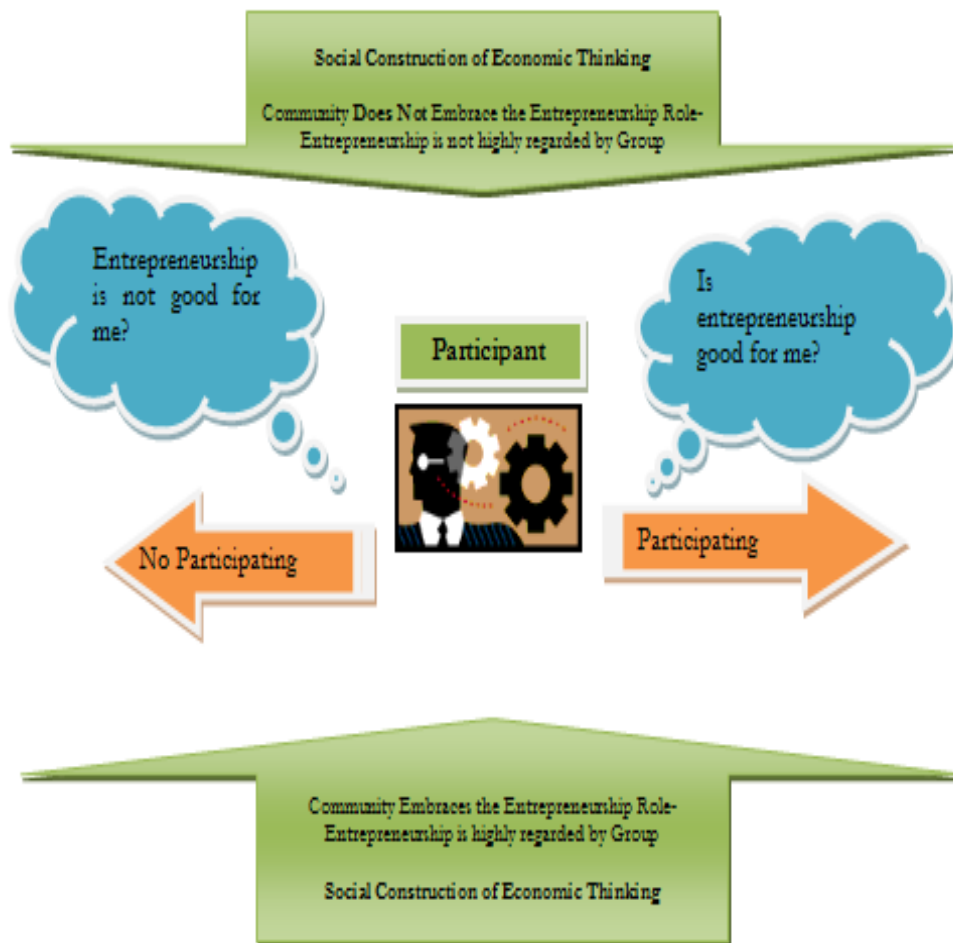
To make the social construction of economic thinking accessible, I will now describe the customized entrepreneurship program for Miami-Dade County at-risk youth, *Cool Entrepreneur*: its conception, development and implementation. Participants' perception of entrepreneurship as an obtainable pathway to success in their community played a large role. Practitioners and policy developers must understand this relationship before enhancing the program to improve the standard of living and quality of life for more participants. The concept of entrepreneurship must align with participants' interests, motivations, satisfaction pathways, and fundamental desires, which intimately relate to the decision-making process. For a participant, just thinking the program will be beneficial greatly improves his or her chances of making this program work for them. This makes social context an important moderator of program outcomes, and a primary consideration in socioeconomic equations for advancing social welfare.

The following figure shows the relationship between economic thinking or context<sup>99</sup>, the program, the community, and participants' decision to engage in the program. Participants only engage fully when they buy into the concept and see some direct positive impact on their lives by advancing one's socioeconomic welfare.

Figure 10: Social Construction of Economic Thinking's Community Embrace of Entrepreneurship

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<sup>99</sup> Economic thinking as a context embraces entrepreneurial behavior – Entrepreneurship is perceived and interpreted as a sign of success by the group or community.



The program's perceived ability to help improve participants' standard of living<sup>100</sup> and quality of life<sup>101</sup> reflects their beliefs about program benefits for their group or community. The program should be aligned with that aggregated perception, in conjunction with the participants' motivations to increase the chances of engagement and eventual success. In his book *Globalization and its Discontents*<sup>102</sup> Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz<sup>103</sup> writes that the success of a socioeconomic policy depends on implementation intensity, frequency and

100 Standard of Living. - The level of well-being (of an individual, group or the population of a country) as measured by the level of income (for example, GNP per capita) or by the quantity of various goods and services consumed (for example, the number of cars per 1,000 people or the number of television sets per capita). See also quality of life.

101 Quality of life - People's overall well-being. Quality of life is difficult to measure for an individual, group, or nation because in addition to material well-being ("standard of living") it includes such intangible components as the quality of the environment, national security, personal safety, and political and economic freedoms.

102 Joseph Stiglitz *Globalization and Its Discontents*, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2003.

103 Joseph Stiglitz (born February 9, 1943), American economist and professor at Columbia University, is a recipient of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences (2001) and the John Bates Clark Medal (1979) as well as the former Senior Vice President and Chief Economist of the World Bank. He is known for his critical view of the management of globalization, free-market

sequencing. It also depends on alignment between the social constructions of the targeted group and policy developers.

We can recognize a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches which can improve quality of life and standards of living. Many publications talk about these as being mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they are complementary; to accomplish both aims it is important for policy developers to include participants' voices when assessing the program's needs and design.

### **Program Conception**

The “Cool Entrepreneur” program was born in June 2004, when the Brookings Institution published its study: “Growing the Middle Class: Connecting All Miami-Dade County Residents to Economic Opportunity<sup>104</sup>”. In this study, the Brookings Institution clearly delineated the socioeconomic challenges experienced in Miami-Dade County. Specifically, the following indicators were identified: Declining income trends, low income, high poverty, small middle class with growing disparity between rich and poor, minorities (e.g., Blacks and Hispanics) less likely to be middle class, interdependence between suburban Miami-Dade and Miami City, low educational attainment, low-wage economy, and exportation of middle-class residents.

In response to the need to implement<sup>105</sup> policy recommendations, I published a report entitled, “Growing and Preserving Good Jobs in Miami-Dade County.<sup>106</sup>” This report also documented several trends in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties, including low-incomes, limited English proficiency, low educational attainment, and reliance of the poor on primarily private versus public transportation. In some instances, the poor spent up to 40 percent of their wage on transportation to and from work during the study period. It was very important to clearly define the socioeconomic context in which the targeted population lives, and where to locate the program.

I wrote:

“If Miami-Dade County as a community is to break away from the vicious cycle of poverty, it must help the youngest and more vulnerable. Perhaps implemented under a “Community Prosperity Plan” that builds upon stronger, more integrated partnerships between the different social support systems (e.g. workforce development) should be a customized entrepreneurship

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economists (whom he calls "free market fundamentalists") and some international institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. In 2000, Stiglitz founded the Initiative for Policy Dialogue (IPD), a think tank on international development based at Columbia University. Since 2001, he has been on the Columbia faculty, and has held the rank of University Professor since 2003. He also chairs the University of Manchester's Brooks World Poverty Institute and is a member of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. Professor Stiglitz is also an honorary professor at Tsinghua University School of Public Policy and Management. Stiglitz is one of the most frequently cited economists today.

104 Brookings Institution - Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, Growing the Middle Class: Connecting All Miami-Dade Residents to Economic Opportunity, 2004.

105 To make operational; to define an abstract concept in such a way that it can be practically measured.

106 Jorge N. Zumaeta, Growing and Preserving Good Jobs: Connecting Market Demand with Labor Supply (Miami, Florida: South Florida workforce – Florida agency for Workforce Innovation and Miami-Dade County. 2005).

program that teaches the basic skills to be financially successful. As I stated in my report, I truly believe that community development hinges on well-functioning economic, business and workforce development systems, all of which require excellent communication, cooperation, and strategic planning focusing on one issue at a time<sup>107</sup>.”

After the release of “Growing and Preserving Good Jobs” in 2005, a consortium of Miami-Dade County public officials decided to create more new employment opportunities for residents, especially the youngest and more vulnerable workers. Accomplishing this required two key changes: (1) improving worker skills and education, and (2) attracting high-wage industries to the region.

These recommendations, easy to propose, can only be achieved with a well-coordinated community effort to attract highly skilled workers and high-wage industries. So the report included several policy recommendations to serve as a base for a comprehensive coordinated county-wide strategic plan. One policy recommendation welcomed by workforce development practitioners, elected officials, and the community as a whole was the creation of an entrepreneurship pilot program for at-risk youth.

Community consensus on the need for the program soon followed. Finding funding sources proved much more challenging. After two years, an ad-hoc U.S. Department of Labor funding source was identified. With a minimum level of funding in place, we were able to implement the first “Cool Entrepreneur” program cohort of youths in the summer of 2008.

### **Need Assessment Study: Advancing Economic Prosperity through Workforce Development**

In many respects the two studies, “Growing the Middle Class: Connecting All Miami-Dade County Residents to Economic Opportunity” and “Growing and Preserving Good Jobs: Connecting Market Demand with Labor Supply,” provided the data needed to determine community needs and challenges, and described high-priority challenges to tackle first. Their policy recommendations also guided several economic, social and workforce development agencies’ strategic plans, strategic initiatives and action plans designed to help alleviate various socioeconomic issues.

To help support new initiatives and break the vicious cycle of poverty in Miami-Dade County, I described my supplemental research in a report entitled “Advancing Economic Prosperity through Workforce Development: An Integrated Approach for Assessing Labor Market Gaps<sup>108</sup>.”

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107 Brookings Institution, Growing the Middle Class in Miami, July 2004.

108 Jorge N. Zumaeta, Advancing Economic Prosperity through Workforce Development: An Integrated Approach for Assessing Labor Market Gaps (Miami, Florida, South Florida Workforce – Agency for Workforce Innovation – 2006).

The two earlier studies had provided research results on low educational attainment to justify the creation of an entrepreneurship program. “Advancing Prosperity through Workforce Development” took the next step, collecting and displaying statistics from the Florida Department of Education which showing that Miami-Dade school district graduates, on average, between 15,000 and 16,000 students a year<sup>109</sup>. Of this total, 50 % move on to higher education (vocational schools, college, university, etc.). Twenty-five percent had found full-time employment after six months. There was comparable information on the remaining 25 %. How to develop programs and policies to assist this population if we can’t identify them? Case managers from South Florida Workforce<sup>110</sup> said this group couldn’t be tracked using the scientific survey; once these students had dropped out of high school without signing up for any formal educational or workforce program. This was an increasingly challenging trend for Miami-Dade County to face. We needed to identify them before they fell completely through the cracks. A number of young adults from this group eventually qualified for and participated in the Florida Program for At-Risk Youth.

### **Policy Recommendations:**

Policy recommendations based on the Needs Assessment Study included:

1. Develop a world-class labor force by strengthening existing partnerships with the business and educational community.
2. Improve access to quality jobs by developing industry and occupational pipelines that train and develop a skilled labor force in high-demand industries, emerging industries, and high-demand occupations.
3. Leverage resources with other agencies to provide a customized entrepreneurship program for at-risk youth.
4. More actively support socioeconomic issues awareness campaigns.

If as a community we could tackle the challenges facing at-risk youth, we could help break the vicious cycle of poverty. This was part of the mission of several local economic, social and workforce agencies which unanimously decided to create an entrepreneurship program, to be developed and implemented by Florida International University. The next section provides specifics of this entrepreneurship program.

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109 According to the Florida Department of Education – Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP).

110 South Florida Workforce (SFW) is the local workforce development agency. Under SFW, the state of Florida – Agency for Workforce Innovation and the Florida Department of Children and Families run an employment program for youth.

## **Chapter 6**

### **THE FIU “COOL ENTREPRENEUR” PROGRAM**

#### **Program Objective**

The Florida International University (FIU) “Cool Entrepreneur” program was designed to develop, grow and inspire at-risk youth 16-18 years old in Miami-Dade County by introducing them to a customized entrepreneurship intervention program. The program’s main mission was to increase the number of effective change agents for a better Dade County.

The program would foster the business acumen of county youth by training them in business fundamentals, communication, goal-setting and problem-solving skills. It would be sensitive to youth’s interests and capacities, facilitating their unique aptitudes and talents via self-evaluation of performance and management styles, as well as development needs. Lastly, the program would create education and career pathways to mitigate an increase in high school dropout rates, help them develop alternative perspectives, and provide new options for positive positioning into Miami-Dade County’s socially constructed economy and social strata.

#### **Definition of At-Risk-Youth**

An at-risk youth is defined as a “person subject to unique jeopardy or threat of increased likelihood of delinquency due to home and environmental factors, or finances at risk due to vagaries of the stock market, global instability, and health issues of the individual having such finances<sup>111</sup>.” An at-risk youth is defined by Florida State Statute<sup>112</sup> as a child under the age of 18 who meets at least one of the following three requirements:

- Is absent from home for at least 72 consecutive hours without parental consent;
- Is beyond parental control such that his/her behavior endangers the health, safety, or welfare of the child or any other person; or Has a substance abuse problem for which there are no related pending criminal charges.

The targeted youth came from the Little Havana and Florida City neighborhoods—one of the nation's poorest. Twenty-eight at-risk students age 16 to 19 were recruited. After being geographically screened and interviewed by South Florida Workforce case managers working in those neighborhoods, they were referred to the FIU Entrepreneurship Program. Case managers selected participants who belonged to their high school business club, so they had already a demonstrated interest in entrepreneurial activities, or the desire to own their own business.

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111 Online Dictionary, Definitions, 2011, <http://www.onlinelawdictionary.net/terms/3403-at-risk.html>.

112 Florida State Statutes – Chapter 984 Pg 234 – Children and Families in Need of Services.

## **Challenges in Working with This Population**

The main challenges facing our group of at-risk youth were: poor math literacy, writing and reading deficiencies, lack of confidence in public speaking, poor organizational skills, disciplinary problems, short attention spans, and an above-average need for mentoring and motivation support.

Some also exhibited behavioral problems. During our first implementation, we had to expel four participants for disciplinary infractions which threatened to disrupt our productive learning environment. Three such incidents related to the use of foul language and other anti-social behavior. The fourth case involved a youth who claimed to have a weapon in his backpack. Although seeing real potential in this participant, after the Columbine High School and other shooting incidents we had a zero-tolerance policy and had to expel him. We discussed our decision with both the participant and his parents; all agreed with the decision.

## **Case Management**

Under the Workforce Investment Act<sup>113</sup>, anyone receiving assistance from any local workforce development board was assigned a case manager. This helped us gather additional behavioral information on participants and measure the program's success. Positive relationships developed between instructors and case managers and participants are described in the Program Evaluation chapter.

Case managers carefully monitored participant performance and discipline during the workshops. In addition to recommending students to the program, they led some aspects of evaluation component and program objective development.

## **Customized Program Curriculum**

The program consisted of a series of workshops covering 15 entrepreneurship modules. It included 70 hours of workshop contact hours divided into four-hour sessions, three times a week for six weeks. Additional sessions on Leadership, Communication Skills and Portfolio Development were also offered. The program began with basic entrepreneurship concepts and ended with an intense concentration on the creation, expansion, and finalization of business plans.

The FIU College of Continuing and Professional Studies (CAPS) - Leadership component, complemented Insight Inc.'s entrepreneur development sessions during the summer of 2008. CAPS also conducted sessions on Effective Communication Skills Evaluation, and Portfolio Development and Illustrations. Such useful discussions elevated the quality and scope of the workshop by teaching life skills necessary to survive, coexist, and move ahead in today's society. All instructors were evaluated by CAPS' Training Program Evaluation, noting

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113 Florida State Statutes, Chapter 445 – Workforce Innovation.

changes of participant perceptions of faculty members, documenting student satisfaction with teaching styles and material coverage. During one-on-one conversations with participants, CAPS and Insight associates gauged participants' interests and expectations. This helped us keep customizing the program to improve workshop content, and decide how best to share information with participants.

The customized curriculum table of contents resembles other entrepreneurial training programs; it also included highly practical exercises relevant to the target group, their environment, and their realities. During curriculum development, the CAPS, CBA and COE academic units [Again it may be helpful to the reader to write these out.] actively collaborated with case managers from South Florida Workforce and Insight, Inc.

The workshop sessions' length, additional module materials, breaks, and guest speakers, were carefully planned to achieve maximum impact. Speakers came from similar backgrounds as the participants. Participants' initial presentations were videotaped to help them correct and improve speech patterns and body language. The workshops, supplemented by guest speakers, also included visits to the Federal Reserve System and Entrepreneurship Program offices. The modules and sessions covered over the six-week (76-hour) program included:

Figure 11: Program Curriculum: 15 Modules and 3 Sessions



Module 1: Essentials for Business
Module 2: Building Your Image and Personal Impressions
Module 3: Start-Up Essentials and Legal Structures
Module 4: From Dream to Reality
Module 5: Marketing Essentials
Module 6: Business Financing, Accounting and Money Issues
Module 7: Savings: Take control of Your Personal Finances
Module 8: Budgeting and Business Plan Development
Module 9: Credit and Business Plan Development
Module 10: Business Plan Preparation
Module 11: First Round of Business Plan Presentations
Module 12: The Business Plan: Road Map to Success
Module 13: Portfolio Building and Illustration
Module 14: Entrepreneurial Road Show – Business Plan Competition
Module 15: Assessment of Program and Self-Reflection
Session 1: Developing the Leader within You
Session 2: Effective Communication Skills
Session 3: Portfolio Development and Illustrations

*Note.* For a more detailed program curriculum please see Appendix V.

Also included were sessions on Effective Communication Skills, Pre- and Post-Presentation Videotaping of Communication Presentations, Portfolio Building and Illustrating, a *Developing the Leader in You* workshop, Entrepreneurial Road Show, participants' presentations, and expert showcasing. Webpage support, chat rooms, forums, and social networking venues were also featured. Face-to-face evaluations and follow-ups were conducted online.

### **The Modules**

The most extensive and informative of the modules were offered by the FIU College of Business' Pino Center for Entrepreneurship and Insight. Their team of highly skilled presenters knew a lot about young entrepreneurship. The program's mission statement of the program was clearly defined at the beginning and reviewed throughout the course, with an emphasis on basic ideas and principles necessary to achieve its objectives.

Instructors maintained positive and helpful attitudes toward students. A weekly "Student Progress Report" summary showed completion of the weekly modules, workshop participation rates and absenteeism. The instructors spent much time and effort on getting maximum participation and enthusiasm from the students by interacting directly and fostering participants' personal interest. In return, they asked for workshop awareness, active participation and reliable performance.

For many students this degree of interaction was new. Instructors' presentations were entertaining to increase positive impact on the students and inspired participants to perform their best on the new material presented and individual assignments. Most students showed their awareness of business etiquette and appearance; some even made it a habit. Business plan presentations and the general advice given by instructors were all excellent. Most participants who showed little interest, asked few questions and didn't actively participate didn't complete the course.

Students were tested on the first and last days of workshops to determine the amount of business knowledge they had acquired. Evaluations included ten questions on students' opinions about business, and 20 on general business knowledge. The positive outcomes, shown in the Appendix, include the Insight report. It found an increase in business knowledge for the whole group, with a 33.1% increase for males and a 30% for females. Future programs might offer more difficult cases support a psychologist or specially trained professional to make their integration into the workshop faster and easier.

### **Leadership Session**

On July 15, participants attended a session on leadership offered by Dr. B. Dalrymple, Director for Leadership and Service at FIU. After engaging with students to begin developing leadership qualities and skills, he showed them how to build on their leadership knowledge and skills. This gave the students practical knowledge and served as a guide to future personal development. Tests before and after sessions showed improved overall learning or perceptions (see Appendix). Many participants agreed the module was engaging and relevant, and they expected to do better on the second assessment.

### **Effective Communication Skills - Speech Communication Session**

The CAPS module, intended to make the course a more fulfilling life-learning experience for our students, was conducted by Kathleen Watson from FIU's Speech Communication department and Richard Pabon, FIU Video Broadcasts Production Videographer.

The two-part "hands-on" interactive course in speech communication was specifically designed to prepare participants to become successful public speakers. During the first day of comments and speeches, Mr. Pabon taped the participants' speeches and showed them on the second day for the students to evaluate themselves in various likely communication situations. For a description and summary of Ms. Watson's comments, see the Appendix. She noted that "the confidence levels of the participants had definitely risen. They appeared more at ease with the entire concept of public speaking." These outcomes were some of the exercise's primary objectives.

## **Portfolio Development and Illustrations Session**

This module reinforced the curriculum, and showed participants the benefits of working systematically. Mr. Malik S. Benjamin, a lecturer with FIU's School of Architecture, gave them a chance to practice marketing themselves and their business plans. They were also introduced to principles of visual marketing so they could tap into their marketing talent as the enterprises grew.

## **The Instructors and Program Facilitators**

Finding instructors to teach this program was a very interesting experience. We needed instructors who could identify with the targeted group and were experienced in dealing with the formidable challenges faced by youth today. Staff members had to convey the program's core messages efficiently and effectively, while sharing their knowledge of entrepreneurial practices.

Two negative incidents during the hiring process indicate the kind of challenges we faced. One professional initially showed real interest; but learning more about our target group, spoke of a lack of experience, and willingness to deal with this segment of society. Another professional said we wouldn't be able to pay him enough to take on such a challenge.

On a more positive note, more than a few qualified instructors and professionals were willing and able to participate. Of twenty-one professionals interviewed, we eventually hired seven PhD professors, two instructors, three case managers and two cameramen, in addition to additional staff from the College of Continuing and Professional Studies.

All project personnel, particularly those working directly with participants, underwent background checks in accordance with the University rules and regulations, and state legal requirements. Most already had security clearance; only two recruits needed to be screened.

## **Business Plan Competition**

On the last day of the Cool Entrepreneur Program we held a contest, for which participants had to submit a detailed business plan of up to 20 pages describing a future business endeavor. Through experiential learning, presentations and exercises, they had become familiar with the main elements of a business plan; and with instructors' help had been working on their plans from the first day.

Each plan had to include an overview/profile of the business, a SWOT analysis, market analysis, sales and marketing strategies, and financial analysis. The contest objectives were to: 1) Reinforce everything they'd learned during the workshop; 2) Educate them about the process of creating and evaluating a new business venture; 3) Prepare them for future entrepreneurship opportunities; and 4) Harness unique resources available in HBS and its communities.

The evaluation committee of six included experts from the Chamber of Commerce (2), FIU - College of Business Faculty (1), a social entrepreneur (1), the business writer at a local newspaper (1), and a staff member from South Florida Workforce (1).

Business plans were evaluated based on the likelihood of being profitable, the printed and oral presentations, potential funding, and possible community impact. Of five finalists, two received honorable mention. First, second and third place winners received prizes and additional recognition. The finalists of the Business Plan Competition were: Import-Export online consulting business – 1<sup>st</sup> Place; Food concession center – 2<sup>nd</sup> Place; Clothing manufacturing – 3<sup>rd</sup> Place; Jujitsu training center – 4<sup>th</sup> Place (Honorable mention); Car-wash business – 5<sup>th</sup> Place (Honorable mention). Each finalist also received a free online course of their choosing.

### **Additional Key Elements of the Program**

Three elements included in our objectives and planning were key to the success of the program and the sustainability of the students' learning, growth, and development after they completed the program. These were a) the sense of belonging to a successful group, b) social integration and c) social permeability. Let's take a closer look at each of these.

### **The Sense of Belonging to a Successful Group**

As mentioned earlier, entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur's role in American society are popular topics, both compelling and inspirational. Students tended to agree that entrepreneurial business and enterprise development form the backbone of America's economy.

In the programs' first session, students were asked to name their idols. Most identified Bill Gates and Warren Buffet as role models. When asked if they believe they have what it takes to grow as entrepreneurs, most said yes. We also asked if they knew which trades or skills had helped these successful entrepreneurs make it big. Most didn't know which circumstances, talents, or context had made the biggest difference. They "knew" that Bill Gates was a high school dropout who had become the richest person in America. These beliefs would be challenged over the next six weeks.

They learned, for example, that Bill Gates had dropped out<sup>114</sup> of Harvard University, not high school; and that at the age of 18 he was writing scientific papers at a Ph.D. level. Obviously Gates had been educated, wrote business plans, managed large operations and developed

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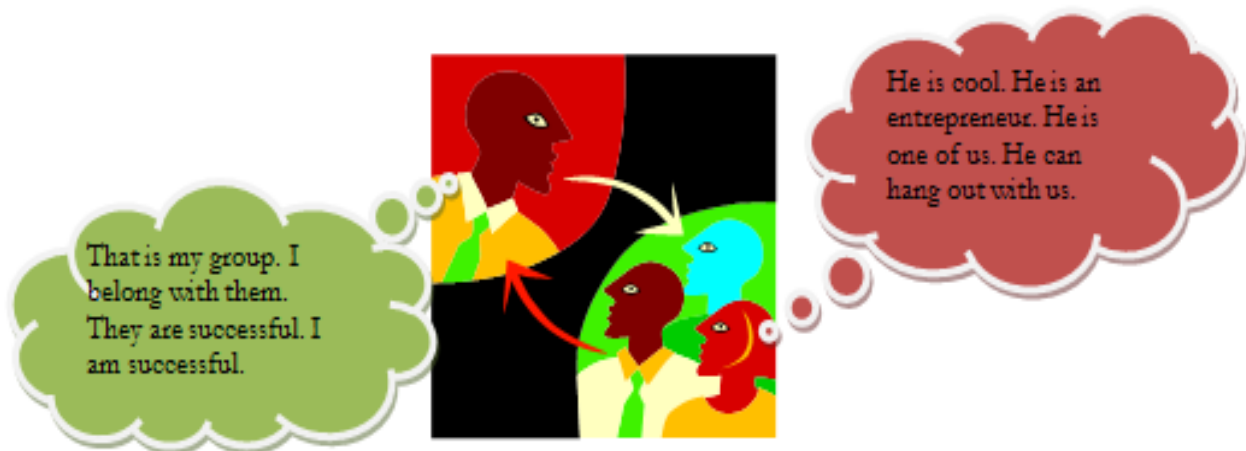
114 In 1975 at the age of 20, Bill Gates dropped out of Harvard to pursue a career in software development. He went on to become CEO of Microsoft Corporation, the largest software company in the world today, and the world's richest man for 13 consecutive years. In 2007, more than 30 years after dropping out of college, Bill Gates returned to Harvard to receive an Honorary Doctorate Degree.

complex software. He was sharp enough and the skills necessary to succeed in a new industry.

Being in the same room and listening to and sharing experiences with other “at-risk” youth allowed them to open up to the instructors and the programs. Every week their walking, talking, and body language showed how participants were shifting their economic thinking, developing educationally and personally, and in general acting like successful members of a successful group.

Combining this “sense of belonging to a successful group” with knowledge of how their skills were in demand, improved their chances of societal integration and helped overcome any restricting labels. Social biases towards people with behavioral problems preclude or limit their access to wider social acceptance. This instinctive reaction from the general population is generated mostly from fear or a protective behavior in reaction to real or imagined behavioral lapses.

Figure 12: The Sense of Belonging Depends on the Social Construction of Economic Thinking - Societal Integration



As participants’ focus shifted from fulfilling desires to becoming entrepreneurs with critical skills, the sense of belonging to a successful group helped reinforce and solidify the

program's objectives. We wanted to help participants gain a new perspective on their lives as well as new skill sets, behaviors, and appreciation for other perspectives and values that would open doors for them and prepare them to interact with and integrate into different levels of society.

After the first week of workshops, small groups began changing their behavior. The most radical changes were: 1) dress code became more businesslike; 2) hairstyles became more professional; 3) handshakes were firmer; 4) eye-to-eye contact when talking to adults increased; and 5) speech and language was more diplomatic.

To confirm that these behaviors were newly acquired we talked to case managers who had known the students for about two years. We also asked students: Why the change in your behavior?

They stated that “we want to be business people who will be accepted in a business setting, so we'll behave more like business professionals.”

Workshops topics including what is and what is not appropriate ways to dress, talk, walk, look, and express themselves when in a professional environment. We first helped them become aware of their personal ways of expressing themselves (dress, talk, hairdo, and body postures) and compare that to what is normal in the business community. These social constructions were introduced by instructors as part of the discussion of professionalism and entrepreneurship. The social constructions that determine how a businessperson should dress and behave gradually took hold among participants; after the first few workshops five participants began wearing suits and ties--the first stage of an amazing transformation taking place right before our eyes. Most students intuitively understood the importance of aligning their personal social construction about entrepreneurship to that of the business world--in this case represented by workshop instructors. Aligning these two models of social constructions of economic thinking transformed program participants.

### **Societal Permeability and Integration**

Societal permeability reflects society's ability to allow citizens to move vertically (preferably ascending) or laterally (due to change in taste) within their standards of living and quality of life. Any society that actively supports entrepreneurs supports creativity and initiative, so a person who grew up in poverty can join the middle class. During daily class discussions, participants told us that the possibility of escaping their current realities motivated them to change their behavior, achieve more and join a successful group. They saw each other as future successful entrepreneurs who they'd like to associate with. After sharing intimate ideas for success with everyone, most participants enthusiastically embraced the potential for success. They even surprised themselves by becoming very comfortable with instructors and administrators, and let us know they had told friends and family members they were attending college.

Participants clearly began relationships with the teachers and mentors by working with them in a higher educational environment.

Societal Integration is about assimilation into a society, community, group or culture. It implies a society or community's willingness to welcome and accept individuals who demonstrate acceptable behavior in a way that benefits society at large. Our entrepreneurship program is intended to help at-risk youth feel more open to such acceptance and comfortable. The social constructionism approach also helped program developers assist participants with the program's conceptual base and delivery method. As participants created alternative views of reality, other stakeholders also benefitted from the more interactive educational experience.

Having a positive long-term impact on participants' lives was a major incentive to add modules and extra sessions. Bringing in sensitive, high-caliber professionals with positive and welcoming attitudes about participants was crucial to the program's development and implementation. Only such caring professionals could break through natural communication barriers and stereotypes to offer to increase our chances of success by sharing constant motivational messages. The Cool Entrepreneur Program curriculum may have resembled other entrepreneurship curricula; what made it unique was the special mix of participants and professionals.

# Chapter 7

## Program Evaluation and Outcomes

### Program Evaluation Methodologies

Program evaluation was divided into four components, each of which looked at the program through a different lens: 1) One-on-one interviews with participants; 2) Business and financial literacy tests (pre- and post-program), 3) Overall Impressions – a participant questionnaire, and 4) Observation by case managers and instructors. The evaluation process followed a prescribed modernist approach, yet encouraged participation and developed a deeper understanding about at-risk youth. Informal participant interviews, conducted prior to the workshops, determined participants' expectations, perceptions and interpretations of entrepreneurship. Let's look at each component more closely.

- 1) Pre-and-post written assessments showed their business and financial literacy levels so we could fine-tune and more effectively implement the program curriculum.
- 2) Just before graduation, participants completed an "Overall Impression of the Program" questionnaire to discover their satisfaction with the program's vision and implementation.
- 3) Using the observational tool, case managers and instructors gathered behavioral and participation data every week on a report. They then met with program developers to discuss how the workshops were going, and how participants were progressing.
- 4) Evaluation data prepared us to help participants acquire a more positive view of reality. Data was collected in a non-intrusive way that respected participants' privacy, sensitivities and security needs. Student participation in all evaluations was voluntary<sup>115</sup>.

### Considerations in Selecting Methods:

Evaluation methods needed to provide the most useful data in the most cost-effective, realistic way, telling us:

- How to better understand the participants' perception and desires without intru.
- What data would help us create effective customized programs for at-risk youth.
- How much of this data can be collected and analyzed in a low-cost, practical and respectful manner using questionnaires, surveys and checklists?
- How accurate will the data be?
- Will these methods capture all critical data?
- What additional methods should and could be used to capture additional data ?

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115 Please refer to Appendix I to see our Consent Forms.



- Will the data help persuade decision makers—funders, top management, etc.?
- Will participants fill out questionnaires carefully, actively engage in interviews or focus groups, allow examination of their documentation, etc.?
- Can program facilitators administer the methods without special training?
- How can the data be analyzed . . . and who will analyze it?
- How would this help ensure the program's long-lasting positive impact?

Including participants’ voices in evaluation results was clearly a priority.

## Collecting Data

Figure 13: Methods of Collecting Data

Method	Overall Purpose	Advantages	Challenges
Interviews (pre and post)	To fully understand participants’ impressions and experiences. To learn more about their answers to questionnaires . Evaluation conducted by instructors.	Get full range and depth of data. Develop a deeper relationship with the participant.	Rather time consuming. Can be hard to analyze and compare. Can be costly. Interviewer bias can skew results.
Financial and Business Knowledge questionnaires, surveys, checklists (pre and post)	To quickly and easily collect data from participants in a non-threatening way. Evaluation conducted by instructors.	Anonymous and inexpensive to administer. Easy to compare and analyze. Can be administered to many participants. Lots of data. Many sample questionnaires already exist.	Might not get careful feedback. Wording can bias. Client’s responses are impersonal. May need sampling expert. Does not get full story

Overall impression of the program questionnaires, surveys	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above
Observation Tools	Gather accurate data about how a program actually operates, particularly its processes. Evaluated by case managers and instructors.	View operations of a program as they actually occur. Can adapt to events as they occur.	Can be difficult to interpret observed behaviors. Can be complex to categorize observations. Can influence behaviors of program participants. Can be expensive.

**Data Needed from the Evaluation:**

Four sets of data would help us evaluate the program:

- Participants’ reactions and feelings about the entrepreneurship program (often poor indicators of possible long-term impact).
- New understandings of entrepreneurship by participants that could change behaviors (enhanced attitudes, perceptions or knowledge).
- An appreciation for skills related to entrepreneurship (how what they learned would enhance behaviors).
- Sensitivity to the program (improved performance because of impact on enhanced behaviors).

Unfortunately, gathering reliable data about the program's long-term impact isn't easy (discussed in our follow-up initiative below). But data about changed behaviors and appreciation of skills proved quite useful.

## **Analyzing and Interpreting the Data**

During evaluations and analysis, we focused on our objectives and the population being served, keeping in mind that we could potentially help an underserved and challenged population achieve a higher standard of living and quality of life<sup>116</sup>. To improve our program by identifying its strengths and weaknesses, we organized data around program strengths, weaknesses and areas of possible improvement.

Regarding analysis of "quantitative" data, we:

- Made copies of data, filed the master copy, and made our comments on the copies.
- Tabulated the data.
- Computed a mean for each question to set up ratings and rankings.
- Listed the range of responses (e.g., 20 people were ranked "1", 30 ranked "2", and 20 people ranked "3").

For analysis of "qualitative" data, we:

- Recorded written data collected.
- Organized responses to questionnaires and comments into categories or themes (e.g., concerns, suggestions, strengths, weaknesses, similar experiences, program input, recommendations, and output and outcome indicators).
- Labeled categories or themes (e.g., concerns and suggestions).
- Attempted to identify patterns, or associations and causal relationships within themes (e.g., all participants had similar concerns, most having come from the same environment).
- Stored comments and results for future reference.

## **Program Outcomes**

A special report on the Communication Skills Development session is attached. Leadership and Illustrations session evaluations were incorporated into the four main reports to avoid duplication. The additional sessions were designed to strengthen the curriculum in the key areas. A special Communication Skills captured details of participants' communication development.

Here are the four program evaluation results in detail.

### **1. One-on-One Interview**

In each informal interview with the program director, participants were asked four questions:

1. Why do you want to be an entrepreneur?
2. Whom do you consider a successful entrepreneur role model?

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116 The study refers to behavioral challenges mostly to disciplinary issues.

3. Do you think you have what it takes to grow as an entrepreneur, as your role model did?
4. Do you know which personality traits and skills helped your idol succeed?

### 1.1 Pre-workshop Interview

Interviews provided glimpses into participants' attitudes and values regarding entrepreneurship and program expectations. In general, participants felt that "entrepreneurs are financially successful people we would like to be like." and "most entrepreneurs didn't need school to be successful." Several specifically mentioned Bill Gates, Donald Trump, Warrant Buffet and sports or entertainment stars turned entrepreneurs. The idea of entrepreneurship was very intriguing to them, represented by an attractive life style with minimum school. The answer to question three about their readiness was a resounding "Yes." They seemed very open to enhancing their lives. Unfortunately, most had no practical knowledge of what skills and traits had supported their role models' achievements.

### 1.2 Post-workshop Interview

The same four questions were posed to the participants after the workshops to see how perceptions and interpretation had changed. More than a few were no longer sure they would like to become entrepreneurs before exploring other options. Their eagerness to become entrepreneurs had obviously weakened. Participants had also gained a new appreciation for the value of education. They had realized that entrepreneurship requires a lot of hard work, dedication, reading, writing, organizational and analytical skills. Responses to question number two had shifted slightly to include a few social entrepreneurs<sup>117</sup>. For question three, participants had a better idea of what it takes to be a successful entrepreneur, and understood the need to work hard on new skills to become successful in the real world. For question four, they admitted to still not knowing specifics about individual entrepreneurs, but now had a general idea.

## 2. Pre- and Post-Assessment of Financial and Business Knowledge

Participant mastery of financial and business knowledge was evaluated using a questionnaire, survey and check list. Results indicated that objectives of the programs had mostly been met, and participants seemed to have acquired important knowledge. Results also reflected well on the work of program instructors and administrators. Over 90% of the participants remained in the course, their attendance was very good, and their work was good to excellent, with significant progress in class participation. Other variables evaluated were student demeanor, appreciation for what was being said, dress code, feelings of pride,

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117 A social entrepreneur is someone who recognizes a social problem and uses entrepreneurial principles to organize, create, and manage a venture to make social change. Whereas a business entrepreneur typically measures performance in terms of profit and return, a social entrepreneur focuses on creating social capital <http://www.socialenterprisemagazine.org/>. Thus, the main aim of social entrepreneurship is to further social and environmental goals. However, whilst social entrepreneurs are most commonly associated with the voluntary and not-for-profit sectors, this need not be incompatible with making a profit.

well-being, and self-confidence. The self-assurance of most students had noticeably increased.

Based on regular interactions with participants, it is clear that the patience, know-how, and caring nature of the instructors and group leaders drove program success. The class environment and climate benefited immensely from the outstanding leadership of these experienced, knowledgeable instructors. Case managers also contributed greatly to making the classroom an excellent learning environment. Overall, evaluations showed improvement in personal and social behaviors, communication skills, motivation for teamwork and leadership, financial literacy, student interaction, willingness to learn and progress, and class participation.

### 2.1 Assessment of Business and Financial Literacy: Pre-Test

The pre-test on business knowledge showed 13.3% of the students felt they had skills to make good decisions about business; 27.7% felt that they had the ability to be successful business owners; 77% of students spoke of plans to own their own business; and 68% said that being financially stable and socially responsible were important.

Averages for business knowledge:	
Whole Group	46.5% correct
Male	42.9% correct
Female	50% correct

### 2.2 Assessment of Business and Financial Literacy: Post Test

The business opinion results showed: 45% of the students now felt they had the skills to make good decisions about business; 65% felt that they had the ability to be a successful business owner; 60% of students now planned to own their own business; and 60% said that being financially stable and socially responsible is important.

Averages and increases for business knowledge:	
Whole Group	78.4% correct / 31.9% Increase
Male	76% correct / 33.1% Increase
Female	80% correct / 30% Increase

## 3. Overall Impressions

The overall rating of the program by participants in response to the questionnaire was 4.8 on a 5-point scale. The lowest ratings were given to the “training motivated you to seriously consider opening your own business,” “the instructor stimulated my interest in the subject,” and “the instructor effectively utilized the time allotted for this seminar.” For these three

areas, the average score was below 4.3, indicating the need for future improvement. Participants also suggested rethinking the program's time allocation. Many participants said the challenging curriculum and new understanding of what being an entrepreneur entails had dissuaded them from becoming entrepreneurs. The more instructors had shared entrepreneurship facts, the more student interest shifted toward education.

The highest rankings (all above 4.5 points out of 5) were for “the subject matter of the seminar was well organized,” “the instructor was knowledgeable in the subject matter” and “the instructor explained the seminar material clearly and effectively.” Just below these were “the instructor related seminar materials to real life situations” and “this seminar was of high value to my learning in this program.”

The questionnaire included a participant comment section. Here are some of the comments:

1. “This workshop was very meaningful and will leave a long lasting experience. FIU rocks!”
2. “I want to thank the participating agencies for giving me the opportunity to learn about the role of entrepreneurship. I want to also thank the instructors for all their patience. Some of my classmates were not in [sic] their best behavior but instructors knew how to handle the situations.”
3. “I am better prepared for life; although I don’t want to be an entrepreneur anymore. This program helped me to understand how difficult [it] is to be a business person.”
4. “I would like to learn about future opportunities. I would like to go to an advanced program on entrepreneurship.”
5. “I want to thank FIU and more importantly the instructors for their patience and for sharing what they know about entrepreneurship with us.”
6. “I am very happy to have been selected to participate because I made lifelong friends in this workshop. Also, I like the instructors.”
7. “The program is excellent. I wish more people in my neighborhood have [sic] access to programs like this. My dream is to open a karate school and this workshop on entrepreneurship has given me the base to do it.”
8. “This is more difficult of what [sic] I thought. I need to learn more before opening up a business. I would like to keep in touch with the instructors and a few friends I made here. It seems we have common goals.”

9. "The six week (program) was too long. Maybe it could be shortened to a four week program? I learnt a lot but I didn't like how some of my classmates behave. May be different participants with different interest could be sort [sic] out before we are put in one classroom? Just a suggestion. Instructors were great."
10. "I will pursue my dream, but first I want to go to college. I want to pursue an education in business administration. This will help me with [sic] better understand business operations and marketing. I need this to be successful in business."
11. "Keep [sic] the good work. We need more of [sic] programs like this in all the high schools. High school is boring. I want to open my own business so I can be my own boss."

Appendix III displays the survey tool used to evaluate the program, a simple nine-question questionnaire with eight close-ended questions and one open-ended question. The primary objective of this survey was to learn specifically about the program structure and delivery method.

#### **4. Observational Tool – Weekly Reports and Discussion Meetings**

As mentioned before, the FIU Entrepreneurship Program was divided into 15 modules, each with exercises and homework. Throughout the program, case managers monitored participants' progress in terms of discipline, attendance, project completion, and participation. All participants were encouraged to engage and learn as much as possible.

If instructors or case managers noticed that participants were not keeping up with the required exercises or homework, they intervened to help the student catch up. In addition to class work, of course, participants faced many personal challenges before and during the program.

Participants were constantly encouraged to participate. Instructors found different ways to increase positive interaction during the class: for example prizes like backpacks, pencils, notebooks, etc.

One instructor gave away one hundred dollars worth of stocks to motivate participants to read the business section of the newspaper. Active participation was crucial for the success of the program. A student was graded as "Excellent" if he or she fully participated, remained alert in class and performed all assignments on time; "Good" for satisfactory performance; or "Improvement needed." Please see Appendix IV for the involvement report, which case workers submitted every week.

## **Instructors Special Reports - Speech Communication**

Another special evaluation was created for the Speech Communication Module, a “hands-on” interactive course in speech communication specifically designed and executed to meet student needs; many had expressed concerns about their public speaking ability. On the first day, the participants gave a short speech about what they liked and did not like about public speaking. Using these comments as a basis for discussion, the students were able to express their individual strengths and weaknesses in presentation skills.

Participants were given some of the basic components of effective communication skills, including content, delivery, four methods of speech delivery (manuscript, impromptu, memorized, and extemporaneous), and the three main purposes of a speech: to persuade, to inform, and to entertain. These topics were presented during interactive group sessions to illustrate basic concepts. Students actually enjoyed getting up in front of the class during these learning activities.

Participants were introduced to the basic components of a good persuasive speech, using five steps in “Monroe's Motivated Sequence:” attention, problem, solution, future, and action. The students quickly grasped the concept of persuasive speech and put the model into practice, “selling” class members an object they had selected. All students planned and presented persuasive speeches.

On the second day, participants in groups discussed various tips for effective public speaking, applying newly acquired techniques for more effective speeches such as “paint pictures with words.”

Students learned to do audience and environmental analyses. This discussion centered on informative speech, including the use of data in introductions and conclusions. All students presented a basic informative speech to the class, showing what they had learned from classmates.

For an exercise on vocal non-fluencies, or verbal fillers “um, ah, like and you know,” etc.--volunteers gave impromptu speeches, paying particular attention to their use of vocal distractions.

On the first day of speeches, and with the permission of the students, Richard Pabon from Video Broadcast Productions had videotaped speeches. His tapes were shown on the second day so students could see themselves in new communication situations. Class interest in this “value added” portion of the seminar proved “a picture is worth a thousand words.”



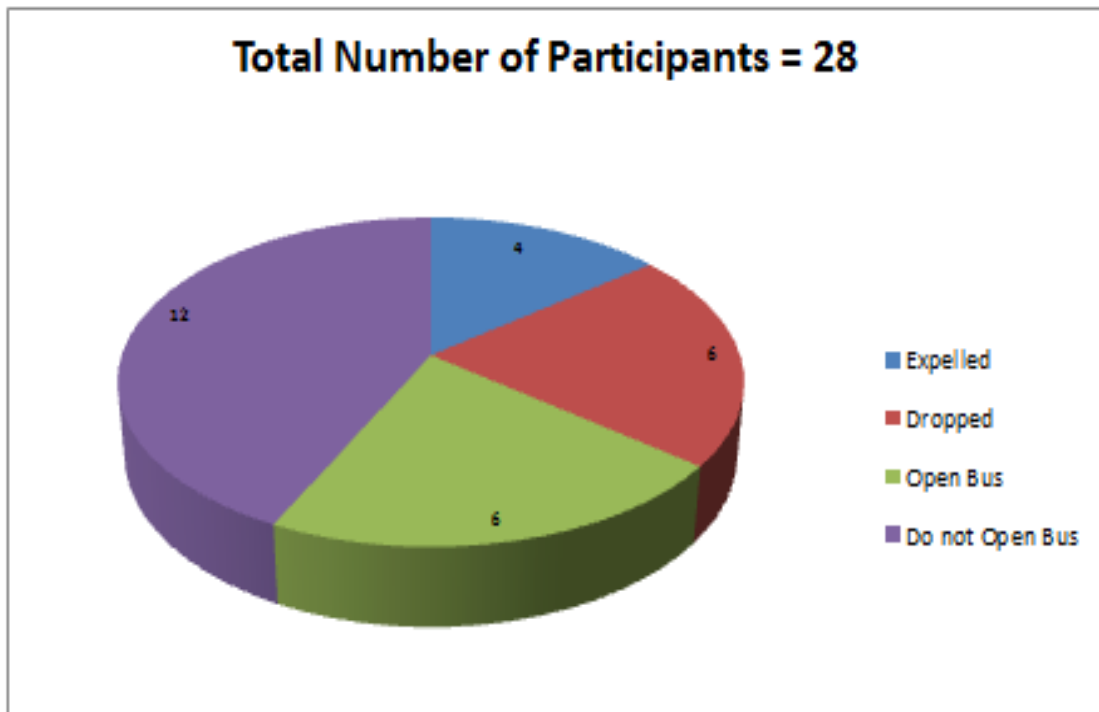
All participants made “wrap-up” speeches at the end of the session about what they had learned about public speaking. Their confidence levels had definitely risen, and they appeared more at ease with public speaking, now ready to use new tips and ideas. And the entire experience proved to be a lot of fun.

### Participant Retention and Drop-out/Dismissal Rates

As program director, I interviewed all 28 original participants before the first workshop, finding them full of expectations (even the four eventually removed for disciplinary reasons).

The workshops took place at the FIU South Campus Marc building, beside a beautiful lake. One day, the building ran out of trash containers. Viewing the security footage, we realized two participants had thrown trash containers into the lake. Even after being warned to stop, they continued this behavior and were expelled from the program. Two others got into a physical fight. Given our no-tolerance policy for such behavior, they were expelled on the spot.

Figure 14: Participants Distribution Status in terms of their Intentions



The program was structured to facilitate learning, and called for strong student commitment as demonstrated by participation, presentations, homework, and completion of exercises. Six participants dropped out because they thought the program was too demanding.

The eighteen participants who completed the program were able to deal with the challenging curriculum and demanding instructors. Of these eighteen, twelve said they'd gained a new appreciation for education, even if opening a business was not on their immediate horizon. They now understood the commitment and challenges faced by anyone starting and maintaining their own business. The meaning of being a successful entrepreneur was better internalized by this group. The other six still wanted to open a business, feeling they had what it takes to make it.

## **Lessons Learned**

We learned many lessons from the program and its evaluations. Participants and instructors expressed real satisfaction about the relationships and interactions which had contributed to a positive and productive classroom environment. More importantly, the positive potential outcomes improved participants' perspectives on life and optimal classroom behavior. Here are nine specific takeaways:

1. *Follow-up is important.* Instructors and participants expressed interest in continued engagement with one another after the program. This echoed our plans to follow up with participants through new social networks developed specifically for that purpose.
2. *Leveraging resources and instructor talent through collaborative community partnerships is important.* To recruit the best combination of instructors, we went outside FIU to find qualified instructors. We plan to reciprocate with external partner organizations that shared their professionals. And we were not be surprised about the need to invest funds in indirect costs, as an investment in long-term partnerships tied to economic development.
3. *Following established protocols is critical when training minors,* to be sure issues such as FBI checks, insurance, liability release forms, and photo authorization forms are ready to be used.
4. *Keep quality a higher priority than quantity* to ensure program satisfaction, but also to demonstrate the importance of customer service in any entrepreneurs' world.
5. *Design an experiential learning curriculum* where participants have hands-on projects in addition to learning experiences. This keeps them fully focused and engaged throughout the long workshop days.
6. *Use a multimedia delivery format* (student/team presentations, 'chat' mentoring, videotaping, role playing, community entrepreneur showcase, site visits, and competition, etc.).

7. *Assess the program and learning outcomes from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives.* Do not miss an opportunity to improve.

8. *Be fully aware of your own professional and personal biases,* as well as how your own social constructions influence the creation, implementation, and evaluation of the program.

9. *Develop a good sense of the social constructions—e.g., values and needs from the perspective of the targeted population,* to create a meaningful and relevant learning experience for them.

## Chapter 8

### PRESENTATIONS: SPREADING THE WORD

#### Conferences and Workshops

All program facilitators recognized the importance of sharing our experiences working with at-risk youth programs around the country. Sure enough, we soon began receiving invitations to conferences. After the successful implementation of our first cohort, we received an invitation to present at the Annual Workforce Development Summit of December 2008 in Tampa, Florida. The presentation entitled “Entrepreneurship Development Program as an Agent of Social Change” generated positive reactions from the audience. Comments were mostly focused on the implementation of the program as well as funding. Several conference participants showed strong interest in replicating the program; but three workforce practitioners and one higher education associate continued to ask for additional information even months later. I stayed in contact with them, but unfortunately neither was able to find funding for a similar program. The interest was there, but financial support was missing. Community interest remained strong, and we were invited to present the program in five different venues:

- Community Innovation Event - Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce Event at Biltmore Hotel. February 2009 in Miami, Florida
- Tri-County Regional Economic Summit at Signature Grant. April 2008 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida
- Workforce Development Service Providers Retreat at Crown Plaza Hotel. Organized by the South Florida Workforce. September 2008 in Miami, Florida
- Entrepreneurship as an Agent of Socio--economic Change. Association of Universities Continuing Education (AUCE) - Virginia Tech. September 2008 in Blacksburg, Virginia
- Entrepreneurship as an Agent of Socio--economic Change. Association of Universities Continuing Education (AUCE) – January 2009 in Clearwater, Florida

Events were mainly for teachers, school district associates, community college representatives, continuing education administrators, workforce development professionals, not-for-profit organization administrators, elected officials, and a few private sector representatives. Even at the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce event, the audience consisted mainly of public agencies and not-for-profit organization representatives. The presentation received many encouraging comments; it would have been great to hear more from the business community in response to our entrepreneurship program<sup>118</sup>.

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<sup>118</sup> The Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce is the largest chamber of commerce in south Florida and it has become the voice of business in the seventh largest metropolitan area in America. Created in 1907, the Chamber was the region's first business organization and its membership is about 7,000. Youth Co-Op, Inc. is a non for profit agency that works to promote innovative programs with direct impact on adults and youth as well as the community, empowering them through education and employment, and identifying and strengthening their knowledge, skills, talents, and abilities.

In many respects, that fact summarizes the overall lack of involvement from the South Florida business community in all aspects of the program implementation. It will be interesting to develop new ways to generate further interest from the local business community to participate in programs similar to “Become a Cool Entrepreneur.” I by no means am suggesting a lack of interest in similar programs, or that the South Florida Business Community would not participate. But I would certainly like to see a greater level of involvement. I took it upon myself to explore better ways to engage the business community to benefit those who may participate in future programs. For example, I began sharing the positive outcomes in different business forums. The importance of minimizing social cost by creating pathways of success for different populations which may provide future employees, could not be overemphasized. When addressing the business community, I used business language and noted tangible short-term cost reductions and benefit maximization.

In addition to support from by the US Department of Labor, we gratefully received support from the South Florida Workforce, Youth Co-op, and the Miami-Dade Children’s Trust and Florida International University, particularly the College of Continuing and Professional Studies (CAPS).

In conclusion, spreading the word about the success of the program was very important to keeping the momentum going and ensure future implementation. We needed to get the attention of the business community, by speaking their language. Next, I shared two PowerPoint presentations used in the conferences and at other local meetings with SFW, Children’s Trust and Youth Co-op staff, Chamber of Commerce, and the business community. Samples of these PowerPoint presentations are presented in Appendix II.

## Chapter 9

### Program Follow-up: Sustainability of New Understandings and Behaviors

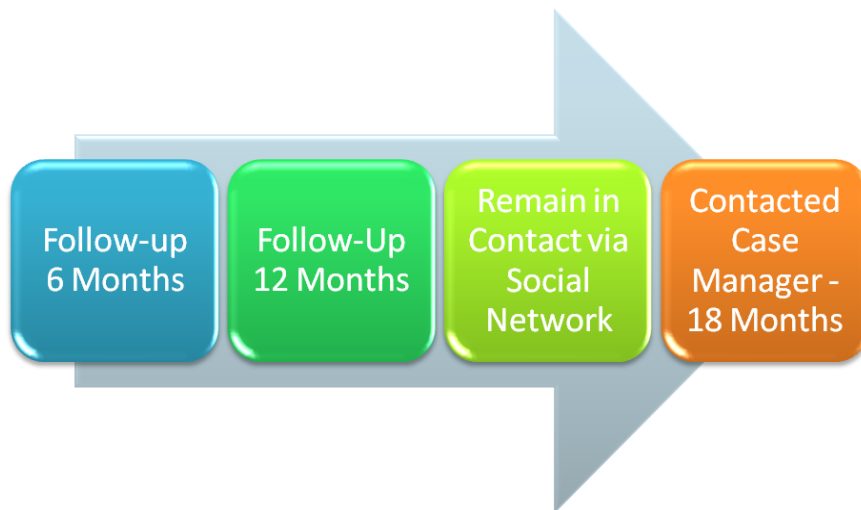
After the program, its founder and developer followed up with participants to learn if the program had impacted their daily lives--and how—in ways not mentioned in the evaluations. Program staff considered follow-up an important way to support and sustain positive program outcomes. This "relational continuity"<sup>119</sup> demonstrated the program staff's commitment to participants and their futures, to promote healthy long-term relationships. Participants developed a sense of belonging to a "community," and came to actively support that community.

Staying in touch increased participants' interest in continuing their new relationships, and using what they'd learned in their daily lives. We wanted to create a sustainable forum in which youth could stay in contact with each other as well as with case managers and program facilitators.

Collaborating with the South Florida Workforce on a meaningful community-building project--primarily for communities with the most challenging socioeconomic problems—was a very positive side benefit of these follow-ups.

Participant follow-up included an initial survey after six months, a second one after twelve months, verbal communication with case managers after eighteen months, and ongoing communication between instructors and participants via the Young Entrepreneur Network. The following chart illustrates these components:

Figure 15: Program Follow-up Process



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<sup>119</sup> In this context relational continuity refers to keeping in touch with program participants well after the instructional component of the program was completed. Programs instructors and staff stayed in contact via email, chat rooms, forums, social networks, etc.

Through two special surveys and soliciting feedback through new social networking websites we explored the impact of the “Become a Cool Entrepreneur” program on participants’ lives.

The two surveys asked: 1. What do you most remember about the entrepreneurship program? 2. How did it impact you the most? 3. Would you recommend this entrepreneurship program to others? 4. Are you considering opening your own business? 5. Are you currently using any of the knowledge gained from the program? If yes, how so? 6. What is next for you in terms of opening a business, school, or work?

### Follow-up Findings (Six Months Survey)

Participants mostly commented on their instructors, business plans, the role of entrepreneurs in our society, and becoming more aware of their body language. Most had gained a new sense of the value and importance of education. They also spoke of learning some very meaningful skills. Most said they would recommend the program to others. Only six participants indicated readiness to open a business, but seven others said they expected to pursue higher education. All participants were looking for work, with only one of them still in school.

Figure 16: The following chart details the results from the first follow-up survey

Participant	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
1	Instructors, business plans	Gained confidence when addressing other people	Yes	Not really	Yes, decision making	Work
2	The importance of reading and writing skills, math	Presentation skills got better/ Appreciate school more	Yes	I already opened it	Yes, everyday life	Work and school
3	Eye contact, handshakes, first impressions, the instructors	Understood the process to open a business better, finances, etc.	Yes	Working on it	Yes, everything	Work and school

4	The instructors, the other participants, the business plan competition	Found support in the instructors and participants/ Education is important to be successful	Yes	Yes, in the future	Yes, at work	Just work
5	The instructors, the importance of school, the steps to open a business	Gained confidence, clarified process to open business/stay in school	Yes	Yes, after college	Yes, decision making	Work and school
6	Presentation skills	Communication skill improvement	Yes	Maybe	Yes, in life in general	Work
7	Our ability to help others as an entrepreneur	Clarified process to open business/stay in school	Yes	Maybe	Yes, organizing my work	work
8	The role of an entrepreneur in our society	Gained confidence. Developed a sense of belonging	Not now, maybe later	Not now	Yes, decision making	work
9	Communication skills, firm handshake, the instructors	Clarified process to open business	Yes	Yes	Yes, organizing work and school	Work and school
10	The people, instructors, body language, handshake	Clarified process to open business. I felt like part of the group	Am working have no time	Yes, I am talking to my dad	Yes, how to achieve	Work and school
11	The steps to open a business, the instructors, the importance of math and writing skills	Reading and writing skills got better/ Education is important to be successful	Yes, I liked it very much	Depending on how difficult it is	Yes, decision making	work



12	The way you dress and behave matter in business, the instructors, business plans	Found support from instructors and participants	Yes	Not now	Yes, organizing myself	Work
13	Have to be organized, sharp to be good business people	Gained confidence/ Education is important in life. We all were equal there	Yes	I wouldn't like because it needs a lot of money to start	Yes, decision making	Work
14	The instructors, the steps to open a business, the importance of how you present yourself	Reading and writing skills got better/gain appreciation for education and training	Yes	It is not that easy. Maybe	Yes, decision making	Work
15	The role of entrepreneurs in our society, the instructors	Found support from instructors and participants	I would like to do it again	No way	Yes, critical thinking	School
16	Communication skills, firm handshake, the instructors	Gained confidence/ I understand the value of education	Yes	No	Yes, decision making	Work
17	How challenging and demanding it is to open a business	Found support from instructors and participants	Yes	No	Yes, decision making	Work
18	Opening a business is serious business	Reading and writing skill got better	Yes	No, it is too difficult	Yes, critical thinking	Work and school

### Follow-up Findings (Twelve Months Survey)

In the responses to “What do you most remember about the entrepreneurship program?” participants mentioned the support of instructors and other participants, which fostered a welcoming environment despite their diverse backgrounds. Fourteen said the business plan competition had been a memorable, demanding and adrenaline-generating event. More importantly, when asked about what had had the greatest impact, they said a greater appreciation for the importance of education, a new sense of belonging, and increased confidence about themselves and their talents. They regarded themselves as potential entrepreneurs, which for individuals in their circumstances can be seen as a success. Most said they expected to refer friends to the program.

Eighteen participants saw a need for additional skills, and expressed their desire to become entrepreneurs or gainfully employed. Rather than feel that a relative lack of skills had closed the door of opportunity, they realized how much more they had to learn.

In the second survey's responses, only four participants expected to open a business. Most indicated that education had become more important in their lives.

Twelve participants (43%) expected to pursue higher education--in itself a statistical success. In sum, the “Become a Cool Entrepreneur” experience gave these young people a new self-image in a different role in society, no longer just “at-risk youth”—a major shift in identity and sense of agency.

Figure 17: Results from the second follow-up survey

Participant	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
1	How to run a business, Instructors, business plans	It helped me to feel welcome in a successful group. I gained confidence in public speaking	Yes	Not really	Yes, decision making	Work
2	The importance of remaining in school. Business plans, reading, and writing	Developed a better appreciation for school and the untapped talents we have	Yes	I already opened it	Yes, everyday life	Work and school
3	Body language, first impressions, the instructors	I learned to trust other people in the group. There are other people that want the best for me	Yes	No	Yes, everything	Work and school

4	Business plan competition, the sense of belonging to a group, instructors	I can make a difference in my life and my worlds	Yes	Yes, in the future	Yes, at work	Just work
5	The importance of school in your life, business plans, how to market a product	Gained confidence, I am in charge. The power is within me.	Yes	Yes, after college	Yes, decision making	Work and school
6	Communication skills in all their dimensions, the young business presenters	The power of effective communication skill through body, written, and spoken language	Yes	Not anymore	Yes, in school	Work and school
7	The instructors, business plans competition, the participants	Education opens doors, clarified process to open bus/stay in school	Yes	It is too difficult	Yes, organizing my work	Work and school
8	The role of entrepreneurs in our society, the people at FIU	The development of a sense of belonging. I am keeping in touch	Not now, maybe later	Not anymore	Yes, decision making	Work and school
9	Body language, communication skills, the instructors	Helped to identify my talents and shortcomings. I felt welcome	Yes	Yes	Yes, organizing work and school	Work and school
10	The people, instructors, body language, handshake, the importance of math and writing skills	Clarified process to open business, I felt like part of the group	I am working, have no time	Not anymore, I will focus on school	Yes, how to achieve	Work and school

11	The steps to open a business, the instructors,	Education is important to be successful	Yes, I liked it very much	Depending on how difficult it is	Yes, decision making	Work and school
12	Have to be organized, need to be sharp to be a good businessman	Found support in instructors and participants to realize that I am in control	Yes	Not now	Yes, organizing myself	Work
13	How you behave as a business person. The way you dress and behave matter in business, the instructors, business plans	Education is important in life, but entrepreneurship offers an alternative road to success	Yes	I wouldn't like because it needs a lot of money to start	Yes, decision making	Work
14	The instructors, business plan competition, how to be a successful entrepreneur	Gained appreciation for education and training. I would like my kid to go to college	Yes	It is not that easy. Maybe	Yes, decision making	Work and school
15	The well-structured program, instructors	Instructors believe in me. I have the talent to be successful	I would like to do it again	No way	Yes, critical thinking	School
16	The people (instructors and participants), communication skills, body language	I understand the value of education	Yes	No	Yes, decision making	Work and school
17	The challenges to open a business	I can do it	Yes	No	Yes, decision making	Work

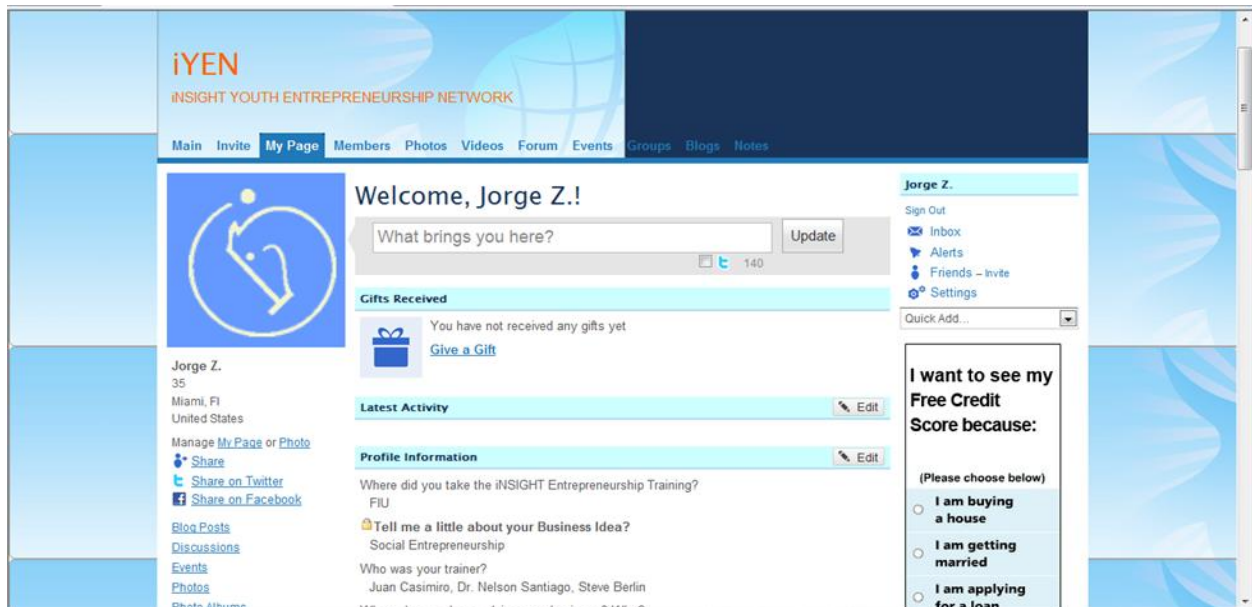
18	The instructors, business plans, the steps to open a business	I can be good in school even though math is not my thing	Yes	No, it is too difficult	Yes, critical thinking	Work and school
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### Follow-up through YEN Social Network (on-going)

A social network site and email address list were created to help participants keep in contact with instructors and other participants, hopefully sharing their post-program experiences. The secure new social network website, “Young Entrepreneurs Network” or YEN—designed to be easy for participants and instructors to use—proved to be an effective, inexpensive way to maintain communication with participants.

Participants worked with instructors to design and develop the website. They included sections for pictures and videos from workshops. Several participants uploaded business plans and requested feedback. Also, some participants used the site to seek partners for future endeavors--a car wash, lawn mowing business, used tires sales center, etc. It is easy to feel the entrepreneurial spirit when reading website comments. And instructors nurtured ongoing mentor relationships with participants with chats and blogs. Instructors and participants continuously exchanged ideas and helped each other think about how to move forward with their projects.

Figure 18: YEN Webpage



In addition to these benefits, participants began developing deeper communications about personal issues and challenges they faced during and after the workshop. When some of these discussions of complicated life situations warranted it, case managers and participants' families became involved. During program implementation, parents or guardians had received bi-weekly progress updates which gave case managers, instructors, and program developers the opportunity to meet and interact with family members. More than once, case managers also called them on the telephone. The social network gave everyone a chance to continue and deepen these key relationships. Here's a sample of the non-confidential comments and concerns shared in the social network:

Figure 19: Follow-Up YEN Social Network

Participant	Comments
1	Anybody in the Doral area. This is because there is a large amount of homes here and I live here. So being able to give back to my community is a plus. Also Coral Gables because that is the area where my partner lives and there is also a big opportunity there for our business.
2	I am planning on operating my business between Lima, Peru, and Miami, FL, United States.
3	I plan on doing business that's not too close from the Dojo that I came from so that we wouldn't take business from each other. So I was thinking of doing it in Cutler Ridge or the Pine Crest area. I am currently looking for a partner to open a Jujitsu training center. Please let me know if you know anybody that would like to invest in this business opportunity.
4	Thank you for your support. It has been very difficult for me since I lost my best friend. We were planning to open a car wash together. Thank you. I will stick with the program.
5	I plan to collaborate with other entrepreneurs to impact society in an empowering way by creating business opportunities targeted to children and adults around the world.
6	I hope as we go our separate ways we can remain in touch. It felt like a family ... like a good family.
7	I read a few of your blogs and I would like to participate in the initiatives. I just don't know how to start. Let me know how I can participate.

8	I would like to impact the society by helping people that need jobs to help support their families.
9	On earth and maybe out of space. Ask Paul Allen, co-founder of Microsoft, he's already been there and has been seeking business somewhere up in the galaxy.
10	I eventually want to be the founder of a non-profit organization. In this, I want to enrich the youth that I come in contact with in a plethora of ways. I witness too much negativity in today's society, and while youth are the future of this world, with the way that things are transpiring, the future does not look too bright. I want to change that. I believe every person has potential; yet what separates a leader from the rest of the crowd is their drive and willingness to take advantage of that potential. I want to be that liaison between having potential and tapping into it for our youth!
11	I would like to give to everyone what he or she really needs, in the moment they need it and with the best quality of products.
12	I considered that we have not developed an environmental culture and what we need is to create consciousness in people about this serious issue. I would like to show the worlds what youths are able to do without damaging the environment.
13	The entrepreneurial program at FIU has brought us together for a reason. I have realized that I am not interested in being a business owner, but I still would like to participate in the events.
14	The world is full of opportunities and we need to be knowledgeable and ready to take advantage when the opportunity comes.
15	I greatly appreciate our friendship and the time spent learning in class. The instructors are very knowledgeable.
16	At one point in time in my life I would like to open a business, but it is such a challenge.
17	Shopping is my thing. I would like to be shopping all day long all year. I know the latest fashion and I would like to work in a store or design clothing.

18

I don't know much about running a business but I know that with good quality and great designs girls will be able to express themselves in the way they feel; therefore there is a need for this industry. Not for me but whoever is interested in running a business.

### Follow-up with South Florida Workforce Case Managers (Eighteen Months)

Following my advisor's recommendation, I later followed up with case managers. They added many valuable insights about the entrepreneurship program's impact on participants.

Eighteen months after the first cohort's completion of the program, I contacted case managers still working for South Florida Workforce in the "Little Havana One-Stop Career Center" and the "Florida City One-Stop Career Center." This telephone follow-up reinforced the findings of the four evaluation components of the program. All felt that the program had increased appreciation for education, enhanced self-confidence and positive identities, fostered a stronger sense of belonging, and brought more hope for the future.

Since some participants were involved with the At-Risk Youth initiative at South Florida Workforce, case managers could shed some light on their current situations. Only one of the three original case managers remained employed by South Florida Workforce at the time of my telephone follow-up. The other two had moved out of the area. The supervisor, still employed at the Little Havana One-Stop Career Center, was a good source of pertinent information, including about the six participants who had voluntarily left the program, and the four who had been expelled. For privacy reasons, the case manager and supervisor shared only general information, including their impressions and experiences of the participants.

Figure 20: The following table provides a synopsis of our conversations

Participant	Comments
1	Noticed changes in behavior, calmer, easier to work with. Participant indicated to case manager the willingness to work and become financially independent
2	Currently admitted to the College of Business at FIU. Opened his online business promoting imports and exports.
3	Participant became energized with workshops. It was a good opportunity to make a long-lasting impact. He sounds more confident. He is currently working at a martial arts academy. He would like to own his own school one day. We saw a positive change in his behavior.
4	He is a good kid, just has been exposed to a lot during his childhood. He found a job; but became unemployed a few months ago.
5	According to her file she is currently working and would like to go to school to be a medical assistant.
6	Participant works in a car wash place. He would like to open his own car wash business. Attitude is better. He conducts himself in a friendlier manner.



7	Participant has come to the realization that she doesn't want to be an entrepreneur at least for the time being. Currently, working at a fast-food restaurant.
8	Participant would like to study to be a cosmetologist at vocational school. Her speech patterns have improved. Eye contact improved.
9	Participant's behavior towards participating has shifted to be more proactive and engaging. Would like to go to vocational education.
10	Currently at Miami-Dade College studying and working part-time. She will do great.
11	Positive change in behavior, more engaging and thinking about going to school.
12	Currently at vocational school, working and studying. Workshop made a positive impact on the participant.
13	Entrepreneurship impacted participant positively. He has become better organized in his thoughts and would like just a job to assist his family. School may be a possibility in the future.
14	Working part-time and going to school part-time also. Noticed positive change in behavior.
15	Going to school full-time. Studying to be an auto mechanic technician.
16	Working part-time and going to school part-time also. Participant exhibited positive signs of behavioral improvement. Contacted her family and they feel her behavior change marginally.
17	Working full time. No interest in school. Feels more confident on future achievements.
18	Currently at Miami-Dade College working and studying.
19	Needed psychological therapy. Participant became withdrawn from participating in activities. Case referred to another agency.
20	Exhibits an attitude and discipline problem, does not respect authority.
21	It has been very hard to keep this participant focused on topics discussed in sessions. Participant constantly disrupts the workshops.
22	Referred to another agency due to substance abuse problem. Got into a fight with FIU student.
23	Does not want to participate. Does not want to comply with program requirements.
24	No interest in participating in workshop. Just wants a job. Needs a better attitude.
25	Does not want to participate. Does not want to comply with program requirements.
26	Does not want to participate. Does not want to comply with program requirements.
27	Lacked motivation to participate in sessions, didn't want to be in the classroom, spoke to guardian.
28	Does not show interest in participating, spoke to parents.

### Overall Follow-up Review

The overall follow-up demonstrated how participation had changed the students' realities after eighteen months. They were more comfortable with financial concepts and business know-how (business plans, marketing techniques, etc.). They also showed signs of positive shifts in attitude, self-esteem, self-identity, future outlook, and relationships. And as mentioned earlier, there was a significant new appreciation for the benefits of a good education.

We are gratified by the program's positive influence and impact--not only on the youth, but also on the faculty/case managers who developed different kinds of relationships with these youth, partly because of continuing relationships via the YEN social network.

In many ways we can see the social construction of economic thinking manifested in the creation of economic knowledge and in the generation of meanings for participants and instructors/case managers. We can expect such constructed meanings to be reflected in the economic behavior of both groups. This economic behavior will be expressed in their interaction with classmates, and ultimately within the market during interaction with other people. Even before that, we can appreciate positive changes such as a new sense of social, emotional, and relational well-being. Instructors and case managers benefited tremendously from their new perspective of the motivations of at-risk youth in Miami-Dade, leading to a greater sensitivity towards participants once considered to be the most challenging part of their caseloads.

Was this entrepreneurship program their last chance to make a difference in participants' lives?

Participants gained supportive new role models, and completed a demanding curriculum. For the first time they felt welcomed by an educational system they once considered unfriendly and discouraging. With a new sense of accomplishment and hope, they could now focus on their future success.

It represented a collaborative transformation towards a more integrated, socially equitable, and sustainable community, featuring alternative paths to long-term success.

## **Chapter 10**

### **Summary and Conclusions**

In our introduction we introduced the theory and practice of social construction as they relate to economic thinking. This included the purpose and significance of the study, research questions, background, and a statement of the problem. We also included key economic concepts as they relate to the Cool Entrepreneur for at-risk youth program. Chapter 1 described the origin of the Cool Entrepreneur Program, how the idea was conceived and why it matters. I also described our search for alternative solutions and how they were incorporated into our original model.

Chapter 2 expanded on my growing appreciation for the social constructionism perspective, and its relevance to any socio-economic development initiative—including programs I was managing.

Chapter 3 summarized social constructionism definitions, some competing approaches, and why I believe social constructionism adds a more humane quality to socioeconomic development programs such as ours, notably in the way program facilitators consciously tried to nurture healthy relationships with participants.

Chapter 4 explored the dynamic relationship of social construction of economic thinking and entrepreneurship—specifically as implemented in the program—and how economic ideas are influence at-risk youths’ behavior. It also summarized the thinking behind our evaluation design.

We began our study with an introduction of the context for social construction of economic thinking. This included a discussion of the purpose of the study, research questions, background, statement of the problem, and significance of the study. Also, the introduction included key concepts in economic thinking as they relate to the Cool Entrepreneur for at-risk youth.

At this point, I introduced the customized entrepreneurship program for at-risk youth in Miami-Dade County, “Become a Cool Entrepreneur,” primarily to demonstrate the virtue of serving as a transformative force for the social construction of economic thinking. I provided some background on conception of the idea for the program, including its structure and modules, partnering agencies, participant selection, objectives, evaluations, and outcomes.

The experience with the Cool Entrepreneur workshop series has taught us that it is essential to support the development of consumer-oriented enterprises employing labor-intensive intervention programs that make extensive and costly training, advanced production technologies or heavy infusions of capital unnecessary. This is especially important considering the current state of the Miami-Dade economy.

In many ways, the program was successful. First, the participants showed a quantum change in their behavior, attitudes, and way of conducting business inside and outside the workshop room. The university environment gave the participants an additional opportunity to succeed and make the experience a productive one, and hopefully awakened in them a dream of higher education.

The FIU teams really helped participants develop new understandings of their realities and expectations. Entrepreneurship is not an easy endeavor; and subjecting young people to a brand new frontier is a challenge. Nevertheless, it was worthwhile showing the importance of self-esteem, sense of belonging, team building and collective intelligence in terms of finding viable solutions. Program facilitators should also consider the following suggestions to enhance the scope and success of the program:

- Begin capturing as quickly as possible the voices of participant: their desires, their perceptions of their realities and expectations before developing a program.
- Develop a curriculum of interest to the participants.
- Prior to beginning program development, provide a workshop on social constructionism to program facilitators to embrace its language and concepts through interactive discussions and role playing.
- Develop an evaluation component that includes the participants' voices in order to encourage participation.
- Facilitate young entrepreneurs' business capacity and help identify micro-loan programs and incubator groups that initiate small business activity.
- Recruit program facilitators able to communicate well, who can make a long-lasting impression with the at-risk youth.

### **Overall Conclusion**

Considering the theoretical approach and practice covered by this study, I concluded that the social construction of economic thinking has much to offer anyone involved in youth development and opening up the local labor market and society. Given the predominant perceptions and interpretations of socioeconomic realities in Miami-Dade, entrepreneurial education should be considered a fruitful approach to explore.

Many participants' challenging backgrounds are known to interfere with their ability to succeed at school. Even worse, those labeled as "at-risk youth" tend to respond by closing themselves off from the educational process. Their social construction of economic thinking did not align with that of educational policy developers at the Miami-School District and the Florida Department of Education. The participants' unproductive behavior is an important sign of misalignment between two socially constructed entities.

This study indicates that economic behavior is based on socially constructed economic ideas which impact at-risk youths' behavioral performance, proved to be relevant within the theoretical context, as well as the results of the entrepreneurship program itself.

Questions raised earlier mentioned the main philosophies supporting economic thinking, and whether or not these ideas are socially constructed. I concluded that some of these philosophies, although still dominant, are clearly unable to promote higher standards of living and quality of life for certain groups. The benefits of aligning policy development and workforce program development and implementation to dominant economic philosophies were explicitly demonstrated.

The social construction of economic thinking has had a tremendous (if usually overlooked) impact on how members of a group or community form their economic expectations, and organize their lives around these new expectations. This ultimately impacts the market. Any specific behavior that differs from the ones needed to attain their economic goals could be considered negative and detrimental to a society's well-being. Identifying sensitive and flexible social constructions of economic thinking is crucial if we are to improve our communities through aligning these social constructions to the workforce development programs intended to mitigate the challenges of at-risk youth.

Program facilitators showed their commitment to the program and willingness to reach out and connect with any of the participants, whatever their personal challenges may be. This was the beginning of positive relationships with the youth, and constructively influenced the youth's engagement in the program and overall learning. Students became more open to suggestions and new materials shared by professors, gradually becoming motivated and receptive to the practical and hands-on curriculum. In many regards, the workshop setting resembles traditional schooling (seating, classroom acumen, discipline expectations and participation). Yet is flexible enough to accommodate different styles of learning, and promotes participants' engagement and integration into the program.

Participating in this research project with program professors, managers, coordinators and case managers, while learning about at-risk youth's life experiences first hand, expanded my personal and professional understanding and sensibility. Perhaps more importantly, I saw that all participants, despite the difficulties, were searching for new ways to improve their lives. This can help them become more integrated as productive members of society, and to help others who experienced similar challenges. Experiencing their obvious willingness to share and welcome new perspectives was a humbling experience. It gave me a more positive, strength-based view of my fellow man in general and at-risk youth in particular.

I also benefited professionally, now better able to motivate others to learn and develop knowledge through action-based learning. I came to understand that educational program design and implementation are constantly changing, very dynamic processes. Anyone needs

to be flexible enough to work with inherent limitations such as budgets and participants' abilities and expectations.

With learning, one size definitely does not fit all. Educators must create learning structures flexible enough include at-risk youth, always taking differences in each participant's needs and learning styles into consideration.

Also, I recognize that this learning event was about sharing and creating knowledge through the program and the lens of participants' social constructions. Viewing economic thinking as social constructs empowers all members of society to seek a better world that works without a rigid platform. This is a major lesson of our "Become a Cool Entrepreneur" program for at-risk youth: participants benefited from developing new meanings, creating knowledge through class interaction, and opening their eyes to alternative realities. Based on what I learned during the program implementation, I highly recommend the Cool Entrepreneur Program to anyone working with at-risk youth.

Developing and implementing the Cool Entrepreneur Program was a humbling experience, which helped me as well as instructors and participants to develop new understandings, new meanings and new perspectives of some important issues. We collectively learned to avoid imposing our views on others, rather to establish a dialogue to exchange ideas in of the process of discovering the optimal solution for all. We learned to move beyond rigid views on human issues, and saw how our understandings of reality are based solely on how we position ourselves to live our lives. Social constructionism adds invaluable conceptual flexibility to our ever-evolving cultural context, set of values, and tools we use to perceive and interpret reality.

As a group, we recognized possible alternative understandings beyond those we had relied on. Instead of wrong or right opinions, we worked on alternative understandings. It was also important to better understand the role of language and mass media in the spread and perpetuation of ideas.

[Jorge: this paragraph is repetitive and unnecessary] It was also humbling to observe instructors and participants beginning to recognize the social construction process at work within their habitual ways of developing the meaning of their reality. Along with instructors and participants, I was inspired by a new ability to redefine ourselves and our relationship with others. This last statement suggests the potential to explore new philosophical and cultural positions to help us face future challenges.

Peter L. Berger, Thomas Luckmann, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Kenneth Gergen shared their insight that all knowledge, even common sense, is derived from and maintained by social interactions. Language relates to mental events. My personal view of a person or an issue is derived from our respective social constructions, which we use to understand and

create alternative realities including economic realities. Ultimately, observing economic behavior through the lens of social constructionism enables individuals to maximize their potential to live fulfilling and meaningful lives, even during harsh economic times or challenging personal economic situations.

The Cool Entrepreneur Program illustrates the social constructionism of economic thinking that brings theoretical and abstract arguments to life. It connects economic reality (the market) to individuals (in this case, at-risk youth) in a dynamic relational process that adds meaning, values, culture, and even behavioral expectations. The American market economy honors entrepreneurial behavior, and at-risk youth participants came to value entrepreneurial activities and image; even if they lack interest in this career pathway, they understand why. In other words, the Cool Entrepreneur Program helps chart the dynamic interaction between the market, at-risk youth and program facilitators and curriculum; it transformed everybody involved. It encompasses the social constructions discussed earlier, from the social constructions of economic thinking as the base for the market/economic system with its respective community expectations, to the social constructions of the individual in terms of his/her definitions for success and expected behavior, and lastly, to the social constructions of the program/policy developers. I called this dynamic exchange of context, individual and program “a convergence of social constructions”: a classroom in which youths and instructors exchange perceptions and interpretations of entrepreneurship, on the way to new understandings, meanings, values and eventually behaviors; applying new social constructions of economic thinking to their new realities. The Cool Entrepreneur Program encompassed a relational process that created new beginnings for many of the youth to begin building futures of productive, satisfied lives.

### **Afterthoughts: Limitations of the Study**

At the end of this project and dissertation journey, I reflect on the limitations of the study:

- Defining “socioeconomic expectations” for specific groups under specific market conditions in a dynamic context is never easy. The complexity arises from the ever-changing subjective factors of perception, and various interpretations of economic understanding and expectations.
- The study interprets economists’ documented ideas and thinking. It analyzes the sociology of the economists at the time of publication of their main ideas. Therefore, the study relies heavily on interpretation by other authors and analysts.
- The terms “economic and workforce development” apply specifically to initiatives implemented within the continental United States of America--for this study, Miami, Florida. Other policy conceptions and implementations may generate different economic development results in other geographic areas within the United States.

The Cool Entrepreneur Program has captured the interest of the local school board and the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE). We are exploring partnerships with high schools, possibly offering it as part of a “dual enrollment” program.

This would mean that if a participant joins a local program, he or she could earn not only credits toward a high school diploma, but also college credit from FIU. If the program keeps providing a venue for social integration and personal growth for at-risk youth, I foresee its implementation at other sites. We are seeking funding from the Gates Foundation and the Woodrow Wilson Foundation. This document may then serve as testimony and part of the request for future funding.



## Appendix I: Consent Forms

### CONTACT/MEDICAL INFORMATION

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Names: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Telephone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Work Telephone(s) (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Another Person to Contact in Case of Emergency: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

### INSURANCE INFORMATION

Primary Insurance Company's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Insured's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Insured's Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Policy Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Plan Type or Code Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### MEDICAL INFORMATION

Use the following section to list allergies or medical conditions that might require special attention during the \_\_\_\_\_ (Program Name). Examples include food, drug, or insect allergies; diabetes; chronic illness; recent surgery; and fainting spells. Include explanations for and dates of hospitalizations for any reason, list any prescribed medication that is taken regularly, and provide information about any special or psychological examinations, conditions, or treatments.

Allergies \_\_\_\_\_

Chronic Conditions (Asthma, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Regular Medications \_\_\_\_\_

Medical History \_\_\_\_\_

**MEDICAL AUTHORIZATION**

**PARENTAL CONSENT & AUTHORIZATION**

We/I understand that our/my son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_, who is \_\_\_\_\_ years old and an academic-year student at \_\_\_\_\_, has been selected to attend the \_\_\_\_\_ (hereinafter "Program") to be held on the campus of \_\_\_\_\_ (hereinafter "Organization"), from \_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.

We/I understand that my/our health insurance, if available, will be the primary coverage for \_\_\_\_\_ in the event of accident or illness while attending the Program. We/I further understand that in the event we/I do not have insurance or have exceeded our/my coverage limits, our/my son/daughter will be insured by the sponsors/administrators of the Program for accident and illness occurring during his/her attendance in the Program, excluding pre-existing medical conditions. This coverage is limited to a total amount of \_\_\_\_\_ per participant. The policy will be arranged through the Organization and will be in effect for the duration of the Program. Upon written request, a copy of the policy will be sent to parents or guardians when it is available. This coverage will be effective from the time the participants register until \_\_\_\_\_, excluding time away from the Program for holiday weekends, or at other times as approved by the Director or the Director's designee.

We/I also authorize the sponsors/administrators of the Program and authorized representatives of the Insuring Agency to obtain information regarding the medical history, physical condition, and diagnoses of our/my son/daughter, as required, for the purpose of documenting covered accidents/illnesses. A photocopy of this authorization shall be valid as the original. This authorization will be valid for the term of our/my son/daughter's coverage under the policy.

We/I, the parent(s) or guardian(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby request that the Organization, through its agents or employees, take whatever steps necessary to secure medical treatment for the child named above in the event such child appears to be in need of such treatment while attending the Program. We/I consent to the rendering of all necessary treatment, including admission to a hospital or other appropriate health care facility, in such institutions and at such places as the Organization, acting through its agents and/or employees, deems best. I authorize the agents and employees of the University to execute whatever forms might be necessary to ensure complete and adequate care of our/my child.

We/I affirm that the above medical information is complete and accurate. We understand that pre-existing health conditions are not covered by the Organization or by the Program's insurance and that such conditions are the financial responsibility of the parent(s) or guardian(s). We/I also understand that the insurance policy cited above does not cover any medical problems we/I have known about, or that we/I should have known about, and have not revealed to the Organization or the Program, and that certain conditions will not be covered under the terms of the insurance policy.

*If this document is signed by only one parent:*

"I, the undersigned, affirm that I have been judicially granted sole custody of the participant."

*If this document is signed by a student's guardian(s):*

"I/we, the undersigned, affirm that I/we have been judicially granted legal guardianship of the participant."

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Participant Signature                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent or Guardian Signature                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Participant Signature                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent or Guardian Signature                      Date

**RELEASE AND WAIVER OF LIABILITY**

I, the undersigned, the Parent or legal guardian of \_\_\_\_\_, a minor child, 18 years or younger (My Child), do hereby release, discharge, waive and relinquish any and all actions or causes of action for personal or bodily injury, damage or loss of property, or wrongful death occurring to My Child while voluntarily participating in the 2008 Entrepreneurial Youth Program at Florida International University from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

I acknowledge that I am aware of risks and hazards connected with these activities, including the risk of severe physical injury and other physical hazards, and that there may be risks and hazards unknown to me or My Child.

I for myself, for My Child, My Child's heirs, executors, administrators and assignees, hereby release and forever discharge THE FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY BOARD OF TRUSTEES, FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY, STATE OF FLORIDA, THE FLORIDA BOARD OF GOVERNERS, and their respective officers, employees and agents, from any and all claims, demands, damages, actions and causes of action which I, My Child, My Child's heirs, executors, and administrators have or may ever have arising out of, by reason of, or in any manner growing out of any injuries, damages or death sustained by me resulting from My Child's participation in 2008 Entrepreneurial Youth Program. It is my intention by this instrument to exempt and relieve THE FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY BOARD OF TRUSTEES, FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY, STATE OF FLORIDA, THE FLORIDA BOARD OF GOVERNERS, and their respective officers, employees and agents, from any liability for personal injury, property damage or death arising out of My Child's participation in 2008 Entrepreneurial Youth Program at Florida International University.

I understand that part of the risk involved in undertaking any activity is relative to My Child's own state of fitness. I acknowledge that My Child's has no physical condition that would prevent him/her from safely participating in these activities. I give my consent for emergency medical treatment rendered to My Child in the event of injury of illness and agree to be responsible for all costs associated with My Child's transportation and treatment.

I have read this release and understand all its terms, I execute it voluntarily, with full knowledge that I am relinquishing significant rights and incurring certain duties.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Witnesses:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix II – Presentations



### Challenges Macro: Miami-Dade's Income Statistics Are Troubling

- **Miami-Dade's incomes are low and poverty is high.** Miami-Dade County's median household income is \$35,966, far below the national median income of \$41,994. The city of Miami's median household income is even lower at \$23,483.
- **Miami's middle class is small.** While 20 percent of the nation's households make between \$34,000 and \$51,000, only 15 percent of Miami's households are in that income bracket.
- **African Americans and Hispanics are less likely to be middle class than whites.** In Miami-Dade County, the white median household income is at least \$20,000 more than the black, Puerto Rican, Nicaraguan, and Haitian median household income.

Source: Brookings Institution

### Become a *Kool* Entrepreneur!

- Objectives
- Regional Market Analysis
- Targeted Population
- Challenges
- Community Partnership
- Customized Program
- Outcomes
- Comments

### Objectives

- Customized entrepreneurship (intervention) program for At Risk Youth (16-18 years old).
- The program will develop the business acumen of the youth through incorporating business fundamentals, communication, goal setting and problem solving techniques.
- The program will be sensitive to participants' interests and talents and will facilitate self-diagnosis of aptitudes and talents, performance management styles, and developmental needs.
- Create educational and career pathways to mitigate increased drop out high school rates

### Lessons Learn

- Partnership - Be prepare to reciprocate if you are seeking a true partnership with an external partner. Do not be surprised that you will need to invest. Take into account INDIRECT COSTS but also realize intrinsic value of developing partnerships tied to economic development
- Protocols - When you are training minors, ensure that all the right protocols are in place (e.g., FBI, insurance, liability release forms, photo authorization forms)
- Do not skimp on customer service
- Design an experiential learning curriculum
- Use multidimensional delivery format (student/team presentations, 'chat' mentoring, videotaping, role playing, meet community entrepreneurs showcase, site visits, competition)
- Assess the program and learning outcomes. Do not miss the opportunity to improve

FLORIDA INT'L UNIVERSITY

"Become A Kool Entrepreneur Program"  
 June 16 - July 24, 2008

PROGRAM SPONSORS:  
 CHILDREN'S TRUST  
 SOUTH FLORIDA WORKFORCE  
 YOUTH COOP:  
 LITTLE HAVANA CAREER CENTER



**How Does Entrepreneurship Benefit Youth?**

*In the Community*

- Provides a Jump Start on the Economy
- Experience/Learn Teamwork and Leadership
- Provides Local Job and Wealth Creation
- Creates Self Sufficiency and Empowerment
- Increases Local Investment Opportunities

**How Does Entrepreneurship and Financial Literacy Benefit Youth?**

*In School*

- Meets Enterprise Education Standards
- Increases Personal & Social Skills
- Improves Communication Skills
- Fosters Teamwork & Leadership
- Enhances Financial Literacy

Participants Learned:

Teamwork Analytical Thinking Strategies Public Speaking Skills Business Plan Development Conduct Surveys Corporate Title Selections Strategies for Success	Business Etiquette PowerPoint Designs Visited <a href="#">websites for research</a> Investments Strategies Negotiations Skills Dress for Success Applied Academics
Financial Ratios: (Breakeven, Return On Investments) Income Statements Time Managements Communication Skills Cultural Exchange Producing a Sales Commercial	Market Research Punctuality Poster Designs Business Card and Flyer Design Project Management Skills Social Responsibility Read Financial Pages of WSJ

**How Does Entrepreneurship and Financial Literacy Benefit Youth?**

*In the classroom*

- Enhances Student Motivation
- Enhances Student Interaction
- Increases Willingness to Learn
- Willingness to Progress
- Increases Class Participation





## Appendix III: Overall Evaluation Form

### THE FIU COOL ENTREPRENEUR PROGRAM

#### Training Program Evaluation

Your thoughtful answers to these questions will provide our Program helpful information to improve future seminar offerings. Your comments are anonymous.

**Seminar:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Term:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Instructor:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the questions based on this scale of 1 to 5:

1. Strongly Disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neither agree nor disagree, 4. Agree, and 5. Strongly Agree

- 
- A. The subject matter of the seminar was well organized. \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. The instructor was Knowledgeable in the subject matter. \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. The instructor explained the seminar material clearly and effectively. \_\_\_\_\_
  - D. The instructor related seminar materials to real life situations. \_\_\_\_\_
  - E. The instructor effectively utilized the time allotted for this seminar. \_\_\_\_\_
  - F. The instructor stimulated my interest in the subject. \_\_\_\_\_
  - G. This seminar was of high value to my learning in this program. \_\_\_\_\_
  - H. This training motivated you to seriously considering opening your own business. \_\_\_\_\_

I. Please write any additional comments you wish to share about your experiences in this seminar.

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Thank you for your participation.

## Appendix IV – Participants’ Involvement Report

Course - Become a Cool Entrepreneur

Week Three- 06/30/08

Entrepreneur FIU South

Start 06/30/08- 07/03/08

**Instructors – Juan Casimiro, Steve Berlin & Dr. Santiago**

### Student Progress Report

Student Name	Social Security	06-30-08 Module 1 Sample Business Plan	06-30-08 Module 2 Sample Presentation	07-02-08 Module 3 Business Plan Preparation	07-03-08 Module 4 Business Plan	Participation	Average Grade	Absences
		Completed	80%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	1
		Completed	80%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	1
		Completed	85%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	0
		Completed	85%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	0
		Completed	85%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	0
		Completed	85%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	0
		Completed	90%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	0
		Completed	80%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	0
		Completed	90%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	0
		Completed	80%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	0
		Completed	95%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	0
		Completed	85%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	0
		Completed	95%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	0
		Completed	90%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	0
		Completed	85%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	0
		Completed	90%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	0
		Completed	90%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	0
		Completed	95%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	0
		Completed	75%	Pending	Pending	Improvement Needed	Completed	0
		Completed	100%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	0
		Completed	85%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	0
		Completed	75%	Pending	Pending	Improvement Needed	Completed	0
		Completed	100%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	1
		Completed	80%	Pending	Pending	Good	Completed	0

Excellent = Students participates, is alert in class and perform all assignments on time

Good = Students performs satisfactory in class

Improvement Needed= Students need to participate more, complete assignments, or more class participation

## APPENDIX V - CURRICULUM

<b>2008 Entrepreneurial Youth Program: "Become a Cool Entrepreneur"</b>			
Monday, June 16, 2008	9:00-10:30	<b>Module 1: Making the Right Choice: Essentials for Business</b>	# of Hours 1.5
	10:30-10:45	Networking Break	
	10:45-12:15	<b>Module 2: Me, Inc: Building Your Image and Personal Impressions</b>	1.5
	12:15-1:15	Lunch	
	1:15-2:15	Guest Speaker: Young Entrepreneur	1
Wednesday, June 18, 2008	9:00-10:30	<b>Module 3: Start-Up essentials and Legal Structures</b>	1.5
	10:30-10:45	Networking Break	
	10:45-12:15	<b>Module 4: From Dream to Reality: Turning Hobbies and Skills into Biz</b>	1.5
	12:15-1:15	Lunch	
	1:15-2:15	Guest Speaker: Young Entrepreneur	1
Thursday, June 19, 2008	9:00-10:30	<b>Module 5: Marketing Essentials: Learning the Basics of the 4 Ps</b>	1.5
	10:30-10:45	Networking Break	
	10:45-12:15	<b>Module 6: Business Financing, Accounting and Money Issues</b>	1.5
	12:15-1:15	Lunch	
	1:15-2:15	Guest Speaker: Marketing Specialist	1
Monday, June 23, 2008	9:00-10:30	<b>Module 7: Savings: Take control of Your Personal Finances</b>	1.5
	10:30-10:45	Networking Break	
	10:45-12:15	<b>Module 8: Budgeting and Business Plan Development</b>	1.5
	12:15-1:15	Lunch	
	1:15-2:15	Guest Speaker: Stock Broker	1
Wednesday, June 25, 2008	9:00-10:30	<b>Module 9: Credit and Business Plan Development</b>	1.5
	10:30-10:45	Networking Break	
	10:45-12:15	<b>Module 9: Business Plan Development</b>	1.5
	12:15-1:15	Lunch	
	1:15-2:15	Guest Speaker: Small Business Owner	1
Thursday, June 26, 2008	9:00-10:30	<b>Module 9: Sample Business Plan</b>	1.5
	10:30-10:45	Networking Break	
	10:45-12:15	<b>Module 9: Sample Business Plan (continuation)</b>	1.5
	12:15-1:15	Lunch	
	1:15-2:15	Guest Speaker: Young Entrepreneur	1
Monday, June 30, 2008	9:00-10:30	<b>Module 9: Sample Business Plan (continuation)</b>	1.5
	10:30-10:45	Networking Break	
	10:45-12:15	<b>Module 9: Sample Business Plan (continuation)</b>	1.5
	12:15-1:15	Lunch	
	1:15-2:15	Guest Speaker: Young Entrepreneur	1
Wednesday, July 02, 2008	9:00-10:30	<b>Module 10: Business Plan Preparation</b>	1.5
	10:30-10:45	Networking Break	
	10:45-12:15	<b>Module 10: Business Plan Preparation (continuation)</b>	1.5
	12:15-1:15	Lunch	
	1:15-2:15	Guest Speaker: Young Entrepreneur	1



Thursday, July 03, 2008			
9:00-10:30	<b>Module 10: Business Plan Preparation (continuation)</b>	1.5	
10:30-10:45	Networking Break		
10:45-12:15	<b>Module 10: Business Plan Preparation</b>	1.5	
12:15-1:15	Lunch		
1:15-2:15	Guest Speaker: Young Entrepreneur	1	
Monday, July 07, 2008			
9:00-10:30	<b>Module 9: Business Plan Preparation (continuation)</b>	1.5	
10:30-10:45	Networking Break		
10:45-12:15	<b>Module 9: Business Plan Preparation</b>	1.5	
12:15-1:15	Lunch		
1:15-2:15	Guest Speaker: Young Entrepreneur	1	
Wednesday, July 09, 2008			
9:00-10:30	<b>Module 10: Become an Effective Communicator</b>	1.5	
10:30-10:45	Networking Break		
10:45-12:15	<b>Module 10: Become an Effective Communicator (continuation)</b>	1.5	
12:15-1:15	Lunch		
1:15-2:15	<b>Module 10: Become an Effective Communicator (continuation)</b>	1	
Thursday, July 10, 2008			
9:00-10:30	<b>Module 10: Become an Effective Communicator</b>	1.5	
10:30-10:45	Networking Break		
10:45-12:15	<b>Module 10: Become an Effective Communicator (continuation)</b>	1.5	
12:15-1:15	Lunch		
1:15-2:15	<b>Module 10: Become an Effective Communicator (continuation)</b>	1	
Monday, July 14, 2008			
9:00-10:30	<b>Module 11: First Round of Business Plan Presentations</b>	1.5	
10:30-10:45	Networking Break and Course Evaluations		
10:45-12:15	<b>Module 11: Business Plan Presentations (continuation)</b>	1.5	
12:15-1:15	Lunch		
1:15-2:15	Course Evaluations	1	
Wednesday, July 16, 2008			
9:00-10:30	<b>Module 11: Second Round of Business Plan Presentations</b>	1.5	
10:30-10:45	Networking Break and Course Evaluations		
10:45-12:15	<b>Module 11: Business Plan Presentations (continuation)</b>	1.5	
12:15-1:15	Lunch		
1:15-2:15	Course Evaluations	1	
Thursday, July 17, 2008			
9:00-10:30	<b>Module 12: The Business Plan: Road Map to Success</b>	1.5	
10:30-10:45	Networking Break		
10:45-12:15	<b>Module 12: The Business Plan: Road Map to Success</b>	1.5	
12:15-1:15	Lunch		
1:15-2:15	Guest Speaker: Young Entrepreneur	1	
Monday, July 21, 2008			
9:00-10:30	<b>Module 12: The Business Plan: Road Map to Success</b>	1.5	
10:30-10:45	Networking Break		
10:45-12:15	<b>Module 12: The Business Plan: Road Map to Success</b>	1.5	
12:15-1:15	Lunch		
1:15-2:15	Guest Speaker: Young Entrepreneur	1	

Wednesday, July 23, 2008	9:00-10:30	<b>Module 13: Portfolio Building and Illustration</b>	1.5
	10:30-10:45	Networking Break	
	10:45-12:15	<b>Module 13: Portfolio Building and Illustration</b>	1.5
	12:15-1:15	Lunch	
	1:15-2:15	<b>Module 13: Portfolio Building and Illustration</b>	1
Thursday, July 24, 2008	9:00-10:30	<b>Module 14. Entrepreneurial Road Show</b>	1.5
	10:30-10:45	Networking Break	
	10:45-12:15	<b>Module 14. Entrepreneurial Road Show</b>	1.5
	12:15-1:15	Lunch	
	1:15-2:15	<b>Module 14. Entrepreneurial Road Show</b>	1
Monday, July 28, 2008	9:00-10:30	<b>Module 15. Assessment of Program and Self Reflection</b>	1.5
	10:30-10:45	Networking Break	
	10:45-12:15	<b>Trade Fair, Venture Capital Competition and Awards Ceremony</b>	1.5
	12:15-1:15	Lunch	
	1:15-2:15	<b>Trade Fair, Venture Capital Competition and Awards Ceremony</b>	1
<b>Total # of Hours</b>			<b>76</b>

Note: In the table the areas highlighted in green were the additional component added to improve participant academic standards.

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